

Newsletter
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Wel come to the Mencap Sport quarterly Newsletter. In each issue, we will bring you all the latest news and competition information.

Paralympic exclusion ends

On 21 November, the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) voted to re-include events for athletes with a learning disability in the Paralympic Games, following a 9 year absence.

The ruling means that UK athletes can finally dream of competing on home soil in London 2012.

The decision was made following a successful two-year collaboration between INAS - the International Federation for Intellectual Disability Sport - the IPC, and the scientific community, who have developed an eligibility system that meets the requirements of the IPC Classification Code.

Speaking immediately after the ban, Tim Reddish - Chair of the British Paralympic Association - said 'We have lobbied hard for the re-inclusion of athletes with a learning disability, subject to a robust classification system and are delighted that IPC and INAS- FID have got us to that point. We believe in the power of sport to positively affect all people's lives and we advocate the involvement of as many people as possible across all disabilities in sport'. Story continues on Page 2.

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2012 a reality for athletes with a learning disability

After missing Athens 2004 and Beijing 2008, athletes with a learning disability can now begin their preparations for London 2012 following the decision at the IPC General Assembly to re-instate events in the Paralympic programme.



The classification was dropped following an incident of cheating at the 2000 Paralympics in Sydney. Various attempts to re-instate the events were made between 2000 and 2006, but it was only in 2007, under the leadership of Dr Bob Price and the involvement of Mencap, that significant progress was made. A joint working group was set up between INAS and IPC to develop a robust system of classification.

The group were supported by a large scientific research project involving a number of universities from around the world, which culminated in a research project held during the 2008 INAS Global Games in Czech Republic. The data from this, and other research opportunities, have enabled sufficient progress to be made to secure re-inclusion, though it is acknowledged by INAS and IPC that the project will not be fully complete until summer 2010.

The sports of Athletics, Swimming, Table Tennis and Rowing have been short-listed for inclusion, and the final decision will be made upon completion of the research. It has also been confirmed that the slots available for athletes with a learning disability are in addition to those already allocated to other classifications, and re-inclusion will not lead to a reduction in athletes from other classes.

Bob Price (pictured), President of INAS-FID, said: "Naturally, I am delighted with the outcome of the vote. Even though they themselves did nothing wrong, for nine years since Sydney 2000, intellectually disabled athletes have been excluded from the Paralympic Games and other IPC sanctioned competitions".



"This resolution brings this unfortunate episode to an end and re-introduces ID athletes to their proper place within the Paralympic family. I am hugely grateful to the Joint Working Group and its associated research teams and I look forward to seeing ID athletes competing on the world's stage in London in 2012,"

UK Sport responded by earmarking additional funding for UK Governing Bodies, to ensure athletes can be selected to Paralympic training programmes.

“Time for sports organisations to act”

Mencap Sport has called upon sports organisations to renew their support for athletes with a learning disability.

Nick Parr, National Sport Manager said “9 years of exclusion from the Paralympic programme impacted upon all levels of sport. The decision should encourage all organisations to ensure that young people with a learning disability have an opportunity to get involved in sport, that talent identification programmes are in place to help athletes progress, and support is in place to give elite athletes with a learning disability the opportunity to compete at the very highest level”.

Mencap Sport can provide advice and training on issues including the inclusion of people with a learning disability in sport or understanding the classification process, and can support County Sport Partnerships and Governing Bodies identify the pathways and competitions that are open to athletes.

Mencap Sport has supported athletes throughout the exclusion, and English athletes have enjoyed incredible success in INAS competition together with their colleagues from around the UK, but this has been without the support of many National Governing Bodies of Sport and with no government funding.

Athletes such as Clare Ryan from Bradford (pictured) have represented GB on a number of occasions, but the task of raising funding and sponsorship to train and compete at an international level is a huge task and one that turns many away from sport.



On hearing the decision, Claire said “It’s absolutely amazing, I couldn’t believe it. Competition is so important - I feel more mature. When I came into the team I was very nervous and shy. But since then, I can do almost anything – anything!”

Mark Goldring, Mencap’s chief executive, said: “Everyone at Mencap is delighted that after years of campaigning, athletes with a learning disability will no longer be excluded from the Paralympic Games”

“However without immediate funding, British athletes will remain excluded from London 2012 despite the ban being lifted. This would be a national embarrassment.”

Details of the new classification process

Athletes with a learning disability face limitations in cognitive or intellectual functioning areas such as reasoning, working memory and learning, visual-spatial perception, reaction time and processing speed, attention and concentration, and executive function. These components can jointly be referred to as 'sports intelligence'.

The new eligibility process is a 2-step process - assessing the primary eligibility criteria and then introducing new sports-specific criteria. This ensures that an athlete's impairment is relevant to sport performance, minimizing the impact of the impairment on the outcome of competition.

Step 1: An athlete who wants to apply for classification as an athlete with a learning disability must submit an 'Eligibility Application' to Mencap Sport using the documents available at www.mencap.org.uk/sport. This will include providing evidence to support the primary eligibility criteria, namely:

- IQ-measure of 75 or below
- Significant limitations in adaptive behaviour
- Age of onset before 18 years

The application will be submitted to INAS where it will be considered by at least 3 members of the new INAS Eligibility Committee. If the athlete is found 'Eligible' they will be allowed to proceed to step 2 of the assessment process (see below).

INAS will publish a Classification Master List at www.inas-fid.org. This list includes the names of all athletes who successfully passed Step 1 of the process.

Step 2: Only after successful completion of step 1 will the athlete proceed to on-site (sport-specific) testing. The on-site testing will focus on the 'sports intelligence' factors relevant to that particular sport such as reasoning, reaction time, visual-spatial abilities and working memory. Assessment will usually take place before an international competition, as in other classes.

The scores will be evaluated against sport-specific minimal disability scores and the athlete will be allocated a sport class. Failure to meet the sport-specific minimal disability scores will lead to allocation of sport class 'In-eligibility to Compete'.

Finally, assessment of the athlete in competition will be used to complement the assessment.

Further information

For further information about the testing procedures please visit the Mencap Sport website at www.mencap.org.uk/sport or www.inas-fid.org

National Classification

During 2008, the UK Sports Association trialled a new national classification system for athletes with a learning disability. The purpose of the national system is to allow athletes to begin the process of classification without the expense of a full international classification. It also ensures that competition is fair and equitable.

The International Classification Process described above is only required for international competition, including INAS and IPC events, or events designated as 'international qualifiers'.

At this time, there are no proposed changes to the current national classification process, though Mencap Sport and its UK partners will continue to monitor the implication of changes at an international level.

The IPC decision however means that an increased number of competitions will now be open to athletes with a learning disability and it is important that athletes, schools and clubs consider the need for classification.

Mencap Sport runs a number of Classification Assessment days each year and can arrange for classifiers to visit schools and clubs, where sufficient numbers of athletes require classification for competition.

We will prioritise athletes entering Mencap Sport events including the National Athletics Championships, British Swimming Championships and National Table Tennis Championships, DSE Open Athletics, DSE Junior Athletics and DSE Junior and Short Course Swimming Championships. We will also be working with National Governing Bodies of sport to determine the classification requirements for the UK School Games and other NGB events.

We would urge any governing body, county sport partnership or DSE regional event organiser to liaise with us when publishing event information to clarify the classification requirements.

For further information, visit www.mencap.org.uk/sport

Mencap Sport supports local sports events

Last autumn, Mencap Sport offered grants to local groups and organisations to develop new sports events and competitions.

Although we did not receive a large number of applications, we made grants to a number of exciting new projects.

1. A Boccia Tournament in Sutton

Boccia is a ball game for all disabled athletes and is played on a court divided into six rectangular throwing boxes. The game can be played by individuals, pairs or teams of three. The aim of the game is to get the ball as close to the jack as possible. Boccia is also a Paralympic Sport. Three players are in each team and ten teams took part.



2. Serious About Sport

A free sports event held in London on 7 June - The event had information stands, held taster sessions in various sports activities and Special Olympic athletes put on a display. Between 400-500 people with a learning disability, their families and carers benefited from the day.



3. Sports Taster Fun Day in Bromley

40 young people with a learning disability aged 14-30 participated in trying out new sports such as rounders, boccia, short cricket and netball shooting.



4. Inter- Gateway Sports Tournament (Brockenhurst Gateway Club)

Members from 7 Gateway clubs in the area and around 120 people with a learning disability took part.



5. East Kent Fun Day

The event was attended by over 400 people and was a great success.

A total of **£3,195** has been awarded by the scheme to date and Mencap Sport is considering the potential to repeat the grant scheme in 2010. We would like to congratulate everybody who participated in the scheme and welcome your feedback and ideas for its future. We would also like to thank the Evan Cornish Foundation and the Renton Foundation for their support.

Medal Success at INAS Global Games



Great Britain athletes returned from the 2nd Global Games with 8 gold, 9 silver and 7 bronze medals, together with 1 world record and a number of personal bests.

The team of 25 athletes finished 5th in the overall medal table after a challenging 10 days in Liberec, Czech Republic.

Exceptional individual performances from sprinters Allan Stuart (Glasgow) and Monique Davis (Croydon), together with swimmers Dan Pepper (Poynton) and Craig Moate (Barking) resulted in individual gold, whilst men's relay swim teams including Pepper and Moate, with Craig Rodgie (Fife), Ben Procter (Newquay) and Nick Boylan (Ashford) resulted in two additional gold medals and a new world record for Team GB in the 4 x 100 medley.



Verona Elder, Chef de Mission comments, "It was a tough event but our team have worked hard and been exceptional ambassadors for Great Britain. There were loads of personal bests and even though this was one of the smallest British Teams we've had, we've still brought home a significant number of medals".

The event was particularly important as it was used to test the new systems developed by INAS and IPC to manage athlete eligibility and classification. A team of more than 30 researchers were in Liberec throughout the competition conducting a series of tests, whilst presentations were made by Nick Parr (Mencap National Sport Manager) and Peter Van De Vliet (IPC Medical Officer) on the future of the system.

Swimmers crowned European Champions

7 swimmers with a learning disability were recently selected by British Swimming as part of the GB squad competing at the IPC European Swimming Championships in Iceland.



Dan Pepper, Ben Procter, Amberley Hoar, Craig Rodgie, Steph Bird, Natalie Massey, and Nic Boylan - many of whom have been supported over the past 9 years by Mencap Sport - were part of the championship winning squad, collecting a total of 94 medals including 39 gold.

The event was the first IPC event to include athletes with a learning disability in a number of years, and was used to test



the classification procedures developed to permit re-inclusion in Paralympic competition.

Mencap Sport Training

One of the biggest barriers to the inclusion of people with a learning disability in sport and leisure is the lack of training and education available to sports organisation, coaches, staff and volunteers.



Mencap Sport training has been developed to help overcome this barrier.

Cheryl Patrick, Training Officer, explained "The course helps people to look at the way they work, their policies and practices to help them become more accessible to people with a learning disability. Information about the pathways in sport, coaching techniques and classification - which can often be confusing - will help organisations to be more inclusive and welcoming to people with a learning disability".

More information, including booking forms, can be found on the [Mencap Sport website](http://www.mencap.org.uk/sport).

Mencap Sport Email News

Sometimes we send out information about events and competitions by email. If you would like to be added to the mailing list then email us at sport@mencap.org.uk putting the words 'mailing list' in the subject line.



Mencap Sport website

The Mencap Sport website has up to date news, competition entry forms, classification forms, advice and information for anyone interested in learning disability sport.



You can find the site at www.mencap.org.uk/sport

Facebook site

For the latest news, ideas and to share your experiences in learning disability sport, become a friend on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/mencap)!



2010 Calendar

The 2010 sports calendar, which features key events for athletes with a learning disability, is now available online at www.mencap.org.uk/sport

