

“ Plain speaking legal advice ”

**The World Cup is Coming.....**

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The World Cup is coming up and many employees are likely to want to watch the key games. The times of the games are likely to interfere with working hours and employers may be concerned about managing absence during this time.

It may be a good time to remind employees about policies, e.g. absence policy, alcohol misuse policy (it is likely that the games will go hand in hand with an increase in alcohol sales: remind employees that it is unacceptable to take a day off for a hangover, or to come into work so hungover that they are completely unproductive), internet use policy (employees may want to track the games on the internet). You may be happy to agree for employees to do this, but equally you may decide on a zero-tolerance approach. That is up to the employer, but you should lay down the rules either way.

Legally, employers are of course under no obligation to adjust rules or procedures to allow for their employees to pursue their interest in the games.

Practically, however, it may be worth considering options, if possible in your organisation. Morale may generally be low due to the recession and the effects that has had on the business and the employees, and this may be a good opportunity to build it back up. Also, if you show that you are willing to consider options to allow employees to watch the games, they are much less likely to take 'sick' days.

Employers could consider the following options:

- Offering a certain amount of unpaid leave
  
- If appropriate, you could offer shift swaps. How these are arranged and approved would have to be dealt with

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- Flexible working: You could allow employees to go home early on the day of a match, provided that they make up the time. This may be difficult if a large number of employees want the same time off
- If possible, you could show the games at the office in a rest room for employees to watch on their breaks. This may become difficult however, especially if the match is at a crucial point when an employee has finished their break. It may also be very tempting for employees to keep checking and therefore make it hard for them to concentrate on their work.

If you do choose to adapt procedures to cater for employees' interest in the world cup, specify that these are one off procedures specifically for this event and be careful to apply them fairly to all employees.

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