



# Illuminations

## *A participatory theatre project exploring sickle cell care*

**I always have a smile**

**I make sure**

**I greet everybody.**

**I'm in pain**

**I'll be smiling**

**I will be greeting you.**

**I am in pain**

**I am in pain**

**"Meredith"**  
(research participant)

Sickle cell is a lifelong, inherited blood condition affecting around 20,000 people in the UK, people mostly of Black African or Caribbean heritage. In this condition, blood cells become crescent-shaped and can block blood flow. People with sickle cell suffer “crises” – unpredictable episodes of severe pain. Healthcare for people living with sickle cell crisis is widely recognised as inadequate, and often worsens suffering.

*Illuminations* is a new theatre production and documentary film emerging from 18 months of ethnographic research into sickle cell crisis care in East London. Through interviews and observations, the study has illuminated what good care looks like for people living with sickle cell – and the barriers that remain.

This project translates lived experience into performance, creating an opportunity for dialogue between people living with sickle cell, healthcare professionals, and the wider public.

# Artistic Strength

## A Creative Team with Proven Impact



### Playwright: Mojisola Adebayo

Mojisola is an Alfred Fagon award-winning playwright and performer. Her plays include STARS, Moj of the Antarctic and Oranges and Stones. Mojisola's work has been performed internationally and published in two collections.



### Director: Gail Babb

Gail is a Kenneth Tynan award-winning theatre-maker and director bringing expertise in participatory arts and co-creation. Her work often explores race, health, and identity. Gail also brings expertise in performance within non-traditional theatre spaces.



**Co-producers** Estella Daniels (left, top) and Kofi Amankwah (right, top) bring are experienced stage and screen actors, who bring lived experience of sickle cell.



**Co-producer** Dr Stephen Hibbs (left, bottom) is a haematologist and researcher focusing on sickle cell.

Tamasha Theatre Company have been making theatre for social change for over 35 years. Tamasha will provide **production support** with contracts and finance, and share expertise.



Film-maker and photographer **Shane Telemacque** (right, bottom) brings experience as a photographer and videographer, alongside lived experience of sickle cell.



# STARS

An Afrofuturist Space Odyssey

Left: A previous collaboration between Mojisola Adebayo and Gail Babb – “STARS: An Afrofuturist Space Odyssey” – won critical acclaim and the New Play OffWestEnd Theatre (Offie) Award 2024

# TAMASHA



# Progress So Far Momentum and Creative Development

*“I was actually taking part and sharing my thoughts, which allowed me to vent certain things that I hadn't done so before. I shared things that perhaps made me look vulnerable. But man, it's something I'm always going to remember”*

**Shane Telemacque**  
**Reflections on Summer creative workshop**

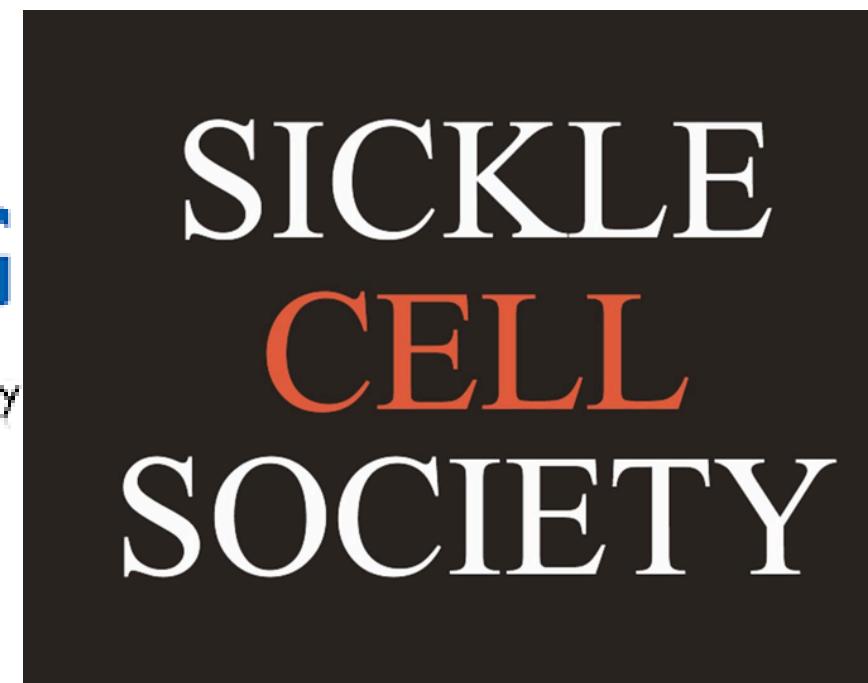
Since 2024, the co-producers have been meeting, sharing vision, and devising ideas. Our filmmaker Shane, who lives with sickle cell, has been recording footage since the start of this journey.

In August and December 2025, we held a 4 days of creative workshop gathering six core members of the creative team, half of whom live with sickle cell. Together we read 12 extended excerpts from the research, undertook imaginative exercises, and shared stories from our lives.

Development work has been made possible through funding secured from the Wellcome Trust, the Worshipful Company of Curriers Millennium Healthcare Award, the Queen Mary University of London Participatory Research Fund, and the Centre for Creative Collaboration.

We have now secured a Arts Council England Project Grant that will allow us to share the production through a professional cast.

# Confirmed audiences



Performances for people living with sickle cell and their loved ones are planned for the Sickle Cell Society mentoring scheme (for young people living with sickle cell) and Solace (for people living with sickle cell in East London). These groups have both been involved in the research project underpinning the theatre production.



Performances for healthcare staff, healthcare students, and health policy makers are planned for at four hospital trusts, Barts and the London Medical School, and the British Society of Haematology Annual Scientific Meeting (held at ACC, Liverpool)

# **Would you consider hosting a performance?**

This would be a free public event, with all performance costs covered by our existing funding.

The piece is designed to be intimate and adaptable, and can work in a range of spaces without complex technical requirements.

An original soundscape supports immersion and helps create a shared, reflective atmosphere.

The performance lasts around 30 minutes and is followed by a 30-minute facilitated conversation with members of the cast and creative team, including people living with sickle cell.

**We hope the event would offer audiences an opportunity to encounter lived experience of sickle cell, engage with new research, and collectively reimagine what care could look like.**