

## Reference request

Experience shows that how a person has behaved in the past is one of the most reliable indicators of how they will behave in the future.

**It is vital therefore that references on people seeking work with vulnerable groups are seen and used as a tool to obtain relevant information to guide decisions about selection.**

References are just as important for voluntary posts as for paid employment. A similar process should be followed when seeking volunteers for the kinds of posts that require a formal recruitment process. However, prospective volunteers might not be employed or have previous experience of working with vulnerable groups. Consequently, organisations may have to be prepared to be flexible about the kinds of people from whom they will accept references and the nature of those references. Nevertheless, it is important to make background enquiries and checks on volunteers as well as on paid staff.

### When should references be obtained?

It is helpful if wherever possible that references should be obtained before interview. Relevant information can then be taken into account and, if necessary, issues explored further before or at the interview. This must be explained in the information sent to applicants and on the application form. Careful consideration will need to be given to any request by an applicant to delay seeking references until it is known whether he or she is to be offered the post.

### Scrutinising references

It is very important to read references carefully and thoroughly to make sure that:

- The referee has answered all the questions.
- There are no vague or ambiguous statements.

It is also vital to compare the information about the applicant provided by the referee with the information the applicant has given about him or herself and his or her experience and background.

If the references reveal any discrepancies or inconsistencies, or any doubts or concerns about the person's suitability, the issues should be followed up and explored with the referee. This is probably best done by telephone, but it is important to keep a written record of the conversation and if the issues are significant, to confirm your understanding in writing to the referee. This is particularly important if the information is such that you decide not to consider the person further, or that you need to explore the issues with the applicant.

**Example reference request: a person with experience of working with vulnerable groups To: (referee's name and organisation)**

**Request for a reference in respect of:** (name of applicant)

**In regard to application for:** (title of post applied for)

**Please confirm the following details**

The applicant's period of employment with you:

From To

The applicant's current or most recent job title with you

The main duties and responsibilities of that post:

The applicant's reason for leaving your employment:

How long have you known the applicant?

In what capacity do you know him/her?

Did the applicant perform his/her duties satisfactorily? Yes [ ] No [ ]

If No please provide details of any areas needing improvement and any remedial action taken:

Please see the job description and person specification attached and comment on the applicant's suitability for this appointment. It would also be helpful if you could describe any strengths and weaknesses you consider the applicant has demonstrated in relation to the requirements of this job and give examples (please continue on a separate sheet if necessary).

Please comment on the effectiveness of the applicant's interactions with:

- a. a) Other adults
- b) Children and young people

To the best of your knowledge has the applicant ever had a safeguarding allegation made against them?

Yes [ ] No [ ]

If Yes please give full details of the nature and date(s) of the allegation(s), by whom they were investigated, what conclusion was reached as a result of the investigation, whether any action was taken and if so what that was?

Has the applicant been the subject of a disciplinary action in respect of which penalties or sanctions remain in force?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If Yes please give full details of the nature and date(s) of the misconduct and of the penalty or sanctions still in force.

Printed name:

Signature:

Position:

Organisation:

Date:

