

Helping our clients to achieve

The World Cup is here – is your company ready?

by Gill Brown, head of Phillips' employment law team

Direct line 01256 854605 email gbrown@phillips-law.co.uk

Date: June 2010

'World Cup mania takes over for a whole month, from 11th June to 11th July 2010,' says Gill Brown, head of Phillips' employment law team. 'During the last World Cup many thousands of man hours were lost in the UK alone due to staff absences. There will be over 570 hours of football, most notably England's match against Slovenia on the 23rd June at 3.00pm. Such is the potential impact on business that ACAS, Business Link and other employee-related websites and advice centres are all advising employers to make some special arrangements in advance of the World Cup, to improve employee relations and to try to minimize absenteeism.

Our advice is that you should have an absence and behaviour policy and that flexibility, fairness and absences should be managed in a sensible manner, whilst ensuring business continuity and maintenance of services. On the other side of the coin there are marketing opportunities to be gained by holding World Cup events with customers and clients. It is wise to remember that enthusiasm for football and the World Cup is not merely a male prerogative but also affects female staff and indeed staff of all ages who are interested.

From an employment law perspective we recommend that companies put in place a policy covering the following points:

1. Staff leave

It is advisable to offer some flexibility to employees to avoid them taking unauthorised leave. Some companies are offering their staff the opportunity to take up to 2 weeks unpaid leave during the World Cup tournament, provided each department has adequate cover. Consideration should also be given to offering flexible hours, or offering time in lieu where time can appropriately be made up.

2. Non-football fans

It is a good idea to ask employees whether they are or are not interested in the World Cup. Those who are not interested could be asked to cover for their colleagues who are interested, on the strict understanding that those who cover for absences, will be afforded the same treatment at another time when the World Cup is over. Colleagues who are not football

Helping our clients to achieve

mindful are usually happy to cover for those who need time off to watch matches, provided they are afforded equal time off at a later date.

3. Racial issues

Employers must be careful to take into account the requirements of different nationalities who may wish to view their own national matches rather than England games. Where this is a potential issue, consultation with the staff is a reasonable step to take.

4. Providing opportunities to watch matches at work

It is important to consider allowing those staff who wish to watch matches, to do so at work if that is a possibility. The rules relating to this should be communicated in advance and be enforced consistently with all staff.

The World Cup is an extremely good way for employers to improve relations with their staff,' concludes Gill. 'Showing a considerate and flexible approach can help prevent absenteeism. It is also reasonable when setting out a policy for watching matches, to lay down certain specific rules such as not attending work after drinking or attending work with a hangover. You may also wish to consider stating that sickness will not be tolerated during the World Cup for drink-related absences. Finally, make sure, when you are setting out such rules, that you have an overall game plan which anticipates your staff requirements to watch certain specific matches. The ultimate outcome could be win-win!'

Call our employment team if you need any business or individual employment advice and visit our website for more information, at www.phillips-law.co.uk.

Gill Brown, director, direct line: 01256 854605, email: gbrown@phillips-law.co.uk

Kelly-Jean Rayner, employment solicitor, ddi: 01256 854670, email: krayner@phillips-law.co.uk

ENDS

Note to editor:

Phillips is a leading law firm in Basingstoke, with around 45 members of staff. We offer a comprehensive range of services to business and private clients, locally and nationwide. We specialise in helping clients achieve what they want.

Wills, probates and elderly client matters
Divorce, matrimonial and mediation services
Residential property conveyancing
Civil litigation and commercial mediation services

Company and commercial matters
Employment matters
Leases and tenancy agreements
Commercial property

For more information, contact: Pam Whittle, marketing manager, Phillips Solicitors, Town Gate, 38 London Road, Basingstoke, Hants RG21 7NY. www.phillips-law.co.uk t. 01256 854642, f. 01256 364333 e. pwhittle@phillips-law.co.uk