



## **UK SPORTS ASSOCIATION For People with Learning Disability**

### **NEWS RELEASE**

- For Immediate Release, 6 March 2009 -

## **2009 UK School Games Open to Swimmers with Learning Disability**

Swimming events for young athletes with learning disability at the UK School Games are set to open up for the first time, following an agreement reached between the Youth Sport Trust, British Swimming and the UK Sports Association for People with Learning Disability.

The Youth Sport Trust announced this week that athletes with learning disability (S14 disability category) will be eligible to compete in swimming at the 2009 UK School Games. S14 competitors must have an INAS-FID classification and will be eligible for selection by their respective team within the multi disability events.

*“This is a significant development and illustrates the positive change in attitude to sport for athletes with learning disability,”* comments Tracey McCillen, National Director, UK Sports Association for People with Learning Disability. *“I am grateful for the commitment from the Youth Sport Trust and Governing Bodies in Swimming and Table Tennis to reach this point; but it doesn’t stop here as there is still much more work to be done to ensure our athletes have the same opportunities in other sports events across the UK as well as access to funding to support them on this competitive pathway.”*

Following a nationwide campaign in 2008, table tennis was the first event to be included in the UK School Games for athletes with learning disability, but on an exhibition basis, which will be repeated in 2009. Discussions continue regarding the 2009 athletics event.

The UK Sports Association for People with Learning Disability will continue to work with its Member Organisations, the Youth Sports Trust and Sports Governing Bodies to ensure there are clear competitive pathways for young athletes with learning disability to access the UK School Games and other opportunities on the sports performance pathway.

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The UK School Games is a competitive event for young athletes of school age from across the UK. The event is scheduled for 3<sup>rd</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> September 2009 in Cardiff. It aims to provide talented young sports people with the opportunity to compete in an event which aims to mirror the experience of competing at a major multi-sport event such as the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

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6<sup>th</sup> March 2009

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#### NOTES TO EDITOR

1. The UK Sports Association for People with Learning Disability (UKSA) is the disability specific Governing Body in the UK for sport and people with learning disability. UKSA is an umbrella body and facilitates and supports talented sports people with learning disability in the UK to train, compete and excel in national and international sport and is the body responsible for classification of athletes with learning disability from 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. See [www.uksportsassociation.org](http://www.uksportsassociation.org)
2. The full Youth Sport Trust Statement can be read at <http://www.ukschoolgames.com/862.php>
3. Athletes with learning disability were excluded from all UK School Games events until 2008. Campaigning by sports and disability organisations, including the UK Sports Association for People with Learning Disability, its members and the Equality and Human Rights Commission promoted change.
4. The ban on athletes with learning disability competing in the Paralympic Games 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 funding has stopped across the UK and some athletes do not have the financial means to continue in their sport. UKSA has since Sydney 2000 been working with its member organisations, the British Paralympic Association, INAS-FID and other agencies, including RADAR and the Equality and Human Rights Commission to have the IPC ban removed.
5. Learning Disability is a term used in the UK, with intellectual disability being used internationally. Both refer to the same group of athletes.