

CITIZENS ADVICE REIGATE AND BANSTEAD

GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY POLICY

Introduction

Citizens Advice Reigate and Banstead staff and volunteers must treat with caution any offer, gift, favour or hospitality made to them personally and must avoid the risk of damage to public confidence in the local office. Trustees, staff or volunteers should always consider whether a gift or hospitality is intended to improperly influence any decisions they make.

This guidance is designed to help in deciding what is acceptable or not. There is also detailed guidance for accepting client donations.

Gifts or hospitality includes meals (but not business lunches or business events with an estimated value less than set out in Appendix 1.1), invitations to the theatre or special events, gifts of wine, equipment etc. It also includes any opportunity to acquire goods or services at a price or on terms at which they are not readily available to the public. It excludes cars or taxis provided by others to take staff or trustees to a relevant meeting or business event.

Guiding principles for the acceptance of gifts and hospitality

- These principles apply to trustees, staff and volunteers. The guidelines below require staff and volunteers in certain circumstances to seek the approval of the Chief Executive Officer. If a trustee is in any doubt about what they should do, they should consult the chair.
- Trustees, staff or volunteers should not normally accept a free service, gift or hospitality from a party with which a local office might subsequently have a contract or other financial relationship from which that party might benefit. If in doubt the Chief Executive Officer must be consulted.
- Acceptance of any gift or hospitality should not create a sense of indebtedness to the donor, whether they are a funder or supplier (existing or potential).
- Hospitality can be accepted if it is modest and contributes to carrying out the Citizens Advice Reigate and Banstead's work. For example, working lunches are a proper way of doing business, provided that they are approved by the Chief Executive Officer or chair and no extravagance is involved.
- It is normally acceptable for someone to represent a local office at a social event or function organised by outside bodies or persons, provided it provides an opportunity to take forward the objectives of the local office, (and as long as such events are infrequent).
- Invitations to events that cost a lot to attend, that trustees, staff or volunteers would not or could not normally pay for or that trustees, staff or volunteers

would not be able to get tickets to, should usually be declined. If in doubt the Chief Executive Officer must be consulted.

Administration of gifts and hospitality

- The Chief Executive Officer must maintain a register of all gifts and hospitality received from non-clients (or offered but not accepted) regardless of value. The register should be available to the board of trustees. The procedure for accepting client donations is detailed below.
- Staff and volunteers must seek agreement from the Chief Executive Officer for the acceptance of gifts or hospitality of a significant value. It may not be possible to assign a precise value to an offered gift or hospitality but anything likely to be worth in excess of the amount set in Appendix 1.2 should be referred for advice.
- If the Chief Executive Officer or any trustee is in doubt about acceptance of a gift or hospitality, they should consult the chair.
- Staff and volunteers must within 10 days of the offer of or receiving any gifts or hospitality notify the Chief Executive Officer of the existence, value and nature of that gift or hospitality.
- Trustees must within 10 days of receiving any gifts or hospitality notify the chair of the existence, value and nature of that gift or hospitality. If the gift or hospitality was received by the chair then the chair must notify the other trustees of the existence, value and nature of that gift or hospitality.
- Any gift of money or equipment must be used for the benefit of Citizens Advice Reigate and Banstead and must not be retained by individual trustees, staff or volunteers.
- Any gifts of food or drink (e.g. wine) etc may be accepted, provided they are modest and can be used for the benefit of all trustees, staff or volunteers.
- If it is necessary to refuse a gift or hospitality, this should be done without giving offence by referring to these rules which cover all, and which are designed to protect the donor as well as the recipient.

Client donations

- If clients offer to make donations, local office staff and volunteers will state that local Citizens Advice services are free. This will be the guiding principle for all discussions between service user and provider.
- If a client wants to thank the local office, a member of staff or volunteer, each will recommend that the client contact their local councillor or Member of Parliament praising the Citizens Advice service. If the client wishes to make a donation of goods, a small communal gift such as a packet of biscuits or a jar of coffee would usually be appropriate.

- When necessary it will be explained to clients that members of staff and volunteers are unable to accept personal gifts.
- All donations from clients either in cash or value of goods above that set out in Appendix 1.3 will be recorded in detail on the client case sheet along with the Citizens Advice Reigate and Banstead's response. Citizens Advice Reigate and Banstead will also record the client donation in the central register of gifts and hospitality.
- On receipt of a donation, the Chief Executive Officer will, at their discretion, write to the client expressing thanks for helping to keep Citizens Advice Reigate and Banstead a free service.
- All donations will be recorded in Citizens Advice Reigate and Banstead's accounting records and checked by the Chief Executive Officer and, if an amount is above that set out in Appendix 1.4, by the treasurer.
- Donation boxes will be carefully placed so that clients do not feel under pressure to donate, and the principle of a free service is not compromised. Donation boxes will not be positioned prominently in interview rooms. They will not be placed in areas unsupervised by staff, to minimise the risk of theft. Boxes will carry details of the local office's registered charity status.
- Fundraising notices will not be displayed in interview rooms or in any place where clients may feel under pressure to make a donation. This also applies to advertising for fundraising events.

APPENDIX 1: AMOUNTS AGREED BY TRUSTEE BOARD

1. The value of business lunches / business events not exceeding £30 per person.
2. The minimum value of gift or hospitality received by staff or volunteers where this policy applies: £30 per person.
3. The minimum value of client donation that must be reported in the gifts and hospitality register and on the client's case record: £30
4. The minimum amount of client donation that must be brought to the treasurer's attention: £50