

Employers – How to Survive the Christmas Party

Here is our advice on some of the key issues to be aware of for the forthcoming Christmas parties:



Christmas parties generally have a positive impact on moral and team spirit and it an opportunity for an employer to thank employees for all their hard work. However the boundaries need to be set by the employer to avoid any future problems. UK legislation is clear, your office party is an extension of the normal work environment whether you have it at separate venue or outside of working hours or. Employers can be held responsible for employee actions so you need to avoid discrimination and health and safety claims.

Make sure you make it clear to staff what is and what is not acceptable behaviour at social events and follow up any failure to comply with this order with disciplinary action.

Employers may be liable for the discriminatory behaviour of their employees and face significant tribunal claims. Employees can be disciplined for any breaches of your disciplinary rules, including dismissal for gross misconduct, following unacceptable behaviour at the Christmas party.

Ensure managers are careful not to discuss issues such as promotions or pay rises in the informal setting of the Christmas party.

Carry out a risk assessment of the venue, considering any particular risks posed to your disabled employees.

Limit the free bar and encourage responsible drinking. You may be liable for the welfare of employees if they suffer alcohol-induced accidents. Consider organising transport home with designated non-drinkers as drivers or paid for coaches/mini buses.

If there is a 'Secret Santa' taking place, make sure staff know the boundaries. Racist or adult gifts are not acceptable.

Decide to what extent you will be lenient with staff on the day after the party and advise employees beforehand. Health and safety should be of utmost importance. Employees should not be expected to operate machinery if not fit to do so. Also the safety of employees driving to work after having had transport home the night before should be considered.

Take these reasonable steps to prevent inappropriate behaviour then employees must take their own responsibility for their actions.

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