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NEW LEGACY PROMISE PUTS DISABLED PEOPLE AT THE HEART OF LONDON 2012

The London 2012 Paralympic Games are a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to challenge perceptions of disability and transform the lives of ten million disabled people across the UK, delegates at the Office for Disability Issues annual event will be told today.

With exactly 1,000 days to go until the 2012 Paralympics begin and on International Day of Disabled People, the Government will outline its commitment to delivering a Disability Legacy from the London Games that will bring about lasting change to the life experiences of disabled people.

Tessa Jowell, Minister for the Olympics and Paralympics, said:

“In just one thousand days some of the world’s greatest and most inspirational athletes will be in the UK to participate in the biggest ever Paralympic Games.

“But this is more than just an elite sporting event - it is a chance to challenge society’s perceptions of disabled people. That is why we have put disabled people at the heart of our legacy ambitions. We want to break down barriers to inclusion and participation in areas such as business and sport, helping to accelerate change that will transform disabled people’s lives.”

Jonathan Shaw, Minister for Disabled People, said:

"It is vital that disabled people benefit from the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity presented by the Games. It's the opportunity to make a real and lasting change, to showcase disabled people's talents, not just in the sporting field, but through employment, through positive role models and through the 2012 disability arts

programme. Such a legacy will live past 2012 and take us towards our vision of disability equality by 2025."

In the spring the Government will publish the Disability Legacy promise which will focus on three areas: increased sports participation, improved business services for disabled people and changing attitudes particularly through inclusion.

New research published ahead of the event by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and Office for Disability Issues (ODI) shows that this approach is supported by 90 per cent of disabled people who feel that it is important the Games yielded long-term benefits for disabled people. Three in four disabled people agreed the long-term benefits should be wider than sport.

Of the 665 disabled people questioned, nine out of 10 believed that it is important that spin-off benefits for them from 2012 should be:

- more access to sport and physical activity;
- good access to Games-time facilities; and
- initiatives to promote a positive understanding of disability.

Work to improve sports provision for disabled people is already underway. This includes Sport England's Sport Unlimited Programme which numbers among its aims opening up opportunities for disabled children to take part in sport.

To mark 1,000 days to go to the Paralympics, Sports Minister, Gerry Sutcliffe, will today be visiting the Vale, a school for 80 young disabled people from the London boroughs of Haringey, Enfield, Hackney and Islington, to see a Sport Unlimited project in action.

At the Vale's site for primary school children, part of the Lancasterian Primary School, he will see coaches from the Tottenham Hotspur Foundation, including Danny Jarvis who himself has cerebral palsy and uses a powered wheelchair, helping young people who do not regularly play sport outside their time at school.

Gerry Sutcliffe said:

“Sport for all has to be much more than just a slogan. Schemes like Sport Unlimited are helping to make it a reality, encouraging young disabled people to see how sport can be fun, healthy and rewarding – all in all, a valuable part of their lives.”

As part of the celebrations to mark 1,000 days to go to the beginning of the Paralympic Games, LOCOG will be launching their Paralympic Pictograms representing each of the Paralympic sports. UK Sport, the English Institute of Sport, and the British Paralympic Association will also be launching a nationwide recruitment drive to find ‘last-minute talent’ – disabled people who think they might have what it takes to be a champion at the Games.

Notes to Editors

1. Work has been carried out across government looking at existing and new initiatives that would meet the vision for a legacy from the Games. The programme identifies three areas in which the Games will act as a powerful catalyst for change:
 - Business –using the Games to establish new standards for services, facilities and opportunities that businesses and public bodies offer to disabled people.
 - Sport –boosting the participation of disabled people in sport and activity.
 - Perceptions –promoting the inclusion and positive perceptions of disabled people in society.
2. The new legacy promise has been created for disability issues and a full report on what the government and the Olympic family will deliver will be produced in Spring 2010.
3. Survey work for the London 2012 Legacy Research 2009 was carried out between 14 October and 7 November by Continental Research, questioning 665 disabled people aged 16 years and over. The findings are available at <http://www.culture.gov.uk/images/publications/011209finaldisabilityreport.pdf>. The full report, questioning over 3,000 people will be published on 17 December.
4. The Office for Disability Issues is working towards equality for disabled people by 2025. Find out more about the ODI’s annual event at www.odi.gov.uk

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