

Reference Policy

Scope

- 1.0 This policy explains Huntingdonshire District Council's position on the giving and requesting of employment and personal (character) references.
- 1.1 The policy applies to all staff whether approached to give a job or other type of reference or seeking references.

Principles

- 2.1 A reference request is a request for information on or about a person.
- 2.2 References may be verbal, or written in an email, letter or any other document.
- 2.3 Typically the employer is approached to provide references for employees for employment purposes. However, references may also be provided in support of academic study or further study; financial information for mortgage or rental purposes.

Giving References

3.0 Employment references:

- 3.1 All employment reference requests for current or former employees will be handled by the HR Department and should be sent to humanresources@huntingdonshire.gov.uk
- 3.2 It is HDC's practice to provide a standard reference in writing, directly to the requestor. The reference will contain factual historic information only, including:
 - Confirmation of employment dates.
 - Confirmation of post employed in.
 - Reason for leaving.
- 3.3 All references provided should be in response to a specific request. General 'To whom it may concern' references will not normally be given.
- 3.4 HDC will not provide telephone references to prospective employers.
- 3.5 Copies of references will be kept on the individual's HR file where possible. The only exception to this is if the reference has been submitted via an online form.

4.0 Personal (Character) References

- 4.1 What you put in a personal (character) reference is a matter for you as you give it in your personal capacity and not on behalf of the Council or in your capacity as an employee of the council. If you do not wish to provide a reference, you should notify the individual to whom it relates. This will give them the opportunity to ask someone else to provide a reference for them.
- 4.2 Personal character references should not be provided using the Council's official letterhead/stationary or email addresses. If you choose to give someone a personal character reference you should use your own personal stationary and state clearly in the reference that it is provided by you in your personal capacity, rather than on behalf of the Council.

References for Academic Courses or Training

- 5.1 The same principles as for employment references will be followed when providing a reference for an individual who has applied to study a course or enrolled at an institution providing training. Requests should be sent to humanresources@huntingdonshire.gov.uk

Financial (Mortgage and Rental) References

- 6.1 All requests for confirmation of earnings and continuity of employment from mortgage companies or rental agencies; will be handled by the payroll team, please send requests to Transactions@huntingdonshire.gov.uk
- 6.2 This information will only be given where Transactions are certain of the identity of the company requesting the reference, and where the individual who is the subject of the reference has given their express consent by signing an authority slip. This information will be provided in writing only, no references will be provided by telephone.
- 6.3 Copies of references will be kept on the individual's HR file where possible. The only exception to this is if the reference has been submitted via an online form.

8.0 References for Contracted Work

- 8.1 Any manager who has used a contractor to undertake a piece of work may find themselves approached by either the contractor directly or by one of the contractor's customers or potential customers for a reference. It is usual that they will ask for information regarding what type of work was undertaken and whether it was undertaken satisfactorily. The same principles as for employment references should be followed only factual/objective information should be provided. The reference will be provided by the individual who was/ is responsible for managing the contract.

Requesting References

- 9.1 It is important that two references are taken up as part of the recruitment and selection process. Along with other mandatory pre-employment checks any offer of employment will be subject to satisfactory references.
- 9.2 The HR recruitment team will seek and collate references for prospective employees and forward them onto the recruiting manager for their approval, only if there are any concerns with the reference, or in obtaining references.
- 9.3 Copies of all references received will be stored on the individual's HR file.
- 9.4 If a reference has not been requested but is received, it should be promptly sent to HR marked "private and confidential".
- 9.5 References may be returned which only contain factual information. Such references can be accepted, even though they do not discuss the applicant's performance within the role the reference is confirming.

Confidentiality

- 10.1 References and requests for them should be kept confidential because they relate to personal and sensitive personal data about an individual. The fact that a request has been received should not be disclosed to other staff or colleagues of the individual.
- 10.2 Requests for references should be kept confidential between the individual concerned and only those individuals who need to know about the request in order to provide the reference.

- 10.3 Copies of references provided should be kept on the HR file and not left where other staff may have access to them.
- 10.4 Under the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), individuals have the right to access personal data. However, the Data Protection Act 2018 includes an exclusion in relation to references given in confidence for the purposes of education, training or employment of the subject of the reference. Organisations no longer have to release copies of references received when candidates request it. In the first instance the candidate should approach the author of the reference if they require a copy. However, on occasion it may be beneficial for the candidate to receive a copy of the reference and if they are unable to obtain a copy from the author then we may consider supplying the reference to them.

Queries

- 14.1 If you have any queries about providing references these should be addressed to HR in the first instance.