



Policy Name	Reference Request Policy
Version	0.1
Name of originator/ author	HR Manager
Review due	May 2024

Policy Statement

The Trust is committed to being fair to all current and previous employees. This policy is to ensure that any references given on behalf of the Trust are within the current recommended guidelines as set out by ACAS.

Principles

If an employer gives a reference it must be accurate and fair. The employer giving the reference can decide how much they include.

In all cases, any references provided on behalf of the Trust should in the first instance be referred to HR who will work with the line manager to complete them.

If you are providing a personal reference, it must be made clear that this is not provided on behalf of the Trust.

References for volunteers

References can be given to volunteers once they have actively volunteered for Earth Trust. All requests to be sent to the Volunteer Officer who will then contact the staff lead to ascertain the correct information needed. Volunteer officer will then complete the reference and send on to the appropriate person.

Types of References

References can be short or long – for example, a 'basic reference' or a 'detailed reference'.

What a basic reference says

A basic reference (or factual reference) is a short summary of their employment. For example, their job title and the dates they worked there.

What a detailed reference says

A detailed reference (or character reference) can include:

- answers to questions from the employer requesting the reference
- details about their skills, ability and experience
- details about their character, strengths and weaknesses relating to their suitability for the new role
- how often they were off work
- disciplinary details
- the reason they left the job

What a reference cannot say

References must not:

- be misleading
- include irrelevant personal information

All details about the person, their role or performance must be fair and accurate. If opinions are provided, there should be evidence to support the opinion.

For example, if someone's performance record shows they need to improve in a few areas, the reference should not say they excelled at the job.

References and discrimination

It's usually against the law for information on any of the following – known as 'protected characteristics' – to be used, whether providing, requesting or checking references:

- age
- disability
- race
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

For example, if an employer decides to withdraw a job offer because the candidate has a disability that was mentioned in their reference it would be considered to be discrimination.

The only exception is when a protected characteristic is crucial to do a job. In law this is called an 'occupational requirement'. For example, if a Catholic church wants to employ a priest and it is necessary for them to be Catholic.