

Are you games ready?

As London gears up for the Olympic and Paralympic Games in just a few months time, prudent HR departments across the UK should be gearing up for the challenges that they will face.

Volunteering

In the absence of any contractual provisions, employers are not under any legal obligation to allow employees to volunteer at the Games or to pay them if they do so; it will be for employers to decide how to respond to such requests. They should, however, ensure that their approach is fair and consistent. Options that employers may wish to consider include allowing staff to take annual leave or unpaid leave.

Annual leave requests

Employers are likely to see an increase in annual leave requests, many of which will clash with one another. It would be sensible to remind employees at an early stage of the procedure for making requests and how such requests will be dealt. First come first served may be fairest approach but may not give the employer sufficient cover across all departments and roles. Employers are entitled to decline holiday requests for business reasons, provided they do so in good faith and on reasonable grounds. They should also be consistent in their handling of requests.

Temporary changes to working patterns or locations

Employers should consider whether it would be sensible to make temporary changes to work patterns or locations in order to assist employees who would otherwise have difficulty in attending work due to transport disruption. In this situation, employers should consult with staff with a view to obtaining their agreement to such changes. It should be made clear that any changes are strictly temporary and do not constitute a permanent change to terms and conditions of employment.

Unauthorised absences

Reminding staff that unauthorised absences could result in application of the disciplinary procedure may act as a useful deterrent to employees who intend to, for example, take sick leave in order to watch the Games.

Internet usage

Employers should remind staff of any internet policies which, for example, prohibit streaming internet coverage of events or use of social networking or gambling sites, and the potential consequences of breaching such policies.

Discrimination and harassment

The focus of the Olympics on competition between national teams creates the potential for unlawful discrimination and harassment to occur, for which an employer could be liable. Employers should remind staff of their Equal Opportunities Policies and the potential consequences of breaching such Policies. They should also be alert to any discriminatory behaviour, however apparently well intentioned, for example office banter or the display of offensive images.

If you are an employer we can –

- identify areas where you may be at risk and help you to address them
- support you with advice on day to day and major issues
- defend you against employment related claims
- revise your employment documentation and procedures
- provide training to your staff
- improve your health and safety compliance
- keep you informed on developments in the law and best practice
- draft compromise agreements for you to give employees and negotiate with their representatives.

If you are an employee we can –

- bring any employment related claims for you
- negotiate an exit from employment for you on favourable terms
- help you with any issues arising during your employment
- advise you on contractual documentation
- advise you on compromise agreements and negotiate improved terms.

For further information

Please call us on 020 7148 7850 or email info@leveneseemployment.co.uk.

Alternatively please contact Victoria Willson directly on 020 7148 7852 or vwillson@leveneseemployment.co.uk.

Disclaimer

Our news articles are written to highlight, in general summary form, some of the legal issues facing employers and employees in the UK. They are not intended to be, and do not constitute either legal advice or an authoritative statement on the law.

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