



UK SPORTS ASSOCIATION For People with Learning Disability

NEWS RELEASE

- For Immediate Release -

Equality and Human Rights Commission is prepared to use its Legal Powers to overturn International Paralympic Committee Ban for the 2012 Paralympic Games

The Equality and Human Rights Commission have unequivocally stated their support for the removal of the International Paralympic Committee ban on people with learning disability competing at the London 2012 Paralympic Games.

Speaking recently on BBC Radio 4 ⁽¹⁾, Liz Sayce, member of the Equality and Human Rights Commission's disability committee stated "I think The Youth Sports Trust decision to now include children with learning disability in the UK School Games as a result of the Commission's intervention, exerts pressure on the 2012 London Organising Committee ⁽²⁾ and the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) to include people with learning disability in the 2012 Games" She went on to say "We hope a resolution will be reached without resorting to legal action, but if necessary the Commission will consider using its legal powers to ensure the removal of the ban. The Commission will be looking at the point when the Games are handed to LOCOG from Beijing".

The ban on athletes with learning disability was imposed by the IPC following an incident at the Sydney Paralympic Games in 2000 when a group of adult non-disabled athletes infiltrated the Spanish learning disability basketball team. The IPC banned every athlete with learning disability across the world from competing at future Paralympics and IPC sanctioned competitions as a result. This has had the additional impact of funding being stopped across the UK and some athletes not having the financial means to continue in their sport.

The UK Sports Association for People with Learning Disability ⁽³⁾, working with its members and other organisations across the UK, has been leading a campaign since 2001 for the ban to be lifted.

Bernard Atha CBE, Chairman of the UK Sports Association, the British Paralympic Association and formerly a member of the IPC said: "This discrimination is immoral and unlawful. It is contrary to the constitution of the International Paralympic Committee. It strikes at one of the most vulnerable groups in our society. If Athens and Beijing have not had the courage or moral conviction to say "No Paralympics until this ban is removed" then the UK must have that courage and conviction."

On hearing the comments from the Commission, Craig Moate ⁽⁴⁾, a swimmer on the Great Britain (Learning Disability) Team said "It's good. My dream is the Paralympics". His father, Doug Moate added "We support anything that will help make Craig's dream a reality. This is his final ambition – it's the only thing left. Craig already has World, European and British titles – this is the one that he wants and dreams of and for it to be in the UK is a bonus. We really want our own Government and Organising Committee to say no to the ban – surely our own Country will help us so this won't carry on?"

The International Paralympic Committee (IPC) has recently agreed to the International Sports Federation (INAS-FID) ⁽⁵⁾ request to re-establish a Working Party to establish how and when athletes with learning disability will be re-admitted. There will be no programme for athletes with intellectual disability in 2008 Paralympics in Beijing. The decision on London 2012 remains uncertain.

ENDS

18 February 2008

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NOTES TO EDITOR

1. Radio 4 Broadcast, "You and Yours", Thursday 7th February 2008.
2. London Organising Committee of the Olympic & Paralympic Games (LOCOG). For the first time there is just one Organising Committee for both the Olympic and the Paralympic Games.
3. The UK Sports Association for People with Learning Disability is the disability specific National Governing Body in the UK for sport and people with learning disability. UKSA is a national umbrella charity that co-ordinates and promotes sport and recreation for all people with learning disability across the UK. UKSA is recognised by UK Sport and is the official Great Britain member of the International Sports Federation for Persons with Intellectual Disability (INAS-FID), a member of IPC.

UKSA has since Sydney 2000 been working with the British Paralympic Association, INAS-FID and other agencies, plus throughout 2007 with the former Disability Rights Commission to have the ban removed. Mencap as member of

UKSA represents sport in England with the other three nations in membership being Scottish Disability Sport, Welsh Sports Association for People with Learning Disability and Disability Sport Northern Ireland. All are working together through UKSA to ensure that this group of athletes compete in the Paralympic Games.

4. Craig Moate, a swimmer from Barking, Essex, has represented Great Britain at INAS-FID competition on a number of occasions. We have further details available on his achievements and swimming career and how the continued ban has impacted on this. Other athletes, families and coaches are willing to speak to journalists and can be contacted through the UK Sports Association for People with Learning Disability
5. INAS-FID, the International Sports Federation for Persons with Intellectual Disability. Founded in 1986, is a member of the International Paralympic Committee and is the body responsible for the international competition for athletes with intellectual disability. See www.inas-fid.org