

# **CITIZENS ADVICE REIGATE AND BANSTEAD CAREER BREAK POLICY AND PROCEDURE**

## **1. Introduction**

A career break is an unpaid period of leave from employment granted for a specific purpose to an individual employee at his/her request.

Career breaks can be for travel, holiday, volunteering, academic or any reasonable specified purpose. Career breaks are not intended to allow you to try out another job whilst retaining your old one in case the new job does not work out successfully.

A career break is intended to benefit staff - supporting continuous improvement and personal development and encouraging a work-life balance. However, in any individual case, this must be balanced by the need to ensure that the services provided do not suffer, and approval will always depend on the particular circumstances at that time.

In deciding whether to approve a particular application and agree its timing, the following criteria are likely to be considered:

- staffing levels in the unit
- how the work will be covered during the absence
- if a temporary replacement is to be employed, the need for an adequate handover
- whether you have applied for and/or had a career break in the past
- whether the break may benefit Citizens Advice Reigate and Banstead Career by enabling you to broaden your experience or education, or focus on non-work issues for a period
- any compelling compassionate reasons

## **2. Eligibility**

To be eligible for a career break, you must normally have been employed by Citizens Advice Reigate and Banstead Career for a continuous period of at least two years. If you have already had a career break and wish to apply for another one, you would be expected to have completed at least two further years' continuous employment since the previous break.

To ensure continuity of service provision Citizens Advice Reigate and Banstead will normally only approve a career break for one employee at any one time and applications will be considered on a 'first come, first served' basis.

## **3. Application**

Employees must make an application in writing to the CEO giving at least thirteen weeks' notice prior to the intended commencement of the career break. Applications should outline the purpose and length of the break, the proposed benefits to the individual and any benefits to Citizens Advice Reigate and Banstead.

There may be an interview between both parties to discuss the reasons for requesting a career break and the implications for Citizens Advice Reigate and Banstead. The CEO will have final discretion to agree or refuse an application.

You will receive written notification of the result of your application to take a career break.

A career break must be used for the intended purpose. If conditions change during your absence, you must inform Citizens Advice Reigate and Banstead of this so that an appropriate decision can be made in the light of the changed circumstances.

#### **4. Period of absence**

Career breaks should have a clearly defined date of return on which the employee will return to their original job or 'a job at same level and location. The career break would normally last between three and twelve months.

In exceptional circumstances (such as to undertake academic study) this period can be extended at the discretion of Citizens Advice Reigate and Banstead trustee board.

#### **5. Terms and conditions during the career break**

Wherever possible your terms and conditions of employment will remain the same on your return from career break, subject to changing business needs.

During a career break no salary will be payable from Citizens Advice Reigate and Banstead. On return you will remain on the same grade but will receive any additional cost-of-living pay awards that have been made to all staff.

#### **6. Pension**

During a career break you can remain in full membership of the pension scheme. The period does not count towards pensionable service however, unless the pension scheme allows you to make employer's and employee's pension contributions. (This will depend on the rules of the particular pension scheme). Citizens Advice Reigate and Banstead will not make employer's contributions during career breaks.

Annual leave entitlement will be frozen whilst absent. Annual leave would be granted on a pro-rata basis for the calendar years both prior to and immediately following the career break. Prior to commencing a career break, you must take all outstanding annual leave.

Citizens Advice Reigate and Banstead will not pay National Insurance contributions for the duration of the career break.

The period spent on a career break will count towards continuous service.

#### **7. Redundancy**

If funding for the job becomes unavailable during the career break, you will be treated as at risk of redundancy, and, where applicable, a statutory redundancy payment will be offered to you based on your continuous service and age as at the date of redundancy.

#### **8. Communication during the break**

You and your manager should agree appropriate means of communicating during the career break, depending on the particular circumstances.

#### **9. Return to work**

You must give written notice of intention to return to work no less than three months before the agreed date of return. If notice is not received, you may lose the right to return to your employment.

Early return from a career break will only be considered in exceptional circumstances since cover arrangements will probably have been put in place for the entire duration and duties offered to other employees.