

Happy Halloween

This Week in Employment Law

Halloween: How to Avoid 'Scary' Situations at Work

With Halloween taking place this week some employers may consider allowing staff to get into the spirit of things by decorating the office or wearing fancy dress. With this in mind, there are a number of aspects to consider for making Halloween run more smoothly:

- Dressing up for Halloween can be a great way to develop a sense of camaraderie amongst staff, however there are risks attached.
- Certain costumes may cause offence and staff should be warned to think twice about their choice of outfit to avoid claims of harassment.
- Also, consider whether allowing fancy dress reflects the right image to clients, especially if your business is customer facing, as there is a risk that this activity could affect the company's reputation.
- The relaxed atmosphere that can be created may lead to a drop in productivity and staff will need to be managed closely to ensure standards remain high.
- Those choosing to decorate the office should be mindful of individuals with certain religious beliefs that may oppose the celebration of Halloween.
- Those holding Halloween parties after work should also be alert to the dangers of misconduct at these events

Mental health costs car makers £1.2bn a year

A recent study by the automotive industry charity 'Ben' has revealed that mental health problems cost businesses £1.2bn a year. The study also revealed that 25% of firms have experienced issues with staff being unable to come to work due to mental ill health.

Did you know?

This reveals the effect mental health concerns can have on a business, with sickness absences restricting potential output and profitability. With this in mind, it is important that employers introduce initiatives that support staff and actively prevent mental health issues from developing.

EU commissioner: Unions for gig economy workers

The European Union's competition commissioner has said that gig economy workers should be able to "team up" to form unions. This is in contrast to a recent High Court decision that prevented outsourced workers from participating in collective bargaining.

Did you know?

The ability to join a union is currently only available to employees or workers, leaving gig-economy staff in a state of limbo as they are often classified as self-employed. Any change to allow them to unionise could make future workplace negotiations more complex for relevant employers.

Number of working mothers reaches record high

The latest figures by the Office for National Statistics has revealed 75% of mothers with dependent children in the UK were working. However, this is still less than the 92% of working fathers, suggesting more needs to be done to reach true gender equality.

Did you know?

Whilst a record number of working mothers is positive, more can be done to improve these figures. The government have urged businesses to embrace flexible working, believing this will encourage mothers to apply for jobs that allow them to effectively balance their work and family commitments.

Employers typically like to embrace seasonal holidays as a way of boosting morale at work, however there will often be a risk associated with activities that are outside of the normal working routine. With this in mind, employers should think carefully before introducing any Halloween initiatives and call our Advisory Team beforehand for expert advice.

Please contact the 24 Hour Advice Service for advice on your specific situation before acting on the information in this publication.