



What shall we do with a drunken air hostess?

A British Airways hostess who was dismissed for gross misconduct for allegedly turning up for work drunk has lost her Employment Tribunal claim against the airline.

Helen Whitmore reportedly turned up for work swaying on the way to the check-in desk, slurring her words and pretending she was sober by attempting to reading a book - which she held upside down.

In her defence, Ms Whitmore stated that she had not in fact been drunk on duty but that her behaviour was because she had been unwell due to the effects of the menopause. She also said that there were inconsistencies in the witness statements that BA relied upon to say she was drunk- one of the statements had been taken by a police officer who stated he smelled alcohol Ms Whitmore's breath but Ms Whitmore said this was because the statement was taken in the bar area of the airport.

However, the Tribunal was ultimately swayed by the fact that Ms Whitmore had then gone home in breach of BA's notification procedures, when she would have otherwise been required to be breathalysed, and never stated at the time that she was unwell. Helpfully (and dramatically) British Airways was also able to show the Tribunal CCTV footage which showed Ms Whitmore swaying and falling over on the day rather than collapsing as she had said was the case.

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