

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The London 2012 Olympic Games will run from 27 July to 12 August 2012 and the London 2012 Paralympic Games from 29 August 2012 to 9 September 2012. The Olympics and Paralympics will present a number of challenges for employers in terms of managing staff and avoiding absence.
- 1.2 During this period, employees may wish to take time off because they hope to be:
 - 1.2.1 a spectator, attending the Olympic Games; or
 - 1.2.2 a volunteer, working for the 'Games Maker' volunteer team.
- 1.3 Employees who do not have the opportunity to watch the Games on TV or internet coverage of the Games may still hope to watch some TV coverage of the Games.
- 1.4 Some employees will not be able to watch the Olympic Games altogether.

2. Advice from ACAS

- 2.1 The advice from ACAS is that employers should start talking to their employees early in order to plan for the Games and minimise the impact on productivity.
- 2.2 ACAS encourages employers to consider the following:
 - 2.2.1 Flexible, and consider allowing shorter working days or longer lunch breaks during the working day;
 - 2.2.2 Clear about what is expected of employees in terms of attendance and performance during the Games;
 - 2.2.3 Honest about how the Games will be handled; and
 - 2.2.4 Fair in the way that time off is handled.

3. Employees Volunteering during the Games

- 3.1 Volunteering as a 'Games Maker' for the London 2012 Olympics Games will involve a considerable commitment in terms of selection, training, and the impact of this on the employee's work.
- 3.2 Legally, employers are not required to allow employees time off to volunteer at the Olympic Games. If time off is agreed, the time off should be taken as approved annual leave. In terms of boosting employee morale, it is good practice to be as flexible as possible in allowing employees to volunteer.
- 3.3 If an employee applies to volunteer at the Olympic Games, employers should consider the application fairly and consistently (see section 4 below).

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4. Handling requests for Annual Leave

Olympic Games

- 4.1 There is likely to be a high demand for annual leave during the period of the Olympic Games because employees may want to take time off to watch the events, work as a volunteer, or just take their normal summer holiday. Employees may also make multiple requests for holiday in a year to ensure that the business does not suffer through being short-staffed.
- 4.2 Employers should advise employees that there is no automatic right to take holiday during the Olympic Games and that, although all requests will be considered, the need for cover must also be taken into account. Employers should also explain what will happen in the event of competing requests for holiday during this period e.g. holiday may be allocated on a 'first come, first served' basis.
- 4.3 Employers should treat requests for holiday consistently, unless there is an objective reason for differential treatment, such as differences in levels of cover within a department.
- 4.4 If employers cannot meet all requests for time off during the Olympic Games they may wish to consider temporary flexible working e.g. allowing staff to work longer hours to make up missed hours on other days. However, the employer must be clear in writing that this is a temporary arrangement and it applies.

5. Unauthorised Absence

- 5.1 Given that demand for annual leave will be high during the period of the Olympic Games and employees may be unable to meet all requests for time off, employers may experience unauthorised absence during this period.
- 5.2 If an employee is absent without having followed the employer's absence notification procedure, the absence is likely to be unauthorised. Unauthorised absence may be a sign of misconduct and should be addressed through the disciplinary process in the usual way.

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