

# PADAN

## Plymouth Area Disability Action Network Newsletter June 2015

### **GRAEAE THEATRE COMPANY co-production with the Theatre Royal**

“The Solid Life of Water”

Monday, 8 June to 13 June - The  
Drum

All 6 nights start at 7.45 pm

The Graeae Theatre company (pronounced Gray-Eye) returns to Plymouth after an absence of several years from performing at the Theatre Royal. Graeae is a long established national company of disabled actors and the production is described as “an intimate, tender play about loss, hurt and rediscovery”. It is by award winning playwright Jack Thorne, whose television credits include Glue, Skins, Shameless and ‘This is England’ so the words “Candid, uninhibited and visceral” to describe the play are also not surprising.

A flier for the production is with this mailing and some access information is at the end of this newsletter under ‘June Events’.  
(Note: corrected from the first issue of this newsletter)

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### **GRAEAE DIRECTOR COMMENTS ON CHANGES TO ACCESS TO WORK AFFECTING THE COMPANY**

The government’s Access to Work scheme (AtW) can provide equipment, help with transport, or personal care or interpreter help to enable disabled people to obtain work.

Support from the scheme has been very important in helping disabled people into employment and self-employment but Graeae has said changes to the AtW rules which are capping awards at an arbitrary level could “terminate the careers of many Deaf and disabled artists”. It noted that a £1 investment in AtW brings at least £1.50 back into the economy.

Limits to interpreter support is particularly affecting Deaf people, and Jenny Sealey the Chief Executive of Graeae who is herself Deaf has had her own AtW support cut by more than half. However, the cuts will also affect Deaf people wanting to work in many professions, not just the arts. For employed people, the funding gap is

expected to be met by employers but in the very low paid area of creative work not only are performers and stage managers to be treated as self-employed but their earnings must meet the threshold of contributing to national insurance which is £8,000 a year, before they can claim AtW. This is well over average earnings of this group of workers of £5,000 a year.

Although Graeae welcomed some changes which make it easier to use AtW for those who don't use the telephone, it says "the new rules do not allow the flexibility needed in order to pursue a career in the creative sector."

Report in  
[www.disabilitynewsservice.com](http://www.disabilitynewsservice.com)

### **FEEDBACK FROM THE PADAN MEETING ON 17 APRIL**

#### **Morning session – Beverley Evans, DIAC**

The guest speaker at the PADAN meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> April was Beverley Evans, the Manager of DIAC, who updated members on how DIAC is delivering services since it became part of the Advice Plymouth drop-in service at Plymouth Guild. She also drew attention to a change to advocacy services since April, when the council contract for advocacy services that were

delivered by the Guild has been awarded jointly to three organisations, Plymouth Highbury Trust, the Royal Association for Deaf People (RAD), and an organisation called SEAP, the initials of which stand for 'Support, Empower, Advocate, Promote'. Members expressed concerns about how the loss of the advocacy services in the Guild and uncertainty about how the new organisation would support disabled people. As this is a very recent change it is not yet clear how it will affect disabled people in the coming months.

The Advice Plymouth drop-in service runs five days a week and times and contact details are at the end of this newsletter. SEAP's website address is:  
[www.seap.org.uk/local-authority/plymouth/html](http://www.seap.org.uk/local-authority/plymouth/html)  
[www.plymouth.gov.uk/advocacy](http://www.plymouth.gov.uk/advocacy)

#### **Afternoon session**

In the second part of the meeting the chair gave a report updating members about PADAN and a copy of the report is included with this mailing for those members who were unable to attend.

The Chair's report discussed the high turnover of trustees in the last 3 years mainly due to illness, and the consequent difficulty of maintaining sufficient trustees (who are also management group members) to be active in

PADAN. It was argued that a provision in the constitution to allow for a minority of non-disabled trustees will help strengthen the management group.

At the meeting it was agreed that an amendment to the constitution to allow for a minority of non-disabled trustees, should be put to members at the Annual General Meeting on 11 July 2015. The proposed amendment will change the percentage of disabled trustees from 100% to 70%, which would mean that non-disabled Associate Members could become a trustees

Meantime three full members have been co-opted as additional trustees, bring the current number to seven. (The minimum and maximum number is 5 and 12).

Regarding the role of Chair, it was accepted that the current role involved a lot of administrative work that is not currently in the 'job' description. It was agreed that it was important to review and change the role so that it could be more do-able for a successor to replace Ann Pointon who would not be continuing as chair beyond the end of this year.

Looking to the future the general discussion included the kind of services and projects that PADAN should be looking to in

seeking funding for next year. More ideas are needed and would be welcome.

Information about proposed changes at PADAN to help it move forward will be mailed later this month, along with booking forms, prior to the AGM, which will be the most important AGM so far for PADAN

**PADAN – Annual General meeting**  
**Saturday, 11 July, 10.30 – 1.00 pm - Warspite Room, Council House**

#### **Access Group recent activities**

The Council is supportive of PADAN continuing its Access Group's activities and so the maintenance of these activities will be part of PADAN's proposals for the future. The Chair's report attached shows the range of issues the group has been involved in over the last 12 months or so.

This included highlighting problems in the siting and layout of the facilities planned for the new Coach Hub in Mayflower Street West, which presents many more difficulties for disabled and elderly people with mobility impairments than Bretonside.

Small improvements have been accepted and are valuable.

Nevertheless the development as a whole was given planning permission.

Because we are approached regularly to give comments arising from PADAN members' from experience of disability on planned, we have felt it important to try and develop members' awareness of access problems affecting those with different impairments to their own, and to develop some auditing skills.

With the DisabledGo project funding in 2013 and 2014, PADAN ran two 2-day Access Courses and one 1-day course. The enjoyable and informative courses were led by Access Consultant Paulette Furnival. Members can become more helpful and informed in discussions with planners if they are familiar with common access problems and with plans presented by architects and developers.

**NEXT ACCESS GROUP MEETING**  
**5<sup>th</sup> June, 10.45 am to 12.45 pm**  
**Frobisher Room, the Council House**  
**Main item – new library Armada Way/Mayflower Street**

The next Access Group meeting will be held on 5<sup>th</sup> June in the Frobisher Room in the Council House. The main item on the Agenda will be a presentation by

council officer Chris Coldwell on the plans to relocate the Central Library services to a site on the corner of Armada Way and Mayflower Street. Library facilities from this site will replace the main library while it is closed from later next year as part of the big Heritage Centre Development.

The group has been meeting every six weeks or so, but has now has already outgrown the free meeting room provided at Plymouth Guild, so we have had to start seeking alternative venues.

Please note, however, that since the booking which was made for us by our Councillor Representative, Cllr Mary Aspinall, we have been told that it might be affected by noise from building works in the basement of the Council House. [Note: These works will continue over the summer, but as our Annual General Meeting is being held on a Saturday morning we are checking and hoping this should be noise free.]

The Access Group is an open meeting so members other than those regularly attending are welcome, but it would be helpful if you could let us know if you intend to come.

## NATIONAL NEWS

### Post-Election disability representation in parliament.

Some disability supporters are no longer in the House of Commons following the General Election, including Labour MP Dame Ann Begg a wheelchair user who represented Aberdeen and lost her seat. She was chair of the Commons work and pensions committee. Lib Dem Stephen Lloyd, vice chair of various disability related all-party disability committees also lost his seat, and high profile David Blunkett decided to retire so did not stand for re-election.

Under the coalition the turnover of the post of Minister for Disabled People has been high, with the Disability News Service noting that post-holders have changed five times in five years.

The newest appointment as Minister for Disabled People is Justin Tomlinson who is to be a junior minister, unlike Mike Penning and his successor Mark Harper who were both Ministers of State. This is perceived to be a downgrading of the post. Not only did Kate Green, Labour's shadow minister, comment that the downgraded role calls into question the importance the Prime Minister gives to the interests of disabled people, but

others have commented on Mr Tomlinson's negative voting record on disability which includes voting for the bedroom tax and against adding exclusions, and against halting further spending and welfare cuts. Given the unknown spending cuts to come from the government's unallocated £11 billion, it is difficult to see him being a defensive supporter of disabled people in whatever new cuts are proposed.

[www.disabilitynewsservice.com](http://www.disabilitynewsservice.com)

### From Atos to Maximus

In March the company Maximus took over delivering the much criticized Work Capability Assessments from Atos, who voluntarily gave up the contract. Maximus will take over, using the same premises as Atos but apparently will be paid more than double the Atos contract.

DPAC (Disabled People Against the Cuts) says very little is expected to change with this transfer to another large private company and calls for the Work Capability Assessment to be scrapped and benefit tests to be brought back within the public sector.

<http://dpac.net>



## PLYMOUTH JUNE EVENTS

### **GRAEAE THEATRE COMPANY co-production with the Theatre Royal**

“The Solid Life of Water”

Monday, 8 June to 13 June - The  
Drum

All 6 nights start at 7.45 pm

Full price £14.70, all concessions  
£10.70, including 70p booking  
fee for bookings made on-line.

Access (amended info from first  
issue of newsletter):

Although we understand the  
Drum’s backstage facilities for  
disabled artists were improved  
as part of the Theatre Royal  
refurbishment, access for  
wheelchair using patrons is  
different depending on the  
production. For this production,  
audience access is only on the  
first floor level (Gate 8) reached  
via the main lift in the foyer.  
Although the lift itself has been  
enlarged the concrete supports  
each side of the entrance to the  
lift are a fixed part of the theatre  
structure and could not be  
widened. On this first floor level  
there are only two wheelchair  
spaces at the back of the  
auditorium.

Note: There is a now a new  
rehearsal/creative activity area  
called ‘The Lab’ in the basement  
which is accessed via a platform  
lift at the Drum end of the  
theatre.

### **FUNKY LLAMA FESTIVAL Saturday 13 June 2 pm – 11 pm – The Hoe**

Funky Llama is a Theatre Royal  
project to promote learning  
disabled artists and creative  
activities with all events planned  
by and for adult learning disabled  
people.

Access:

Additional blue badge parking at  
Elliot Street end of the Hoe  
Additional 5-10 accessible WCs  
including hoist facilities within the  
fenced festival site - one block  
near the entrance, one back  
stage and another on the far side  
of the site.

Wheelchair spaces for spectators  
and 3 marquees with seating  
available.

### **ARMED FORCES DAY Saturday, 27 June, the Hoe 9.30 to 5 pm, music programme 5 pm to 10 pm**

A full programme of activities for  
Armed Forces Day is on the  
[www.visitplymouth.co.uk](http://www.visitplymouth.co.uk) site

Access:

The closure of Hoe Road from  
the Mound at the Citadel to the  
junction of Madeira Road will be  
closed from 7 am to 3 pm which  
affects blue badge parking.

Blue badge parking – none at the  
Hoe. Provision has been made  
for disabled parking at Ballard  
House – 50 spaces on a first

come first served basis and a Citybus shuttle service is being provided. The shuttle bus runs from 9 am, to 5.35 pm which is the last bus from the Hoe.

Four additional accessible toilets will be provided in the Hoe area.

We will send further updates as they become available.

Information on the [www.visitplymouth.co.uk](http://www.visitplymouth.co.uk) website includes a map with the location of Ballard House in West Hoe and a bus timetable. Please contact PADAN if you don't have access to the internet and would like a programme, map and timetable.

**Royal Naval Volunteer Band Association Festival**  
**Sunday, 28 June, 9 am to 4.30**  
Ten Royal Naval Bands will perform

Limited blue badge parking on the Hoe via Elliot Street from 9 to 5 pm

### Useful addresses and websites

#### Advice Plymouth

Ernest English House  
Buckwell Street, PL1 2DA  
Drop in service – open Mon-Tues-Weds 9 am to 6 pm, Thurs and Fri 9 am to 5 pm  
Phone 03444 111 444 (local rate) from 8 am to 8 pm Mon-Fri, and 8 am-1 pm Saturday.

#### **[www.disabledgo.com](http://www.disabledgo.com)**

The Plymouth section has access details for several hundred Plymouth venues

#### **[www.disabilitynewsservice.com](http://www.disabilitynewsservice.com)**

#### **[www.disabilitynow.com](http://www.disabilitynow.com)**

On line general magazine

#### **[www.depac.net](http://www.depac.net)**

(Disabled people against the cuts)

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