FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Commonwealth Sport announces GAPS Youth Camp to develop next generation of Para athletes ahead of Malta 2027

- Young Para athletes aged 14–18 and their coaches from across the Commonwealth will gather in Stellenbosch, South Africa, for a dedicated development camp in March 2027.
- Malta 2027 will feature the largest Para sport programme in Commonwealth Youth Games history, including the debut of Para swimming.
- Building on the success of Trinb ago 2023 and Glasgow 2026, GAPS aims to strengthen inclusive sporting pathways and create opportunities that extend beyond the Games.

Thursday 5 November 2026: With less than one year to go until the Malta 2027 Commonwealth Youth Games, Commonwealth Sport has announced a global GAPS Youth Camp, bringing together the next generation of Para athletes and coaches from across the Commonwealth.

Delivered in partnership with Stellenbosch University in South Africa, the camp will take place from **28 March to 4 April 2027**, and welcome young Para athletes aged 14–18 and their coaches for six days of specialised training, learning and development.

The camp forms part of Commonwealth Sport's wider commitment to creating more inclusive sporting pathways, particularly for young people with disabilities who face significant barriers to accessing coaching, facilities and competition opportunities.

As well as preparing athletes for Malta 2027, the programme aims to develop their confidence, skills and aspirations while strengthening the knowledge and capability of coaches to support Para sport development in their home countries.

The initiative builds on the success of the first GAPS Youth Camp, held ahead of the Trinbago 2023 Commonwealth Youth Games, which supported 17 athletes from seven nations.

At those Games, Nigeria's Destiny Agbo made history by winning the first Para sport medal awarded at a Commonwealth Youth Games in the Girls' Discus F42-44/F61-64.

Five other GAPS athletes also won medals, while four participants subsequently progressed to compete at Glasgow 2026, demonstrating the impact of sustained investment in young Para athletes.

Malta 2027 will represent another significant milestone for inclusive sport, featuring the largest Para sport programme in Commonwealth Youth Games history and introducing Para swimming for the first time.

Alongside sport-specific coaching and performance support, the Stellenbosch camp will offer Athlete Voice sessions, creating a supportive environment in which young athletes can share experiences, build connections, develop confidence and explore how they can make a positive difference through sport.

Additional regional GAPS activities are also planned to support athlete development, as well as access to classification and competition opportunities.

Katie Sadleir, Chief Executive Officer at Commonwealth Sport, said:

"The GAPS programme means a great deal to Commonwealth Sport, and we see its impact every time our athletes step up to compete at the highest level.

"GAPS is built on the belief that every athlete deserves the chance to compete without barriers and to shape their career through talent and determination.

"It was inspiring to see that in Glasgow our GAPS athletes performed brilliantly, alongside emerging athletes who had been part of the Youth GAPS programme three years earlier.

"We are delighted to support the next generation of young Para athletes on their journey towards Malta 2027, and we can't wait to see them shine."

Ellen Barwise, Director of Development and CGA Relationships at Commonwealth Sport, said:

"Our dream is a Commonwealth where every young person with a disability has the freedom to participate in sport, discover their potential and pursue their ambitions.

"Yet for too many young people, the greatest challenge is not a lack of talent or determination, but a lack of opportunity. Limited access to coaching, facilities and inclusive sporting pathways means that potential too often goes undiscovered.

"Through GAPS, we are working with our partners to change that. We believe lasting change comes from developing both the person and the environment around them. By supporting young athletes, strengthening the capabilities of their coaches and helping build more inclusive sporting pathways in their home countries, we are creating opportunities that extend well beyond the Games.

"Because every young person deserves the freedom to participate, the opportunity to belong and the chance to achieve their dreams."

Team England's Bebe Jackson, silver medallist in the Girls' Discus F42-44/F61-64 at the Trinbago 2023 Commonwealth Youth Games, said:

"The GAPS programme showed me that having a disability doesn't have to stop you from achieving your goals. It helped me grow in confidence, believe in myself more and realise what opportunities are out there for me as a Para athlete.

"Being able to travel to different countries, meet other athletes and compete internationally gave me experiences I might not have had otherwise. It also helped me feel more prepared for competing on a bigger stage and taught me to push myself outside my comfort zone.

"I'm really grateful for the opportunities the programme gave me and how it's helped me grow both in and out of sport."

Since 2018, more than 700 athletes and coaches have participated in GAPS camps. Through its international network of partners, the programme supports emerging Para athletes and coaches while helping to strengthen inclusive sporting environments and development pathways across the Commonwealth, aiming to create lasting change.

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Notes to Editors

About Commonwealth Sport

Commonwealth Sport is the organisation responsible for the direction and control of the Commonwealth Games and Commonwealth Youth Games, and for delivering the vision of the Commonwealth Sport Movement: "Our Commonwealth, united through sport".

Its mission is to deliver inspirational and impactful Games, excite and empower athletes and young people, and drive equality in sport and society across the Commonwealth.

Established in 1930, the Commonwealth Sport Movement brings together 74 nations and territories, representing a diverse Commonwealth community of more than 2.5 billion people.

About the Commonwealth Youth Games

First staged in Edinburgh in 2000, the Commonwealth Youth Games provide young athletes with international competition experience and a pathway towards senior-level sport.

More than 6,000 athletes have competed since the Games began. The most recent edition, held in Trinidad and Tobago in August 2023, marked the introduction of Para sport to the Commonwealth Youth Games.

About GAPS

Gather, Adjust, Prepare, Sustain (GAPS) is a multi-sport, multi-stakeholder partnership programme that supports the development of emerging athletes and coaches, with a particular focus on inclusive sporting pathways for people with disabilities. Developed in partnership with Griffith University in 2016, GAPS has active partnerships with six leading universities across the Commonwealth where we are working with dedicated academics, researchers, students, sport scientists, expert coach developers and a host of other professionals that all contribute to the achieving the dream of GAPS.

GAPS brings together athletes, coaches, universities, sporting organisations and community partners to build skills, share knowledge, remove barriers and create opportunities for participation and progression.

Through developing both people and their sporting environments, GAPS aims to contribute to lasting positive change in sport and communities across the Commonwealth.