

## **Avoid an own goal during the World Cup**

Unless you are completely disconnected from the rest of the world, you will know that the kick off for the World Cup is on 11<sup>th</sup> June. With matches starting at 12.30, 15.00 and 19.30 (UK time) it is likely that there will be a number of employees wanting to watch their national team during working hours. Have you thought about how to accommodate their wishes with your own need to get the job done?

You are of course entitled to ban football from your premises. Supporting your football team is not a human right. The problem with this approach, apart from considerably lowering your staff morale, is that you may encounter an epidemic of footballitis, with staff self-certifying off sick when their team is playing. Even if their pattern of sickness is suspicious, you may not be able to do anything about it unless you catch them red-handed.

Whether you allow a giant screen in your premises or give your staff the time off, you also have to be careful about exuberant support. Football pitches are not renown for their equal opportunities ethos. Allowing football banter in your workplace leaves you exposed to discrimination claims.

Finally, certain supporters cannot imagine watching a match without a pack of their favourite lager. If employees can watch the matches at their desk or in the staff room, there is no need to lecture you on the potential danger of allowing alcohol in the workplace.

Acas has issued some advice that should help you plan how to deal with these potential problems. Acas advice is that "you should try to be:

- Flexible, where possible - for example, by altering start and finish times during the working day or allowing longer lunch breaks
- Clear about what you expect from employees - in terms of attendance and performance during the World Cup. Managing employees expectations of what might be possible is key to keeping them onsite
- Communicative - start talking to each other now about the World Cup and how you hope to manage leave and working hours
- Honest - if you cannot accommodate any changes to your work practices then say so. Also, you may need to remind employees that any special arrangements for watching matches are only temporary
- Fair - you need to be seen to be fair about the way you respond to requests for time off and avoid favouritism."

We would also recommend that you encourage employees to consider using their holiday entitlement if they want to take time off.

Having made your plan it is important that you communicate it to staff. We would recommend that you put it in writing to your employees and include a reminder about disciplining staff who over step the mark – this is particularly important for businesses that have employees supporting different competing teams. The aim is for employees to enjoy the World Cup without trouble, while maintaining productivity for your business and keeping clients happy. Please also don't forget those employees that are completely uninterested in football. If you give extra time off to football fans, allow it for football widows.

Details of the dates and times of matches can be found on Fifa's web site, [www.fifa.com](http://www.fifa.com)

For more specific information or to discuss your requirements please call either Amanda Galashan or Julie Calleux at EmployEase on 0845 123 3741, or email us at [info@employease.co.uk](mailto:info@employease.co.uk).

We hope you find this update useful. Should you wish to unsubscribe from this free update, please email us at the above address and your name will be removed. This e-mail does not constitute legal advice on any particular situation you may have.

© **EmployEase: The Employment Practice Ltd 2010**