



Clover HR

**ANOTHER COVID-19 CHRISTMAS:**  
The Employer guide to surviving  
Christmas remotely.





# ANOTHER COVID CHRISTMAS

The Employer guide to surviving Christmas remotely.

Christmas 2021 will soon be here; although certain restrictions placed upon us last year have now been lifted, it is safe to say that Christmas celebrations still may not be what employees and employers are previously used to, leading into the festive break.

Many employees still may have not seen their colleagues face to face for several months, others may have only recently gone back into the usual work environment and are adapting to new ways of working; or some may have moved to a more hybrid way of working, splitting their time between home and the workplace. Many may still not have seen family or friends recently, or be seeing them very often, and therefore the feeling of togetherness that usually surrounds this time of year leading up to Christmas could still be missing for some employees this year.

Usually businesses would celebrate Christmas in a variety of ways, whether it be with office parties, an off-site Christmas party, Christmas lunches/buffets, bonuses, and gifts. Some of these functions may go ahead this year due to the lifting of restrictions, however there are still recommendations in place for social distancing and the wearing of masks, therefore some employers may choose not to put such events on. Also, employees may still feel unsure about attending these types of gatherings.

# 01

## LOOKING AFTER YOUR EMPLOYEES

Advice for employers is to look at how they can help their employees get through the last month of another incredibly challenging year. It remains increasingly important for employers to pay attention to the needs of employees and try to have some festivities, keeping the Christmas spirit going.

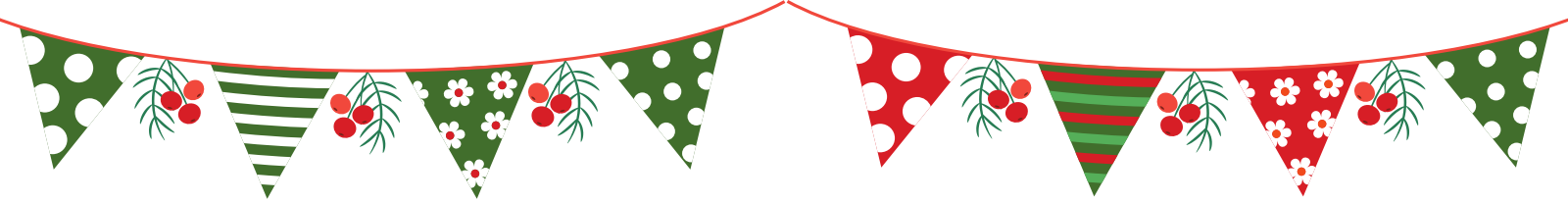
Employers are encouraged to look at:

- Boosting employee morale over the festive season
- Help employees to focus on their wellbeing and mental health
- Show appreciation for employees' hard work and adaption to different working methods during the pandemic
- Keeping teams and colleagues together and united

Currently, employers can hold a tax-deductible Christmas party, that in total is limited to £150 per head as long as the function is open for all employees to attend and is for team-building purposes. The money can't have already been spent on other functions during the year. In addition to this, employers can issue employees with a tax-deductible gift up to the value of £50.

If workplace social gatherings are going ahead, some tips for helping employees to keep safe and feel more comfortable are:

- To think about ventilation and if there may be access to an outdoor space
- Suggest the wearing of facemasks when moving around, should people want to, provide sanitiser and ask employees to perform a lateral flow test (LFT) before attending
- Ask employees to stay at home if they are not feeling well
- Ensure that attendance is voluntary so employees can make the choice based on their own comfortabilities and situation
- If you are using a specific venue, such as a restaurant, pub or event space, ensure that their guidelines are communicated to employees ahead of time, explaining that they must be followed



## 02

### SAYING THANK YOU

2021 has been another really challenging year for everyone, and where it may be easy for businesses to focus on the hardship they have suffered, this year it is more important than ever for employers to be recognising their employees and saying thank you for their hard work.



Not all recognitions and reward has to be of monetary value, employers / managers could look to send personal Christmas cards to their employees thanking them for all their work and support during the pandemic and all the changes the business and employee have been through. (It may be a nice touch if handwritten from the Business leader – if numbers permit).

If businesses are in a position to offer monetary rewards or gifts to employees then gift vouchers could be considered as these can be sent directly to employees' home addresses or even via email if they are E-vouchers, this may be appropriate as some employees may still be working remotely. (This does come with some warning as gift vouchers may not be as secure as in the past and consideration should be given as to which retailers are chosen). Many companies are now offering direct delivery too – Christmas Hampers / self-care kits / personalised items – there is a wide choice of gift options available online.

# 03

## REMOTE CHRISTMAS PARTY IDEAS



If it has been decided not to put on the usual Christmas parties this year to be able to reward and thank employees for their work, support and commitment during the pandemic, employers could consider hosting virtual Christmas parties instead. These can be done using programmes such as Zoom or Microsoft Teams.

Below are some suggestions of options and themes for virtual parties:

- Send party boxes to all employees, including a bottle of prosecco, snacks, & chocolates for them to all enjoy during the party
- Have a Christmas quiz, encourage employees to wear Christmas jumpers and have prizes on offer for the highest scorers, these prizes could be vouchers or gifts sent to employees in the post
- Online awards ceremony where employees can get dressed up and then they vote for their employee of the year, for example
- Karaoke party - not everyone loves a karaoke, but if your employees do then host a virtual karaoke party to get employees into the Christmas spirit singing their favourite Christmas songs to their colleagues
- Fancy dress theme - get employees to dress up in fancy dress outfits. Offer prizes for the top 3 best outfits, or even a prize for the worst outfit
- Host a virtual escape room party

If hosting some sort of virtual party, it would be a nice added touch if all employees attending were given a gift of some sort, as an appreciation for the work they have done during 2021.

## 04

### SECRET SANTA

Secret Santa is popular within workplaces as it saves employees having to buy presents for all their colleagues, or for their team members. Some teams and colleagues are all still remote due to the pandemic, so may not be getting together this year. Instead of the usual office secret Santa, look at doing a virtual secret Santa. There are apps available to download which are set up as secret Santa's, which message employees and tell them who they have been selected to buy a present for.

Planning would be needed to decide how to get the presents to employees, as not everyone may agree for colleagues to know their addresses for these to be posted, so there may need to be a designated person who collects the gifts and posts them out to employees. Failing this a manager could arrange gifts to be sent to their employees' home addresses as a secret Santa and these gifts can be opened during a team video call if a Christmas party event is not being held.



## 05

### WELLBEING & MENTAL HEALTH

The Christmas season is a time for happiness and togetherness; however, it sadly can also be a stressful time for some people, especially more so this year with the challenges everyone has faced from Covid-19.

It is important that employers remember that employees need support, and that focus is placed on employees' wellbeing.

Employees who feel valued in the workplace are more likely to be motivated and committed to the work that they do, to be able to do this they need to be able to focus and look after themselves also.

Employees need to be aware that their wellbeing is important to their employer and that there is support available if they need it. Businesses should look at offering support to employees in a variety of ways throughout the year, by listening and promoting open dialogues for employees to talk, promoting wellbeing and assistance if needed, this can be done in workplaces, or through employee assistance programmes, and also encouraging employees to take time away from work to spend with their families.



MERRY

Christmas

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