



The problem of drunken tourists

The incident in a hotel in Albufeira last week involving child neglect and drunken British parents once again highlights the problem of extreme drunkenness by some tourists on holiday overseas.

In this particular case the parents, according to eye witnesses and police, were so drunk that they had no control of their daughter aged just 14 months. This clearly put the child at risk. Thanks should go to the GNR who responded quickly to calls from the hotel for assistance, identified the conditions that placed the child at risk and ensured the correct action was taken for the child to be transported to hospital and placed in temporary care.

The parents, however, having regained custody of the child returned to the UK, whereupon through a daily tabloid, blamed everyone apart from themselves for the incident levying accusations against the police and other authorities here.

This is not the first time a child has been held in protective care following neglect by their parents on holiday here and I doubt it will be last.

Extreme drunkenness, and by “extreme” I mean losing all sense of consciousness, is a problem which causes a danger to those involved, results in crime and consequently an enormous drain on police resources. In 2013 there were a number of incidents of criminality by tourists caused by excess drinking, two examples being assaults on taxi drivers and criminal damage by throwing furniture from apartments to the street below.

Many thousands of police hours are spent dealing with drunken tourists, often young teenagers, on holiday here who have become detached from those in their group and are found wandering in the street often with no identification. These people are at risk; and often when one reads about tourists being robbed in the early hours when they are walking alone it is simple because they have placed themselves in a vulnerable position through excess drink.

Clearly we encourage tourism and people come on holiday to have a good time. The price of alcohol is much cheaper here than in the UK and two-for-one offers in bars in tourist areas attract people to drink more, probably much more than usual.

In a survey of tourists recently conducted by Safe Communities Algarve, nearly all tourists considered the Algarve a very safe place, their only concern being drunkenness and disturbance caused by their fellow tourists. This was illustrated when a group of female teenagers were asked what they most enjoyed here in the Algarve and the answer was just two words “get drunk”.

Clearly more needs to be done to reduce this problem and Safe Communities Algarve will liaise with police and the British Consulate to look at new initiatives. However the main responsibility rests with the individual themselves. Also some responsibilities must rest with those bar owners

who continue to serve drinks to those who are clearly at risk to themselves and others through drink. Solving the problem is therefore a collective responsibility.

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