

BRIGHTON & HOVE – SOCIAL SERVICES – LEARNING DISABILITIES

Stevie Howse lifts council grant in aid of Britain's Special Olympics

Fundraising effort championed by Grace Eyre, a local charity supporting people with learning difficulties.

Power Lifter, Stevie Howse is one of 23 athletes from Brighton and Hove who will be participating in this year's Special Olympics 2009 – a national event to be held in Leicester from 25th to 31st July. The games takes place every four years and are organised by Special Olympics, Great Britain (www.sogb.org.uk) which is part of an international Special Olympics movement.

Stevie is a member of the Special Olympics Brighton and Hove sports club which has been formed to support people with learning difficulties in their on-going challenges for gaining universal access to sporting opportunities. He was featured on Meridian News on Thursday 12th March after receiving a grant from Brighton & Hove Council to support his training for the Special Olympics 2009.

Athletes with learning disabilities have been barred from the mainstream Paralympics competitions since accusations of cheating were made against a Spanish team at the Sydney Olympics in 2000. This issue is now being taken up by the Equalities and Human Rights Commission (www.equalityhumanrights.com) which has said; this is "one of the most important discrimination battles of this year".

"There is now a campaign to have this ruling reversed for the London 2012 Olympic Games," says Eva Jarvis, director of Grace Eyre (www.grace-eyre.org), a local charity supporting people with learning disabilities in Brighton & Hove, East Sussex and West Sussex.

"There are more learning disabled people in the world than any other disability. Fortunately, until things change we have the Special Olympics movement which will enable our athletes to continue to train and celebrate their sporting achievements."

"To do this we need to raise funding. The sports club has set a target of £21,000 to enable 23 athletes and eight coaches to attend the Leicester National Games. The club team will be represented in Power Lifting, Swimming, Golf, Ten Pin Bowling, Bowls and Football (Seagulls Special Team supported by Brighton & Hove Albion Football Club – www.seagulls.co.uk).

"As well as individual donors, we would also welcome sponsorship by any PR savvy companies or organisations that may recognise the business benefits of being associated with this venture," says Eva Jarvis.

Contacts

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