

THE IMPORTANCE OF CHILD SAFEGUARDING IN THE ACCOMMODATION SECTOR

The exploitation and abuse of children happens in every country and across every social group. According to a United Nations study on violence against children, it is estimated that 150 million girls and 73 million boys around the world experience sexual exploitation and violence. The International Labour Organisation estimates that around 5.5 million children are in forced labour, including forced sexual exploitation.

The accommodation sector is frequently used by individuals and organised criminal groups to coordinate and hide this abuse. This could happen in any of the following ways:

- Hotel rooms are used for child sexual abuse including organised child prostitution.
- Hotel rooms are used to hide children being trafficked for sexual abuse and other forms of forced labour.
- Hotel contractors are using forced child labour, often without the hotel ever knowing.
- Hotel guests are abusing or neglecting their own children during their hotel stays.
- Hotel staff are behaving inappropriately toward children during their stays.

As an accommodation provider, you are in a unique position to help identify, prevent and report instances of child exploitation and abuse. Saving just one child is important, but if the entire accommodation sector took a proactive approach to safeguarding children then our industry could have a major impact on improving the lives of millions of children around the world.

Adults-only accommodation: It is important that this type of accommodation has a policy and plan that addresses child safeguarding in their destination.

UNDERSTANDING CHILD EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE

We recommend that you spend time researching and learning about the different types of child exploitation and abuse that can occur. Best practice would be to involve senior management in this process. There are a number of excellent online resources to help you and we have included some below, but we strongly recommend that you also try to find information that is specific to your country or destination, and written in your local language. If possible, you should reach out to trusted local organisations with expertise in this field such as police, a relevant government department, a school or a children's charity.

UNICEF: This is a United Nations organisation dedicated to protecting the rights of children globally.

The Code: An international organisation dedicated to protecting children from sex tourism.

NSPCC: The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children is a UK-based charity but offers information and resources that are relevant globally, particularly related to the prevention of childhood abuse and neglect.

ILO: The International Labour Organisation undertakes a number of monitoring and prevention initiatives related to child labour. Travelife follows ILO guidelines when assessing if a hotel is complying with our child labour requirements.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC): This outlines the universal rights that all children should have. Travelife follows the UNCRC when assessing if a hotel is upholding the rights of children.

ASSESS YOUR RISKS

An effective child safeguarding strategy will be specific to your business operations and your destination. You should spend time thinking about what are the high-risk areas within the scope of your business and what you can do to address them.

We recommend you ask the following questions and, ideally, produce a written risk assessment report that you can discuss with senior management to decide on next steps:

- What children does our business directly come into contact with? (e.g. the children of guests)

- What children does our business indirectly influence? (e.g. children in your local town, children who use the beach)
- Who at our hotel is most likely to observe any abuse of children? (e.g. front office staff, housekeeping staff, other guests)
- Who at our hotel has contact with children when their parents may not be present? (e.g. entertainment staff, food and beverage staff)
- Do our guests have an opportunity to interact with local children in our destination? (e.g. excursions, local shopping and dining)
- What areas of our business directly involve children? (e.g. babysitting service, kids club)
- What groups of children are at high risk from exploitation and abuse in our destination? (e.g. have you observed homeless children in your area? Are orphanage or school visits offered to tourists?)
- Do any of our suppliers use child labour? (e.g. have you checked that an off-site laundry contractor is respecting child labour laws?)

Answering these questions should help you identify the risk areas within your operations. These might include:

- Guests abusing their own children
- Sexual abuse of children taking place in guest rooms
- Guests engaging in child prostitution
- The hotel being used to traffic children
- Suppliers using child labour
- Your own staff abusing or behaving inappropriately with children
- Guests engaging with activities involving children such as orphanage or school visits, even if you do not offer the excursions yourselves.

IMPORTANT

Remember that often abuse is not obvious. A common example in the accommodation sector is young bar or entertainment staff flirting with teenagers who are under the age of 18, perhaps inviting them to a party or simply complimenting the way they look in a suggestive manner. Or perhaps a teenage guest invites an adult staff member to socialise with them and the staff member accepts, not realising they are under 18. This is inappropriate behaviour and should be noted within your risk assessment so that you can address it in your child safeguarding plan.

DEVELOP A CHILD SAFEGUARDING PLAN

You should write a plan that outlines the steps you will take to prevent the exploitation and abuse of children. This should be agreed by senior management and cover all of the following key areas:

- A statement that commits your business to safeguarding children.
- Your formal policy and procedure for reporting suspected child abuse and exploitation to the appropriate authorities. This must include contact details for those authorities, such as phone numbers.
- Staff training and awareness that includes what they can do to prevent and report child exploitation and abuse. This could include a training session for new staff, regular update training for existing staff and written information posted in staff areas and/or your staff handbook. This must be in the languages that all of your staff understand and cover the staff of your contractors.
- Guest awareness. This should include written information in the languages your guests most commonly speak about your commitment to safeguarding children along with what they can do to prevent and report child exploitation and abuse.
- We recommend you include the steps you will take to ensure your suppliers are also safeguarding children. This could include sending them information on your commitments and including contract clauses that commit them to upholding the same principles.

OTHER IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

Keep records

A Travelife auditor may ask to see evidence that you are taking steps to safeguard children so we recommend you keep your policies, reports and plans updated and available for inspection. If you provide training to your staff, you should keep records of dates, who delivered the training and which staff attended the session.

Monitoring and review

Ensure that one person in your organisation is always responsible for staying updated on issues relating to child safeguarding. You should regularly review your policy and procedures to ensure that they are effective, making any changes as necessary. We strongly recommend that an assessment of your child safeguarding activities is included in your regular internal sustainability reports, and that senior management are engaged with this.

MORE INFORMATION & RESOURCES

Travelife Detailed Guides: [Human Rights](#), [Fair Labour Practices](#), [Community Engagement & Support](#)

Travelife Quick Guides: [Child Safeguarding Policy](#), [Labour and Human Rights Policy](#)