



GOSHA Newsletter

December 2021

Prepare for Coronavirus!

Assess - Prevent - Reduce – Protect

COVID-19

COVID-19 continues to be a threat.

There remains no room for us to be complacent, so please continue to refer to communications from our Government:

www.covid19.gov.gg/

and, specifically in relation to workplace safety:

www.gov.gg/hse

GOSHA Activities

With the continuing prevalence of COVID and the variants publicised, we have postponed our Safety & Health Week to now take place in April and have deferred a new programme of talks but we are planning for a conference to take place in October 2022, which will be a day event.

We will, of course, let you know what is planned.

Subscription Fees

We thought that we should now begin charging subscription fees from January 2022 to help us to arrange events next year, including the planned conference.

We are so grateful for the support of our members : through your membership and a variety of ways you support GOSHA. Thank you.

Workplace Christmas Parties (some advice from Arag, a UK Legal Expenses Insurer)

While the return of the company party is most welcome, after Christmas was effectively cancelled last year. Employers need to be careful, in the face of stubbornly high Covid-19 case numbers and the recently discovered Omicron variant.

While many large-scale parties have already been cancelled and the prospects, even for smaller events, hang in the balance, we've produced some guidance for employers still planning to hold a live event this year.

Our Head of Claims, Chris Millward, comments:

Every year, we advise businesses about the employment risks that social events can increase, such as harassment. But the ongoing pandemic presents some new issues that bosses need to navigate. Most of us are so ready for a party after two years of lockdowns and limitations on social gatherings, but that will mean different things to different people.

Some may be a little too enthusiastic and might need reining in, but others could be anxious about the virus and just being in a party situation.

We often urge employers to think about staff who, for whatever reasons, may not want to attend a Christmas bash. This year, there could be lots of people who want to attend but cannot, if they or a loved one are isolating or particularly vulnerable.

Bosses might like to think about making alternative arrangements for those people who are missing out, like sending them a gift or holding a parallel online event.

For businesses still holding live Christmas events, ARAG has issued a five-point PARTY strategy:

1. **Plan** - Check cancellation terms and make contingency plans, just in case. Review the venue's Covid-19 risk assessment and communicate any requirements to guests
2. **Adapt** - to local circumstances, if there are cases among the workforce or a spike in infections in the local area. Consider smaller, team gatherings or 2020-style Zoom events
3. **Remind** - It's probably been a while, so employees may need reminding that normal workplace rules of conduct and behaviour still apply at off-site events
4. **Test** - Compelling employees to show a negative test could raise tricky legal issues, but providing tests and asking staff to use them before attending will help minimise infection risk
5. **You're ready - to party!** For so many employees still working from home or only just back in the office, a festive get-together however small, is likely to be a big boost morale.

Nobody wants to think about cancelling a Christmas party that everyone is looking forward to and might be costing thousands." *continues Chris.* "But there may come a point at which going ahead would be irresponsible.

Besides, the cost of cancelling could be a lot less than holding an event that spreads the virus throughout the workforce, forcing lots of employees to isolate or take sickness leave, at the same time.

Hospitality venues and event organisers probably can't afford to be generous over cancellation terms, but they might be more flexible in postponing an event if you help mitigate losses by letting them know in good time and work with them.

This has been a very difficult year for many companies and for their staff, so we're all looking forward to letting our hair down. But nobody wants to take the coronavirus home for Christmas.

All of ARAG's legal protection policyholders have access to its legal helpline, which they can call for advice about their specific Christmas party circumstances or other legal issues.

GOSHA wishes you.....

a very happy Christmas and a healthy and safe New Year, 2022. We hope you will be able to attend some of the events and learning we have been planning.