

Guidance Scope	This guidance sets out the minimum reference requirements for all prospective employees across ECL and aligns with the (CQC) safer recruitment expectations under Regulation 19: Fit and Proper Persons Employed. The guidance defines the minimum number and type of references required and the criteria for acceptable and unacceptable referees. It also provides guidance for non-standard circumstances, including education, volunteering, self-employment and overseas employment. These requirements apply to all permanent, fixed term contracts, bank and apprenticeship appointments across ECL and must be followed alongside all other safer recruitment checks.
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Minimum Reference Requirements for all services across ECL.

- At least 2 employment references plus a professional reference or a character reference
- If previously worked in healthcare obtain reference from the most recent employer within the last 7 years
- If the candidate is currently in education or volunteering, request these references alongside employment references.
- References must cover the last 3 years.
- If the most recent employment does not cover the last 3 years, obtain additional employment references until the full 3-year period is covered.
- Always request a reference from the candidate's most recent employer.

Acceptable Employment Referees

- Current or previous Line Manager
- Registered Manager
- Deputy Manager
- Service Manager
- Head of Department
- Practice Manager
- Director
- HR Representative authorised to provide references

Unacceptable Employment Referees

- Work colleagues
- Friends from work
- Subordinates
- Customers or service users
- Family members

Professional References

Professional references should come from someone who knows the candidate in a professional capacity.

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Acceptable Professional Referees

- Teacher, Tutor or Lecturer
- College or University Supervisor
- Placement Supervisor
- Volunteer Coordinator
- Professional Mentor
- Clinical Assessor
- Coach or Instructor in an organised setting
- Professional Colleague who has worked closely with the applicant
- Representative of a Professional Registration Body
- Community Organisation Leader who has supervised their work

Unacceptable Professional Referees

- Friends
- Neighbours
- Family members
- Partners or spouses
- Anyone who only knows the applicant socially

Character References

Character references can be used to support employment history or fill gaps.

Requirements

The referee must:

- Have known the applicant for at least **5 years**
- Not be related by blood or marriage
- Not live at the same address
- Have no financial relationship with the applicant

Acceptable Character Referees

- Clergy Member
- Community Leader
- Scout or Guide Leader
- School Governor
- Local Councillor
- Long-standing Family Friend (not related)
- Charity Trustee
- Club Chairperson
- Community Volunteer Leader

Unacceptable Character Referees

- Parent
- Sibling
- Child
- Partner or spouse



- Relative
- Housemate

Educational References

Required if the applicant has been in education within the last 3 years.

Acceptable Educational Referees

- Professor
- Teacher
- Headteacher
- Academic Advisor
- Guidance Counsellor
- Teaching Assistant

Referees We Cannot Accept Due to Financial Links

- Current or former business partners
- Employers who are shareholders in the applicant's business
- Accountants, bookkeepers or financial advisers acting on the applicant's behalf
- Bank managers or lending officers managing their finances
- Landlords, letting agents or property managers
- Clients, customers or suppliers involved in ongoing financial transactions
- Creditors, debtors or personal loan providers
- Investors with a financial interest in the applicant's activities
- Anyone with joint ownership of property, businesses, investments or bank accounts
- Individuals providing financial support to, or receiving support from, the applicant
- Anyone who may financially benefit from the applicant obtaining employment
- Anyone who has referred the candidate through a Refer-a-Friend (RAF) scheme

Volunteering

Volunteering can be used as:

- **Employment Reference** - Where the volunteering role is relevant to the job applied for.
- **Professional Reference** - Where the volunteering role is not related to the care sector or role applied for.

Common Scenarios

Has not worked recently/Left School/Retired

If the candidate has been:

- A full-time carer
- Out of work for a long period
- Recently left education
- Retired

You should:

1. Request references from the last 2 known employers, regardless of how long ago.
2. Keep evidence if records are unavailable.
3. Obtain character or professional references to help cover the required period.

Consider supporting evidence such as:

- District Nurses
- Social Workers
- GPs
- Religious leaders
- Neighbours
- Care-related statements
- DWP Carer's Allowance statements

Avoid immediate family members.

Redundancy or Dissolved Company

Where an employer has ceased trading:

Obtain

- Companies House screenshot confirming dissolution
- Previous manager or supervisor reference
- Business acquaintance reference (if applicable)
- Character reference from a person of standing

Supporting Evidence

- Employment contracts
- Payslips
- P45s
- Bank statements
- Redundancy letters
- HMRC employment history records

Self-Employed Candidates

Company Listed on Companies House

- Capture screenshots.
- Save as employment evidence.
- Record on the reference log.

Company Not Listed on Companies House

Obtain:

- Accountant's letter confirming trading history
- Client or customer references



- HMRC registration evidence (e.g. UTR)
- Character references from a recognised professional

Self-Employed Through Self-Assessment

Accept:

- Customer testimonials
- Client emails or letters
- Invoices and contracts
- Profit and loss records
- UTR confirmation
- HMRC records
- Business bank statements
- Accountant or financial adviser confirmation
- References from clients, suppliers or professionals of standing

Agency Workers

Where agency references cannot be obtained, gather:

Alternative Evidence

- Payslips
- Timesheets
- P60s
- Contracts

Additional Support

- Manager or supervisor reference from placement location
- Character reference
- Written explanation from candidate if the agency will not provide a reference

Family Business Employment

Where the candidate worked in a family business:

Obtain references from:

- A non-family supervisor or manager
- Clinical or work supervisor
- Non-family colleague (preferably senior)
- HR or Compliance Officer

Also obtain:

- Character reference from a non-relative

Armed Forces Personnel

A **Certificate of Service**, accompanied by an official covering letter, may be accepted instead of a standard employment reference.



Overseas Employment or Study

6 months or more continuously spent abroad.

Where employment, volunteering, military service or education occurred overseas:

- Obtain references from the overseas organisation where possible.

Labour Books

Some European countries issue official labour books containing employment history. These can be accepted instead of requesting separate employment references if the information provided is sufficient.