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The importance of childcare at squash clubs for busy parents



Kaifu Lodge in Hamburg is one of Germany's most vibrant squash facilities. With eight courts, an extensive gym and fitness studios, swimming pool, spa, beauty salon, restaurant, bar and a thriving social scene, it is a model for commercial success. Another element to its prosperity is something which other squash clubs might not have thought of - childcare.

Kaifu Lodge offers childcare free of charge to members and for a small fee to friends of non-members, four days a week for children up to seven years of age (for older children, the club has a plethora of junior squash and fitness programmes).

Children are one of the principal barriers to participation in sport and exercise for adults all over the world. Mothers in particular (but fathers too) typically don't have time for exercise because they are too busy with their young children. Offering childcare removes that barrier.

For parents in those exhausting early years of their children's lives, the golden opportunity to exercise and enjoy time with friends on the squash court - whilst knowing their young children are receiving high quality care from someone they know who is close by - is absolutely priceless.



At Kaifu Lodge, they offer this service for free because the benefits are worth it. On Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Sunday daytimes, their squash courts, gym, yoga studios and fitness classes are full of happy mothers and fathers. They bring their friends who pay a small fee for the childcare, have a coffee and a chat afterwards and are introduced to the club's strong 'family' vibe. It's a free advertisement to potential new members.

The club has had a childcare service since 1991, when Connie Hasselbach, who was General Manager for 36 years, had his son. His wife and some of her friends who had also just had babies formed a private 'crawling group' using a studio room. Within weeks, it grew to many other mothers and babies. Kaifu Lodge's childcare programme was born.

"The childcare service developed naturally," says Conny. "There was a demand which we had never deeply thought about before. Many people from the club and outside the club came along, so we set up programmes for them."

Conny and co-founder Michael Grau rebuilt one of their fitness studios into a huge 180sqm nursery. "We decided to 'go full stick' - if you do something you should do it properly," says Conny. "It wasn't to make money, it was to serve the needs of our members and local people."

The quality of childcare was paramount for Conny and Michael. "The education and experience of your staff must be good," says Conny. "The clients and children must be able to trust that the programmes will take place at a guaranteed time and that children can use other parts of the facilities including the swimming pool. But the main thing is the quality of the staff."

As well as the crawling group, there are yoga, ballet and breakdance groups for 5-8-year-olds and hip-hop for 9-12-year-olds ([see the full timetable](#)). There are also squash kids' days and regular training for tots up to seven years, then more structured training, tournaments and other events for those up to age 14. Over 450 players who participated in Kaifu Lodge's junior squash programmes later became adult members.



The club also offers some parent and child classes such as yoga where both generations can exercise and have fun together. But time by themselves or exercising with friends is the most crucial factor.

"For mothers and fathers, it's crucial that they can bring their kids to a decent programme so they can do something else," says Conny. "It's very important to find time for yourself as parents.

"If members can place their children and kids up to 17 into a programme in the club, they stay, they become members, join the family and become involved in all aspects of the club. They feel it's 'my' club. They don't say they go to the fitness centre or squash centre, they go to 'my club.' The benefits for the club are so high."

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Read more about the importance of Kaifu Lodge's vibrant social scene to its success [here](#).



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