

COVID-19 and School Residentials – Refund policy and credit

21 months after the global pandemic first impacted on school residentials, the EA is currently working through a staged approach to allow schools to undertake residential stays, whilst taking into account the current conditions around Covid. We remain hopeful that we can welcome school residentials again in 2022 and have already received a large number of bookings for next year.

We were hopeful that we were seeing light at the end of this Covid tunnel but with the emergence of the Omicron variant we, like everybody else, are seriously concerned about the impact this will have on our business. This is exacerbated by the end of statutory financial support.

At Share Discovery Village, we rely on a busy school residential season as the core of our annual operation and revenue generation. This helps support our charitable aims working with a wide range of vulnerable, disadvantaged and disabled visitors. The income from school residentials is fundamental to our ongoing viability.

Having lost a full 12 month period of trading in 2020 and having a much curtailed 2021, financially we are not in a position to provide refunds. As an organisation we are laser focused on our survival and planning for mitigations against a second year of reduced visitors. We are working hard to ensure we reduce costs whilst also retaining as many skilled staff as possible to be ready to recommence operations in the New Year.

We understand that some schools may not be able to undertake residential activities in 2022 due to the disruption to the academic year and risk management of extra-curricular activities. This, coupled with potentially increased demand for residentials, may put pressure on availability which may lead to disappointment for some schools. **We are therefore extending our offer of credit until the 31st December 2023.**

We understand that some schools are experiencing pressure from parents for refunds. Whilst we sympathise with all organisations and individuals experiencing the financial impact of the ongoing Covid situation, our contractual obligation is with each school and not the children or parents. What we intend, by extending our promise of credit, is to give schools the confidence to refund parents if they so wish, in the knowledge they can recoup this cost against the credit balance held by Share for 2022 or 2023. By doing so we can ensure Share remains viable into the future and parents and schools do not lose out financially at this difficult time.

Thank you for your understanding and support as we all try to navigate this difficult, ongoing situation.

Darragh Collins, CEO (A), Share Discovery Village.

