

## Are Kids Clubs Safe?

In the last edition of Get'Away we highlighted the issue of Kids Clubs following contact by an ex resort representative. He had contacted HolidayTravelWatch to advise of his experience of working for a long established tour operator. He and his Partner had been hired by this company to work in their Children's Clubs, providing daily care and activities for the wishing to join the Club. They were quickly promoted, and became responsible for their own Children's Club. They discovered that many of their colleagues, like them, had no experience in either working or dealing with children before this particular job. They also discovered that very few carried qualifications or carried a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) certificate.

Such a certificate tells a potential employer that the holder of the certificate does not hold any previous convictions or any 'markers' that would prevent them from working with vulnerable people.

We were concerned that such a practice may be widespread and therefore sought the guidance of the CRB. In their response they stated,

*"Although there is legislation in place which requires positions for certain employment roles to obtain a Disclosure, an individual applying for a position quoted in your letter is not legally obliged to obtain a Disclosure, although it is best practice if one is applied for".*

A holidaymaker who is hoping for safe facilities for his children, will it appears, hope that best practice is being employed in the safety of this important facility.

We decided to survey several brochures to test whether the hopes of the CRB are in fact demonstrated.

In making this survey, we of course do not imply that travel companies do not take their responsibility seriously toward their clients and their children. Most are responsible companies; all household names.

We decided to look at long-haul brochures. Such holidays are now becoming more popular with families, eager to escape the 'overdevelopment' of European resorts.

Within one major tour operators brochure, they advise that

*"Kids Clubs - available at many resort hotels to keep the kids occupied all day with a variety of exciting activities, in a safe environment".*

We checked the 'General Booking Information' of the same brochure, and the closest reference to them we could find was under 'Safety' which advises that,

*"We take the safety and security of our clients extremely seriously" it adds, "[...] Holidays operate to many parts of the world, some of which do not conform to British Health and Safety Standards...and therefore urge you to undertake reasonable precaution whilst on holiday".*

In another main-stream tour brochure, under 'Hotel-run Kids Clubs' it states,

*“Standards and facilities at kids clubs featured in this brochure may vary. We are unable to accept responsibility for or give any guarantee for the standard of the facilities and qualifications of personnel at hotel run kids clubs. Kid(s) clubs may not meet the standards of similar facilities in the UK and Guests are strongly advised to remember that local standards and requirements of such clubs may differ overseas and so you must ensure that you are completely satisfied with the facilities and staff providing this service before you enrol your child or children into the club and into the club’s care”.*

This enquiry began from an ex employee’s concern. He was concerned that people were employed without any formal qualification or criminal record checks. He worked at an European location. We do not know the answer to our question, are kids clubs safe?

However, what we have recognised is that no one, no parent, no travel representative, no tour operator, would want harm, of whatever kind, to come to any child placed in the care of a kids club. We are now faced with a real a difficult problem. Do we wait for an incident to arise within such clubs? Can any tour company endure the backlash against their brand in the face of such an incident? Should any parent have to endure the misery of an accident or assault on their child? Is it sufficient to rely on a local standard, should we not be striving to develop a high and uniform standard?

We suggest that the Travel Industry and their Representative Bodies, Consumer and Parent Groups, join together to lobby and seek assistance from Politicians and Crime Fighting Organisations, in order to find an immediate solution to this troublesome issue.

HolidayTravelWatch  
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www.holidaytravelwatch.com