



## Norland Agency Reference Policy

### Introduction

It is a requirement when registering with Norland Agency, in order to pursue employment opportunities, that Norlanders provide their most up to date references. This document outlines Norland Agency's policy in relation to obtaining references for Norlanders utilising the Agency.

### Who can supply references?

References should focus on seeking evidence about a Norlander's abilities and experience in the working environment, and in particular the childcare sector. This information would be best provided by a current or previous employer, and therefore the Agency will seek the Norlander's most up to date employment references.

If the Norlander has not undertaken paid employment for a number of years, references for voluntary roles can be sought, but these should preferably be childcare related.

General character references, are less relevant than professionally focussed ones, however in exceptional circumstances when the Agency is unable to obtain recent employment or voluntary references, a character reference may be sought. Character references can be obtained from a previous work colleague who knows the Norlander in a professional capacity, people who have used the services of a Norlander as a child carer (not paid), or a professional who has known the Norlander for some time such as a lecturer, local vicar etc.

### What should be included or excluded from a reference?

- It should be established in the reference who is writing the reference, the nature of their relationship to the Norlander and the length of time they have known them.
- The contents of a reference must be accurate and a fair account of the period of employment, and not information that is misleading or provided in malice. Nothing should be put into a reference that the Norlander is not already aware of, and, if based on opinion, could have a negative impact on their future employment.
- Children's names should not be used within the reference, or any personal information which would make them identifiable to a third party.
- No 'sensitive personal information' should be included in the reference in relation to the Norlander, including information related to; ethnic origin, physical and mental health, religious beliefs, political opinions, sexual orientation, and criminal convictions.
- Please note that Norland Agency will not ask any specific questions on our reference template that is related to disability and/or sickness absence as this has the potential to contravene equality legislation. If a Norlander is employed based on an introduction from the Agency, a health declaration will be included with the draft contract and the client is at liberty to use this.

### **When will references be sought?**

References will be sought from previous employers at the point of the Norlander registering with the Agency and must be obtained and verified prior to the Norlander's CV being sent to a client. The Agency will not seek references from a current employer until the Norlander has ended their employment, or authorisation has been provided by the Norlander at the point of resignation. For Newly Qualified Nannies (NQNs), the Agency will use a verified employment reference from the time the NQN was at college to put the NQN forward for jobs between the 8 and 12 month period of their position. Once the 12 month appraisal has been received this will be used, with consent from the client.

### **Types of references received by Norland Agency**

Reference requests are sent via email. Norlanders registering with the Agency provide the names and details of two recent referees. References can be provided in the following format:

#### **Written references**

Written references are Norland Agency's preferred reference type, and this will be sought for permanent and temporary positions, both obtained through the Agency and externally.

When leaving a permanent role, or a temporary position obtained externally, the Agency requests that the Norlander contacts their referee to confirm that they are willing to provide a reference and that they have given permission to be contacted by the Agency. Once this has been done the Agency will contact the family directly. If the Norlander already has obtained a reference from the family, this reference will need to be verified (please see below\*).

For temporary positions obtained through the Agency, the Agency Consultant will contact the family at the end of the placement to confirm the placement was successful and to ask for a reference. In the case of Newly Qualified Nannies (NQN) the Agency will use their 12 month appraisal at the end of their NQN role as a written reference, unless consent has not been provided.

#### **Verbal references:**

When written references can't be obtained from a former employer, they can provide a verbal reference. Again, the Norlander will need to ensure that they have permission from the referee to pass on their details to provide a verbal reference. In this instance, a member of staff from Norland Agency will liaise with the referee to arrange a time to take a verbal reference, using the appropriate Norland Agency form as a template to record responses.

#### **\*Reference Verification:**

Norlanders can provide the Agency with references that they have obtained directly from their previous employers. Before sending the reference to the Agency the Norlander will need to contact their referee to seek permission to share the reference and advise them that the Agency will be in contact to verify the reference (as outlined on the Norlander Information Checklist). Once this has been completed, the Norlander can send the reference to the Agency to verify, confirming that the appropriate permissions have been sought and providing the relevant contact details. Whenever possible, the Agency will call the referee to ensure that the information on the reference is complete and correct. If this is not possible, an email will be sent to verify the reference.

When the referee is contacted for verification they will also be asked for the appropriate permissions and consent so that the Agency can keep the reference on file.

**How references will be stored and used?**

Copies of written and verbal references will be uploaded on to the Agency's Customer Relationship Management database and a copy may also be held on email. Information will be held in line with Norland's Data Management Policy.

The references will also be anonymised for use in the Norlander's profile. These profiles will be sent to clients alongside the Norlander's CV when applying for roles through the Agency; the profile confirms the Norlander's training, qualifications and references from previous employers.

All referees will be asked by the Agency if a copy of their reference can be issued to the Norlander for their records. If agreed, the reference will only be given on direct request from the Norlander, and the references will be anonymised taking out any information which identifies the employer or their children.

**Can clients speak to referees from the Norlander's previous positions?**

All recent references provided by the Norland Agency have been obtained directly or verified. However, on occasion, a client may wish to contact the Norlander's former employers. On these occasions and only at 'offer stage', the Agency will contact the Norlander to ascertain from them which referees would be willing to provide a direct verbal reference. Once this is established, the Agency Consultant will contact the referee(s) to gain permission to provide the client with the referee's name and contact telephone number.

**What happens if the Agency is unable to obtain a reference?**

Norland Agency will endeavour to obtain recent and complete references for all candidates. In some instances the Norlander's most recent reference may not be available and this can be for a variety of reasons, including, for example, the length of placement (i.e. short temporary positions), a referee's time constraints and client confidentiality. On these occasions, if the placement was made through the Agency, the Agency will confirm details of the role to any potential employers. These details will include the start and end dates, job title, the nature of the role, i.e. sole/shared care, and the number and ages of the children. If the placement was not made by the Agency, the client will need to make a decision as to whether they wish to employ the Norlander based on their performance at interview/trial, experience on their CV and the other references provided.

**What is the procedure if the referee has cause for concern in relation to the Norlander's performance?**

Norland Agency strives to meet the expectations of all employers with the Norlanders they put forward for positions. On occasions where there have been any issues with a Norlander's conduct or it is felt that the Norland Code of Professional Responsibilities has been breached, it is important that this is fed back to the Agency in a timely and professional manner.

When a reference request is received by the referee for a permanent or temporary Norlander, and they have concerns regarding conduct, the referee should respond to the member of staff contacting them to report their concerns.

Depending on the nature of the issues outlined and the severity of the allegations it will be decided as to whether any Norland disciplinary action should be taken against the Norlander concerned.