

CITIZENS ADVICE REIGATE AND BANSTEAD EXCLUDING CLIENTS OR WITHDRAWING SERVICE POLICY AND PROCEDURE

1. Circumstances where exclusion is relevant

Citizens Advice Reigate and Banstead work hard to give advice and support to all clients. Unfortunately, however, there are circumstances where managers feel that they have no alternative but to withdraw service from a client or exclude a client. These circumstances include when:

- the client has been violent, aggressive, threatening or abusive toward staff, volunteers or other clients
- the client regularly refuses to follow the advice given
- the client regularly changes their mind about what they want to do
- the client fails to provide the required information, for example someone who does not disclose all of their debts, or continually changes the information they give
- where there is a suspicion or knowledge that the client is attempting to make a fraudulent benefit or other claim
- the supervisor feels that the client cannot be offered any further assistance on a particular issue, either because they have exhausted all available sources of advice, the client is proving too demanding on time and resources, or the advice or support required is beyond the expertise or remit of Citizens Advice Reigate and Banstead.

2. Alternatives to exclusion

Ceasing to advise a client is a serious step for them and Citizens Advice Reigate and Banstead will consider alternatives before doing so.

For example:

- if a client ignores clear advice or continually changes their mind, explore the reasons and try to overcome any barriers
- if it appears that a client is not listening consider whether setting out the advice clearly and simply writing would help them understand,
- where there is evidence that a client is withholding information relevant to the case, set out the concerns in writing and explain that the client can only be advised if the client is open and honest otherwise the most helpful advice will not be possible
- if a client continually changes their mind or gives conflicting information, explain the difficulties this causes and consider setting this out in writing

3. Procedure for withdrawing service or excluding a client

Citizens Advice Reigate and Banstead will undertake the following procedures when withdrawing service or excluding a client:

- The client should be warned that Citizens Advice Reigate and Banstead is considering withdrawing the service and the reasons for this, with specific examples of the behaviour so that they have a chance to put things right.
- The decision to withdraw service must be made by Citizens Advice Reigate and Banstead CEO, and the chair of the trustee board informed of this decision.
- The CEO must write to the client to explain that service will no longer be provided to them and set out clear reasons why.
- The letter must explain any conditions to the client. For example, if a client has physically assaulted a member of staff it may be that a complete ban will be imposed on the client. If service is to be withdrawn because a certain issue has been exhausted it may be that Citizens Advice Reigate and Banstead are unwilling to continue with the particular matter, but will happily continue to advise the client on any new matters.

- The client must be made aware that they will not be able to seek advice from another Citizens Advice office within the same district.
- If the service is withdrawn on the basis that Citizens Advice Reigate and Banstead is unable to help the client, the CEO must be satisfied that Citizens Advice Reigate and Banstead has approached all relevant local agencies as part of the advice process, or that the client has been correctly signposted.
- The client should be told that they can appeal to the Citizens Advice Reigate and Banstead trustee board chair if they disagree with the decision.

4. Overriding principles

Citizens Advice Reigate and Banstead must ensure that they have solid reasoning for withdrawing service or excluding a client, and be satisfied that any decision does not conflict with policies on equality or exclusion. For example, it is not acceptable to withdraw service purely on the basis that the client is deemed 'difficult' or has [mental health problems](#). Citizens Advice Reigate and Banstead should not exclude a client just because they have made a complaint or claim. If however, a client has issues that manifest themselves in such a way as to disrupt staff, volunteers or clients, or put the personal safety of staff, volunteers and clients in jeopardy, it may be that exclusion is the only option available.

In exceptional cases Citizens Advice Reigate and Banstead may have to exclude a client during or after their first visit. However, in the vast majority of cases, exclusion should be used as a last resort and Citizens Advice Reigate and Banstead must attempt to exercise other forms of resolution before deciding to ban a client.

If a client complains about the decision, the chair of the trustee board (or another designated trustee) should review the CEO's decision and check that it was arrived at properly and is reasonable in the circumstances. The chair's decision is final.