

Employers Guide:

Staff Christmas Parties

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This blog is aimed at employers; and includes the pros and cons of staff Christmas parties, what the employer is responsible for and some helpful tips to avoid any post party issues arising.

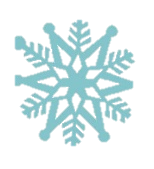
With careful planning and thought from employers, the staff Christmas party can be an enjoyable festive occasion for everyone involved.

As a way of showing thanks and appreciation to their staff, some businesses will choose to host a Christmas party. This will most likely involve music, dancing, food, alcohol and potential games. The event gives staff the opportunity to relax and enjoy themselves, feeling rewarded for all their hard work.

On the other hand, it can present the risk of staff misconduct which may cause problems for employers. Issues such as discrimination, violence, alcohol abuse and harassment can impact on the working environment post-party. Therefore it is important to set ground rules prior to an event, making staff aware of the rules and the potential consequences if they are not adhered to. This will help to ensure staff have fun, but not so that things get out of hand.

The **PROS** and **CONS** of hosting a Company Christmas party:

**PROS**

* **Gives employees the opportunity to enjoy themselves and relax.**
* **Allows employees to get to know people from other areas within the organisation.**
* **Allows employees to network with senior staff and build self-confidence.**
* **Encourages employee engagement.**
* **Reinforces company culture.**
* **Boosts employee morale.**

**CONS (potential)**

* **Alcohol misuse- employees drinking excessively, resulting in either verbal or physical abuse.**
* **Harassment of, aggressive or threatening behaviour towards staff or employer.**
* **Discrimination (sex, age, disability, religion, sexual orientation, race etc.)**
* **Ethical disagreements between staff, potentially resulting in confidential information being divulged.**
* **Staff may be involved in a drink-driving accident on their way home.**

What are **YOU** responsible for?

Under employment law (the Equality Act 2010\*) employers may be held responsible for any acts performed by their employees during the course of their employment. Any social activity that is organised by the business is considered an “extension” of the workplace- regardless of place and time. Even if the party is held outside of work and outside normal working hours, any incidents that occur will still be classed as “during the course of employment”; therefore it is entirely possible for the employer to be held responsible.

The employer is also responsible for ensuring the level of Health and Safety at the event.

\*The Equality Act 2010 legally protects people in the workplace and wider society and replaces other previous discrimination laws with a single Act. To treat someone differently based on their age, sex, religion, disability etc. is against the law.

Useful tips for Employers

Consider:

1. Reminding everyone of the company guidelines regarding behaviour a day prior to the event. For example sending an email to all staff.
2. Having a dress code- this helps keep things professional and prevents employees from wearing inappropriate clothing.
3. Finding out how each employee is getting home and arrange transport, for example taxis, minibus, car share etc.
4. Ensure that your employers’ liability insurance and your directors’ and officer’ insurance are both up to date.
5. Limiting the amount of “free” alcohol, by giving staff tokens that they can then exchange for drinks.

AND THEN, ENJOY YOURSELVES AT YOUR CHRISTMAS PARTY!

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