

# Managing your workforce during the Olympics



Following guidance from Acas urging employers to allow employees the flexibility to enjoy Rio 2016, we set out some pointers below on making the Olympic and Paralympic Games an enjoyable and productive period for your business.

## What can be done in advance?

Employers can start planning for the sporting events in advance; it is likely that nearly all staff will have an interest in some aspect of the Games and employers could take this opportunity to gauge the level of interest with their employees.

Businesses should also assess whether they have the opportunity to be flexible with employees during the Games. Because of the time difference between the UK and Brazil, major events will be taking place in the early hours of the morning so a possible option could be to agree with employees in advance that they can have a later start time so long as the time is made up at a later date. Similarly, the option to allow staff to take breaks during popular events could be explored. Any additional flexibility during the Olympics should be applied consistently and fairly across all staff.

## How to tackle absence

Where holidays are already at cap or requests have been refused, employers might find themselves faced with high numbers of unauthorised absence. Levels of attendance should be monitored during the Games in accordance with the company's absence policy to ensure the unauthorised absence can be addressed. Where it is believed that sickness absence is false, it is important to tackle this with the employee on their return to work and a meeting should be held with the employee for them to explain the reasons for their absence and so any suspected falsity can be investigated.

## Which policies are essential during these events?

The period before sporting events can be used to remind employees of the policies in place and their rights and obligations under these, alongside what action can be taken if the policies are breached. The internet plays an important role in reporting results from the Games therefore social media and internet policies should be recirculated to remind staff of the rules regarding social media use during working time and which sites are acceptable to access using work equipment. A way around the use of personal or work equipment to access results during the working day could be to allow staff to listen to the radio or watch TVs or to allocate a person to update results on an office noticeboard.

Additionally, any policies regarding being under the influence of alcohol at work should be strictly enforced and, if there is a clause covering taking tests because this is critical to the employee's health and safety, random testing could be carried out to ensure any social drinking whilst watching sports is not risking the safety of employees at work.

## Can we discipline staff during events?

Even during global sporting events the normal business rules apply, for example, the start time, absence reporting procedure and the requirement to meet targets, unless these have been amended with the agreement of both parties for the duration of the Games. This means that where employees breach the rules they can be disciplined for this under the normal procedures.

The content of this briefing is correct at the time of publishing.

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