



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**27 October 2010**

## **OLYMPIANS FEAR IMPACT OF SCHOOL SPORT CUTS**

Olympic and Paralympic stars have expressed deep concerns over the dramatic cuts to school sport funding announced in the Comprehensive Spending Review [CSR] and fear they could have a detrimental impact on the health and wellbeing of the nation's young people.

The Department for Education (DfE) announced last Wednesday [20<sup>th</sup> October] it is axing the £162m investment in school sport from next year, which includes funding for a network of School Sport Partnerships across the country.

As School Sport Ambassadors for the Youth Sport Trust gold medallist sprinters Darren Campbell and Jason Gardener, heptathlon gold medallist Denise Lewis, badminton Olympic silver medallist Gail Emms, Olympic silver medallist sailor Joe Glanfield and Paralympic swimming gold medallist Sascha Kindred have formed a united front to oppose the cuts.

The 450 School Sport Partnerships are responsible for delivering sport and are tasked with raising levels of sports participation across every school in England. They have provided millions of hours of coaching, created thousands of new links between schools and clubs and introduced over a million more young people to competitive sport over the last three years.

**Jason Gardener, who won gold in the 4 X 100 metres at the 2004 Athens Olympics, said:**

"Over the last ten years we have seen such vast improvements in the standards of sport within our schools. There's increased numbers of young people taking part in sport, more young people competing in sport, and more taking on leadership and volunteering roles. It is critical that there is funding that can continue to sustain this progress."

**Darren Campbell, who was also part of the 4 X 100 gold medal winning team in Athens, added:**

"I regularly visit schools and see the most talented children now getting the support they need to develop their skills to be future champions. I see some of the most troubled teenagers having their lives transformed through sport, and I see the positive impact sport is having not just in PE but across the school curriculum. To cut funding now when such incredible results are being achieved is beyond belief."

**Denise Lewis, heptathlon gold medallist at the 2000 Sydney Olympics, said:**

“From the very young at primary level, right through to those who are in their last years at school, we must do all we can to ensure young people get the very best opportunities to take part in sport at school. The School Sport Partnership network is a vitally important structure we have in place to deliver this and it is producing some fantastic results that must continue.”

**Paralympic gold medallist swimmer, Sascha Kindred, added:**

“When I speak to young people about my Paralympic experiences you can see the excitement in their faces and enthusiasm they have towards sport. What we have in place is a school sport network that is allowing them to try new sports, develop through sport and support them to be the best they can be. Take this network away and there’s a significant risk to these opportunities being lost.”

**Badminton Olympic silver medallist Gail Emms is equally concerned:**

“With London 2012 just around the corner and a chance to develop a real, lasting sporting legacy, I find this funding cut extremely difficult to comprehend. The network of School Sport Partnerships is successfully delivering sport and inspiring our next generation of Olympians and Paralympians - to pull the rug from under them now and axe the funding is mind blowing.”

**Joe Glanfield, who won an Olympic silver medal in sailing at the 2008 Beijing Olympics, believes the School Sport Partnership network is crucial:**

“Many young people I meet during school visits have gained new confidence and self belief through the power of sport. This is happening in hundreds of schools across the country affecting millions of children - it is very concerning that the cuts to funding will hit the development of young people in such a devastating way.”

**ENDS**

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**Notes to Editors:**

Interview opportunities are available with Olympic gold medallist Jason Gardener on request.

**About the Youth Sport Trust**

The Youth Sport Trust is a charity established in 1994 to transform the lives of young people through PE and sport. Our mission is to improve both the quantity and quality of PE in schools and to inspire and engage all young people in sporting activity – whether it is to lead, coach, compete, play or volunteer. Find out more by visiting [www.youthsporttrust.org](http://www.youthsporttrust.org)

Jason Gardener, Darren Campbell, Denise Lewis, Sascha Kindred, Gail Emms and Joe Glanfield are School Sport Ambassadors for the Youth Sport Trust and visit schools across the country championing the importance of sport for young people.

**Some recent highlights of the Youth Sport Trust’s work:**

- **National School Sport Week:** Over 4 million young people and 14,000 schools took part in our National School Sport Week campaign in 2010, which uses the power of the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games to get more young people to do more sport.
- **Competition in schools:** through our work on increasing inter and intra school competition in schools, the latest School Sport Survey results (England only, Oct 10) show a 'very large increase' in the number of pupils participating in intra-school competition: up from 69% in 2008/09 to 78% in 2009/10.
- **UK School Games:** 1,500 of the UK's top young athletes took part in the UK School Games this summer. This is the pinnacle sporting competition for school-age athletes in the UK and is the result of our in-depth work with National Governing Bodies on pathways for young people to progress in competitive sport.
- **Sainsbury's TOP Activity:** our numerous programmes to increase participation in sport include Sainsbury's TOP Activity, which creates opportunities for sedentary youngsters to do alternative sports in out-of-school clubs. Over 1.7million youngsters have benefited from the clubs since their launch in 2005.
- **Creating young leaders and volunteers:**
  - through our projects over 80,000 young people have become directly involved in sports based leadership and volunteering over the last year alone.
  - Our Young Ambassadors initiative has recruited and trained 5,000 inspiring youngsters to be role models in their schools – their main aim to increase sports participation - since its inception in 2006.
- **Sky Sports Living for Sport:** Over 1,000 schools are now participating in our Sky Sports Living for Sport initiative, which uses elite athletes to mentor and inspire young people to make positive changes in their lives through sport.