

How employers can avoid the Christmas party calamity

The office Christmas party season is well upon us. The time of year where too much mulled wine is drunk, inappropriate comments made and photocopiers undergo hefty burdens.

While many employees are counting down the days until the annual Christmas party, many employers are worrying about the legal implications of the festive bash, often stemmed from a misunderstanding of the law. Most will be shocked to find that they are liable for the actions of staff at the annual work bash.

Employment law specialists, Law At Work are warning employers to avoid an ongoing hangover from the annual festive fixture by ensuring that their misconceptions and lack of knowledge are addressed now.

To help Edinburgh's businesses prepare for the festive period and dispel some of the most common misconceptions surrounding employment law, Law At Work is hosting a special pre-Christmas event on the 11th of December, a must for anyone responsible for the festive party. Aimed at business owners, senior managers and HR professionals, the half day event will tackle common employment law myths, ensuring that businesses in Edinburgh are legally prepared this Christmas and are aware of their responsibility during festive celebrations.

One of the key topics to be discussed includes harassment, a common complaint from the Christmas party season which many employers aren't aware they are often liable for at such events. In addition to festive related matters, the event will also look at a number of misconceptions experienced throughout the working year, including myths surrounding 'dismissing a poor performer takes years' and when you can sack a thieving

employee – making it an ideal refresher course for senior managers ahead of the New Year.

Donald MacKinnon, director of legal services at LAW, commented:-“Every New Year we experience a record number of calls from employers; most relating to staff behaviour following their office Christmas parties. Often this is a result of employers failing to realise that they could be liable for any resultant claims by staff following another staff member’s behaviour towards them. Like any other organisational event, employment legislation still applies; however, often these are disregarded at such times.

“For many employers, they simply are not aware of the employment law requirements. This occurs throughout the year; however, it is often during office celebrations that these rules should be adhered to most, when drink is flowing and staff are more ‘relaxed’. For example, many employers are not aware that they can found liable for party punch-ups because their attitude to free alcohol was held to have fuelled the fisticuffs. This can still apply for events held off site and outwith normal working hours.”

In addition to discussing the events of the Christmas party and raising awareness of some of the key employment legislations surrounding harassment including, theft and inappropriate behaviour, the event will also touch on recruitment, another popular topic in the New Year. An interactive event will provide business leaders with tools and techniques which will help dispel the barriers of employment law, allowing them to deal with matters quickly and firmly.

Places for the Employment law de-bunking the myths seminar are limited and cost £45 for LAW clients or £90 for non-clients (exclusive of VAT) and can be booked by visiting the Law at Work [website](#). The event will be held on Wednesday 11 December 2013 at LAW’s offices in Edinburgh.

Submitted by [Lucy Nicolson](#)