

# UK SPORTS ASSOCIATION For People with Learning Disability

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## PRESS RELEASE

### **“OUTRAGE AT IPC EXCLUSION OF ATHLETES WITH LEARNING DISABILITY FROM 2008 BEIJING PARALYMPICS AND IPC SANCTIONED EVENTS”**

Issued 27 June 2006

Surprised and outraged, the UK Sports Association (UKSA) rejects the decision by the International Paralympic Committee to exclude athletes with learning disability from Beijing in 2008 and all IPC sanctioned events.

UKSA, its Home Country Associations, athletes, volunteers and professional staff have all contributed enormous time, effort and support to the on-going process between INAS-FID and IPC and are bitterly disappointed with this outcome.

The impact of such a far reaching decision on athletes with learning disability in the UK and throughout the INAS-FID membership cannot be overstated. Talented sports men and women with learning disability have had the opportunity to proudly represent Great Britain at Paralympic level taken away. Athletes, their Coaches and families are devastated by this result.

*“I just can’t believe it”* commented one athlete, *“we work so hard, have done so much already, its just wrong”*.

*“Reaction to this decision has been strong”,* comments Tracey McCillen, National Director UK Sports Association. *“Listening to the anger and disbelief of athletes, parents and coaches as they try to come to terms with this decision makes you understand just how tragic this situation really is. The UKSA Board of Directors need to digest and evaluate the full impact of the events of the past 2 days at their July meeting at which decisions will be taken on the most appropriate course of action to take.”*

Speaking earlier, Geoff Smedley, Vice President, INAS Europe and Chair of the GB Eligibility Committee said *“two generations of talent will miss the opportunity of competing at the Paralympic Games. For many London 2012 is just too far into the future – by the time we get to London, and assuming the situation changes, it will have been 12 long years since an athlete with learning disability had the opportunity to compete – surely by no-ones standards can this be seen as acceptable?”*

UKSA encourages the British Paralympic Association, other Disability Sports Organisations, National Paralympic Committee members, Sports Governing Bodies, the 2012 Organising Committee, Politicians and the British public to lend their support to GB athletes at this time.

The meeting of the UKSA Board of Directors will be convened in July to consider its position and together with its membership deliberate the future of learning disability sport and GB participation in international competition and determine an appropriate course of action to take on behalf of athletes with learning disability in the UK.

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For further information, contact Bernard Atha, President INAS-Europe & UK Sports Association on telephone 0113 2478328 or Tracey McCillen, UK Sports Association, Leroy House, 436 Essex Road, London N1 3QP. Tel: 07710 455 067 Email: [info@uksportsassociation.org](mailto:info@uksportsassociation.org)

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#### NOTES TO EDITOR

1. The UK Sports Association for People with Learning Disability (UKSA or UKSAPLD) is the national body that co-ordinates sport for people with learning disability in the UK and is the official GB representative on INAS-FID for athletes with learning disability.
2. Photographs and athletes interviews may be arranged by contacting the above.
3. Scottish Disability Sport, Mencap Sport, Welsh Sports Association for People with Learning Disability and Disability Sport Northern Ireland are members of UKSAPLD.
4. INAS-FID is the Intellectual Sports Federation for Persons with Intellectual Disability. INAS-FID, founded in 1986, is the body representing athletes at international level and is a member of the International Paralympic Committee. INAS-FID is the world representative for athletes with intellectual disability. See further information at [www.inas-fid.org](http://www.inas-fid.org)
5. A full detailed report of the events leading to the IPC ban is available on the INAS-FID website at [www.inas-fid.org](http://www.inas-fid.org) together with details of the full submission of previous submissions to IPC.
6. Athletes with learning disability have been excluded from International Paralympic Committee events and the Paralympic Games, since Sydney 2000.