



UK SPORTS ASSOCIATION For People with Learning Disability

Response from The UK Sports Association for People with Learning Disability to the Joint Statement on the Re-Inclusion of Athletes with Intellectual Disability in the Paralympic Games

The UK Sports Association welcomes most positively the joint statement of INAS-FID and IPC which declares a commitment to bring an end to the long standing discriminatory ban on athletes with an intellectual disability.

Very positive is the agreement to admit athletes with intellectual disability into regional and world competitions in 2009 for which the IPC should be congratulated on this indication of good faith.

However the statement that "*the inclusion of athletes with an intellectual disability in London and beyond remains a viable and reasonable objective*" falls far short of a commitment that they will be in the London 2012 Paralympics and can only be seen as disappointing after eight years of discussion.

We call upon the Prime Minister, the London 2012 Organising Committee, the Secretary of State and the Mayor of London, to declare unequivocally that athletes with intellectual disability must be included in the Paralympics in London 2012. Not to so insist would be in contempt of this country's discrimination and human rights legislation.

The message must go to the IPC Board: "Athletes with intellectual disability must be included in 2012 and that announcement should be made now."

This message would be the very best encouragement for the IPC to conclude successfully its work on removing the ban and would remove any residual doubts about the future inclusion of athletes with intellectual disability in the Paralympic Games.

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NOTES TO EDITOR

1. 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 non-disabled adults cheated by competing in the Spanish learning disability basketball team claiming to be athletes with intellectual disability. This cheating was made possible by the then President of INAS-FID who immediately following the Sydney Games was removed by the membership of INAS-FID.

The IPC banned every athlete with intellectual disability across the world from competing at future Paralympics and IPC sanctioned competitions as a result.

Since then INAS-FID reviewed its eligibility criteria and method of registration and produced a most rigorous procedure to prevent the possibility of further cheating which the IPC has refused to accept.

The impact of the ban has been far reaching. In many countries, including Great Britain funding has stopped to both representative organisations and the athletes themselves. Athletes do not have the financial means to continue in their sport and are forced to pay vast sums of money to compete and represent Great Britain.

UK athletes have been ejected, completely excluded or limited from competing and accessing various sporting competitions and schemes across the UK including the UK School Games. Grant Aid to the UK Sports Association has declined over the years and UKSA is now operating under very severe financial pressure due to the continued IPC ban. Athletes with intellectual disability were excluded from the Paralympic Games in Athens and Beijing.

2. Learning Disability is a term used in the UK, with intellectual disability being used internationally. Both refer to the same group of athletes.
3. The UK Sports Association for People with Learning Disability (UKSA) is the only portal through which athletes with intellectual disability can compete in elite international competition. It 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. Its members are Scottish Disability Sport, Welsh Sports Association for People with Learning Disability, Disability Sports Northern Ireland and Mencap Sport in England. All are working together to ensure that this group of athletes compete in the Paralympic Games. See www.uksportsassociation.org
4. UKSA has since Sydney 2000, been leading a campaign for the re-inclusion of athletes with intellectual disability into the Paralympic Games and has been working with its member organisations, The British Paralympics Association, RADAR, the Equality and Human Rights Commission and other agencies to have the IPC ban removed.
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
6. INAS-FID competition is quite different from opportunities within Special Olympics. INAS-FID is about performance, gold, silver and bronze. Special Olympics focus on participation.