[Home address – must be included]

[MP name and email address]

XXth November 2023

Dear [XXX MP]

I am writing to you as **one of your constituents and as a deaf athlete/insert any other relevant role or delete]**

**I am contacting you to invite you to support the campaign for fairness for deaf athletes being led by** **UK Deaf Sport**, the national governing body for all deaf sport in the UK at grassroots and elite level. We are asking the Government to end the discrimination against elite deaf athletes and fund and support them as they do Olympic and Paralympic athletes and support the DeaflympicsGB Team to compete at the Deaflympics. **I would be pleased to meet with you and the UK Deaf Sport Team to brief you on the campaign and how you can support us.**

There are currently 12 million adults in the UK who are [[1]](#footnote-1)deaf. **This equates to one in five adults** **in your constituency,** and there are also at least 50,000 deaf children. Although a substantial proportion of the population is deaf, the deaf community is one of the most inactive groups with 53% of deaf adults being inactive.

[Insert personal experience including sport activity and any activity in your home constituency e.g. ‘As a member of the deaf community…’ or delete]

Despite the UK having one of the best-funded talent and performance sport support systems in the world, with £612 million allocated every four years to Olympic and Paralympic sport through UK Sport, the current Government policy excludes deaf athletes from accessing it. There is currently no funding or support for elite deaf athletes. They/We must support ourselves and raise their/our own funding for every aspect of our training, equipment and competition. Deafness is the only disability Government do not fund at the elite sport level.

There is a common misconception that deaf athletes compete as part of the Paralympics when in reality, deaf athletes are not included in any of the Paralympic classifications, and so cannot compete unless they have another Paralympic disability. Instead, deaf athletes compete at the Deaflympics which is recognised by the International Olympic Committee on the same footing as the Olympics and Paralympics. The Deaflympics is 100 years old in 2024 and the next summer Deaflympics takes place in Tokyo in 2025. UK Deaf Sport select and manage the DeaflympicsGB Team.

The recent Government Sport Strategy stated that the Government want to support our most talented athletes to realise their full potential and committed £232 million to support Team GB’s preparations for Paris 2024 - unless they are deaf. Whilst we have welcomed the Government’s commitment to make all sports and physical activity “accessible, resilient, fun and fair”, we are disappointed that this new strategy, yet again, does not recognise deaf athletes and continues to exclude them from the performance sport system. This has a massively negative impact on deaf athletes’ ability to perform at the top level.

We are requesting that the Government invest £3 million into deaf sport and athletes over the next 4 years, just 0.5% of the current UK Sport budget, along with associated access to the expertise and opportunities which come with funding from UK Sport. This would fund the development of deaf talent pathways, training, coaching and wider support for elite deaf athletes and to send a strong, competitive DeaflympicsGB Team to Tokyo in 2025. This would be life-changing not only to deaf athletes who are able to benefit directly but to all deaf people providing role-models and opportunities at all levels.

Our deaf athletes recognise that funding is a privilege not a right, but they rightly do not comprehend the specific discrimination which sees other disabled athletes supported with hundreds of millions of pounds of funding whilst they receive no support at all. Nor can young deaf athletes see role models in the way other disabled children can.

Being deaf should not be a barrier to taking part in sport. At a time of increasing recognition in Government policy of the importance of tackling inequalities and inclusivity in sport and the low sport and physical activity participation rate in those who are deaf, UK Deaf Sport feel the time is right to readdress this funding anomaly and discrimination so that we are able to create strong and successful deaf athlete pathways that mirror their Olympic and Paralympic peers. Deaf athletes as role models on the world stage will inspire the deaf community to engage in sport and activity and gain the associated physical and mental health benefits.

I would welcome the opportunity to meet with you, alongside the UK Deaf Sport team, to brief you on our/their campaign and how you can support us/them. Please email [ukds@plmr.co.uk](mailto:ukds@plmr.co.uk) to arrange the meeting.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

[Your name]

1. UK Deaf Sport use the term ‘deaf’ to represent all people who are deaf, hard of hearing or have a hearing loss, whether this is acquired or from birth. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)