



CHRISTMAS PARTIES

Religious Issues

Celebrations in the office during the build-up to Christmas, including an office Christmas party, have a mostly positive impact on the workplace. It can help boost morale and promote a warm feeling among colleagues in the workforce. However, it is important to ensure such festivities do not exclude individuals who choose not to celebrate the occasion because of their own religious beliefs as this can marginalise them and have a negative impact that far outlasts the festive season.

Focusing on one Christian festival has the potential to cause offence. Employers could face a discrimination claim if they do not take different religions into account when planning their Christmas party. Location, theme, timing and catering should all be carefully considered, and a choice of non alcoholic drinks and vegetarian options are a must. Knowledge of the workforce's requirements is therefore vital.

Also remember, **drink driving** - employers are expected to take reasonable steps to ensure that their employees return home safely from work-related social functions.

Pre-arrange lifts with non-drinkers who are driving or organise taxis.

MYTHS OF CHRISTMAS

"I can do my Christmas shopping online at work"

No! While some limited personal use will often be anticipated and permitted, employers should be sure that their staff are aware of the extent to which use is permitted and whether it is restricted to certain times of the day, such as lunch breaks.

"I can come in late because of a festive hangover"

No! The reality is that this will often be overlooked during the festive period. However, if staff arrive later than the time specified in their contract of employment, they will technically be in breach of contract.

Employers would therefore be justified in reacting in a reasonable manner, whether by pursuing whatever disciplinary action is appropriate in the circumstances.

"I can take photos of everyone at the party and post them on a social networking website"

No! Employees should seek permission from each individual before posting their photo on a website, otherwise it could give rise to problems for staff or their employer.

If you would like a detailed employers guide to Christmas Parties then please email info@apmhr.com

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