

Lord Holmes of Richmond MBE



Chris Holmes is Britain's most successful Paralympic swimmer winning a total of 9 golds, 5 silvers and 1 bronze. He was also Director of Paralympic Integration, responsible for the organisation of the 2012 Paralympic Games in London.

Chris is a passionate advocate for the potential of technology and the benefits of diversity and inclusion. He campaigns for more accessible environments for disabled people and is working to end the injustice of unpaid internships.

In Parliament Chris is a member of the Select Committee on Artificial Intelligence and has been a member of Committees on Digital Skills, Social Mobility and Financial Exclusion. He is co-chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Groups on Assistive Technology, Fintech, block chain and the 4th Industrial Revolution.

Chris is also Chair of the Global Disability Innovation Hub, Diversity Adviser to the Civil Service, non-executive director at Channel 4 and Chancellor of BPP University.

Chris sits on the Future Talent Steering Group which offers thought leadership on the future of work and how best to develop opportunities and skills for people and organisations in a changing world. Chris is also Chair of Ignite, an innovation and change consultancy that applies lessons from elite sport to a broad range of business situations, inspiring teams and achieving outstanding results for clients in the public and private sector.

Early life: As a boy Chris was a promising sportsman; on school teams for most sports and academically gifted with a distinct ambition to get to Cambridge University, by no means a normal next step from the Kidderminster Comprehensive he attended. At the age of 14 and completely unexpectedly Chris went blind overnight. His extraordinary courage and determination took him back into the pool, and just four years later to

straight A's for his A-levels and a place at Cambridge. At the end of his first year at Cambridge he won a record-breaking six gold medals at the Barcelona Paralympics.

In total Chris won nine gold medals, including the record six gold medals at a single Paralympics. He gained a string of World and European titles, broke 35 world records and was awarded an MBE for services to British sport at the age of 20. He was member of the Great Britain swimming team for seventeen years and captain for five.

Career: After retiring from competitive swimming Chris worked as a journalist before qualifying and working as a commercial lawyer specialising in employment and pensions. He also took non-Executive Director roles at the Disability Rights Commission and UK Sport and was an Ambassador for the successful London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic bid.

In 2009 Chris was appointed Director of Paralympic Integration for London 2012. In this role, Chris drew on political skills, strategic know-how and his incredible determination to deliver the most successful Paralympics ever. It worked. London 2012 was the first games to have all sponsors signed to both Olympics and Paralympics, the first games to sell out all the stadia for every session and, incredibly, the first games to achieve worldwide television audiences in the hundreds of millions.

In recognition of Chris's talents and contribution to the country he was invited by the Prime Minister to enter the House of Lords. Chris relishes this political role and his experiences navigating the ancient corridors of power with guide dog Lottie offer numerous entertaining anecdotes.

Chris's legal background stood him in good stead as non-Executive Director at the Equality and Human Rights Commission (2013-2017) where he headed up the Disability Committee and was responsible for important diversity and inclusion programmes, ranging from sport to broadcasting and precedent setting legal action concerned with the Equality Act 2010 and establishing principles around accessibility and inclusion.

Chris is supporter and patron of several charities including Duke of Edinburgh Awards, the Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Trust, Help for Heroes and Guide Dogs.