

PREFACE

I am delighted to have been asked to introduce this history of the Special Olympics in Great Britain. Both my experience as a former special needs teacher and my role as Lord Mayor have convinced me that sport can bring so much to those with learning difficulties. We are committed to extending the benefits of sport to all groups in our community. The SOGB motto 'let me win but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt' sets an excellent example of how we all can strive to set and meet our personal goals and have fun in the process. This history shows for the first time how the Special Olympics National Summer Games has grown from quite small beginnings in 1982 in Knowsley, Liverpool, to become one of the largest sports events in Britain in terms of athlete participation.

This history of SOGB is the first part of a research project run by the City's two universities, De Montfort and Leicester University, to study the complex process of putting on the Games and their impact on all concerned: athletes, families, volunteers, organisers, sponsors and the general public. This history shows how much effort has already gone into using the four yearly National Summer Games to leave a positive legacy in terms of improved provision for those with learning disabilities and the public awareness of their needs and achievements. The way in which a group of dedicated individuals were gradually able to enlist the help of politicians, companies and celebrities to promote the cause of learning disability sport is an inspiring story.

All of us in Leicester look forward to welcoming everybody involved in this wonderful event to our diverse city and beautiful city in July 2009, where we pride ourselves on our commitment to breaking down barriers and creating an inclusive community. We are proud to be the first city to have the honour of hosting the Games twice. We invite you to celebrate the joys of sport with our SOGB athletes and to begin this journey by finding out more about the history of this remarkable organisation.

With very best wishes to our Special Olympics athletes, their coaches, and families, and everyone involved,

Councillor Manjula Sood
Lord Mayor of Leicester

March 2009