

KIRSTY BURROWS

Senior International Sports Executive – Governance, Integrity, Safeguarding & Organisational Systems



PROFILE AT A GLANCE

- Senior international sports executive with deep experience across governance, integrity and institutional systems within the Olympic Movement.
- Proven and trusted leader in organisational reform, risk management and governance strengthening across complex, federated and highly scrutinised environments.
- Extensive experience supporting executive leadership, councils and boards through periods of change, operational pressure and reputational risk.
- Background spanning cultural change, safeguarding, athlete wellbeing, education and ethical sport systems, with strong transversal leadership across functions and stakeholders, and a focus on practical implementation and institutional credibility.

CORE LEADERSHIP EXPERTISE

- Olympic Movement governance, institutional integrity and federated systems
- Organisational systems, operations and service delivery
- Safeguarding, athlete welfare and duty of care governance
- Operational delivery & day-to-day execution
- Stakeholder engagement & consensus building
- Public speaking & institutional representation
- Education systems and professional development frameworks
- Major sporting events operations and escalation
- Risk management and reputational resilience
- Executive advisory and senior stakeholder engagement

LANGUAGES

- English
- French, Spanish & Italian
- German & Portuguese

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Senior international sports executive with more than fifteen years’ experience operating at the intersection of governance, integrity, safeguarding and organisational systems within complex, federated environments.

Proven track record in designing, implementing and operationally delivering governance, regulatory and legal-adjacent frameworks, including compliance, risk management and institutional oversight across International Federations and National Olympic Committees.

Extensive experience managing complex integrity, safeguarding and ethical cases, acting as a trusted escalation point and supporting executive decision-making under significant operational and reputational pressure.

Recognised for driving systemic and cultural reform, strengthening integrity, accountability and institutional credibility within evolving and highly scrutinised environments.

Comfortable operating in lean structures, combining strategic leadership with hands-on, day-to-day execution across developing organisations.

LEADERSHIP THEMES & SYSTEM EXPERTISE

System leadership, governance & institutional delivery

- Led the design and implementation of safeguarding and integrity systems, driving global reform and operational delivery of key initiatives within federated sport environments.
- Designed and led the Safe Sport Regional Hub Initiative (SSRHI), a global operating model strengthening safeguarding systems at regional and national level, and embedding cultural change to address high-risk systemic concerns.
- Provided strategic leadership across governance architecture, funding models and implementation frameworks, with responsibility for a multi-year USD 10m+ envelope.
- Driving cultural and behavioural change to strengthen integrity, accountability and trust across federated systems.
- Led consensus-building across international federations, National Olympic Committees, governments and external partners, ensuring practical implementation across diverse governance contexts.

Olympic Movement governance & institutional integrity

- Senior leadership across safeguarding, athlete welfare, wellbeing, youth development and integrity within the Olympic Movement, operating across federated governance structures spanning more than 200 countries.
- Architect of governance frameworks balancing technical autonomy, ethical standards and institutional accountability.

Major events, operations & decision-making

- Led safeguarding and welfare operations at Olympic and Youth Olympic Games, coordinating multidisciplinary teams and day-to-day operations.
- Trusted escalation and decision reference point for complex ethical, operational and reputational issues.

System Architecture, education & delivery

- Designed, implemented and delivered multi-year, Executive Board-approved initiatives addressing systemic risk, education delivery and prevention.
- Aligns policy, operations and delivery across complex federated systems.

External representation & consensus building

- Recognised authority and spokesperson on integrity, safeguarding, governance and athlete wellbeing, representing institutions externally with governments, UN agencies, civil society, athletes and strategic partners.

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PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Associate Director Safe Sport: Health, Medicine & Science (2022 - present)

International Olympic Committee (IOC), Lausanne, Switzerland

- Executive Board-mandated leadership of global governance initiatives, including the SSRHI programme, securing approval, funding and delivery oversight within a €10m+ budget envelope.
- Designed and implemented governance architecture, decision pathways and accountability models, enabling consistent application across International Federations, National Olympic Committees and major events.
- Led transversal coordination across sport, legal, safeguarding, medical and external affairs functions, ensuring alignment between policy, operations and real-time decision-making within a federated institutional model.
- Acted as senior escalation point for complex safeguarding, integrity and ethical cases, advising executive leadership and supporting decision-making under significant operational and reputational pressure.
- Supported the development and implementation of governance and risk management processes, strengthening institutional oversight, accountability and operational consistency across federated structures.
- Oversaw safeguarding, welfare and mental health delivery at Olympic and Youth Olympic Games, coordinating multidisciplinary teams and managing high-risk situations in live operational environments.

Founder & Managing Director (2018 - 2022)

Sports Rights Solutions, Ltd, London, UK

- Founded and led an independent advisory firm supporting international sports organisations, federations and event organisers on governance reform, safeguarding systems, athlete welfare, education strategy and institutional integrity.
- Advised executive leadership and boards on system design, policy architecture, risk management and operational delivery, supporting organisations navigating cultural change, regulatory pressure and reputational risk.
- Designed and delivered education programmes, governance toolkits and implementation frameworks used across federated and decentralised sport systems, ensuring consistency while respecting technical autonomy and cultural context.
- Managed budgets, contracts and multidisciplinary teams, operating at the intersection of strategy, operations and stakeholder engagement.
- Advised on purpose-led partnerships and stakeholder engagement strategies, aligning governance, safeguarding and institutional values with commercial and external relationships.

Expert Consultant (2016–2018)

International Olympic Committee (IOC), Barcelona, Spain

Served as an expert consultant on safeguarding, athlete welfare, gender equality and protection-related policy development, advisory work and pilot initiatives. This work informed early institutional approaches to safeguarding, mental health and youth protection, and laid the foundation for subsequent senior leadership roles within the organisation.

ADVISORY, GOVERNANCE & EXPERT APPOINTMENTS

- Expert member, FIFA Safeguarding & Child Protection Working Group (since 2026)
- Expert member, IOC working group on safeguarding and mental health in esports and gaming (since 2023)
- Expert member, Council of Europe / European Union Joint Programme on Child Safeguarding in sport, pool of European experts (since 2017)
- Board Member (ex officio), International Safeguards for Children in Sport since 2017
- Expert Consensus Member, IOC International Consensus Panels: Mental health; holistic youth development; Interpersonal violence)

EDUCATION

PhD (in finalisation) Public Health Approaches to Interpersonal Violence & localised governance
Canterbury Christ Church University

International Master in Law, Management, and Humanities of Sport (Grade A merit)

SDA Bocconi, University of Neuchâtel and DeMontfort

Bachelor of Science: Physiotherapy (1st class Honours)
University of Southampton

SELECTED PROFESSIONAL TRAINING & ACCREDITATION

- UK Anti-Doping (UKAD) – Accredited Advisor
- Designated Safeguarding Lead (Level 3)
- IOC Certificate: Safeguarding Officer in Sport
 - Academic Director (2021–2024); architect of a seven-month global certification pathway professionalising safeguarding practice across 100+ countries
- Advanced Trauma-Informed Investigations
 - T.M.C. Asser Instituut (The Hague) – complex case management, proportionality and decision-making under pressure

EARLIER CAREER

Held earlier professional roles across athlete services, clinical practice, safeguarding and youth wellbeing, including work with internationally recognised high-performance and medical institutions in Europe, the Middle East and Asia. These roles provided a strong foundation in risk management, multidisciplinary working and culturally informed practice in elite and youth-focused environments.

REFERENCES



Thomas Bach
IOC Honorary President

Pierre Ducrey
IOC Sports Director