Norland Agency Reference Policy

Introduction

Norlanders must provide current references when registering with the Norland Agency to search for a new role. This document outlines Norland Agency's policy in relation to providing and/or obtaining references for Norlanders.

Who can supply references?

References should provide evidence regarding the ability and experience of a Norlander within the working environment, with a particular focus on the early years sector. This information is best provided by a current or previous employer. 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. It is preferable that these voluntary roles are childcare related. General character references can be gained in exceptional circumstances when the agency is unable to obtain recent employment or voluntary references. A character reference will only be accepted where there is at least one professional reference already available. 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 content should be included in 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. The referee cannot include 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 and not facts, could have a negative impact on their future employment.
- Children's names should not be used within the reference, nor any personal information which would make them identifiable to a third party.
- No sensitive or personal information should be included in the reference in relation to the Norlander, including information relating but not limited to ethnic origin, physical and mental health, religious beliefs, political opinions, sexual orientation and criminal convictions.
- Please note that the Norland Agency will not ask any specific questions on our reference request 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 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 to contact them.
For Newly Qualified Nannies (NQNs), the agency will use a verified employment reference from the time the NQN was at Norland 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 as their employment reference providing consent has been given.

Types of references received by Norland Agency

Initial 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:

<u>Written references</u>
Written references are the agency's preferred reference type. This will be sought for permanent and temporary positions, both obtained through the agency and externally. When leaving a permanent or temporary position which was obtained externally, the agency requests that the Norlander contacts their referee to confirm if 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 has already 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 will contact the family at the end of the placement to confirm the placement was successful and to ask for a reference.

<u>Verbal references</u>
When written references cannot be obtained, a former employer can provide a verbal reference. The Norlander will need to ensure that they have permission from the referee to pass on their details to the agency. In this instance, the agency will liaise with the referee to arrange a time to take a verbal reference. The appropriate Norland Agency reference form will be used as a template to record responses.

<u>Reference Verification</u>
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 their details and advise them that the agency will be in contact to verify the reference. 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. The agency will email the referee to ensure that the information on the reference is complete and correct. If the referee does not respond, the agency will follow up with a phone call to verify verbally.

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 retention policy and schedule. 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.

Any references supplied to clients or Norlanders 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 agency are obtained directly and/or verified. However, a client may wish to contact the Norlander's former employers directly. On these occasions, and only at the '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 share their contact details with the client.

What happens if the agency is unable to obtain a reference?

The 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. Providing the placement was made through the agency, confirmation of the role will be provided by the agency to any potential employers. These details will include the start and end date, job title, nature of the role i.e. sole/shared care, and the number and ages of the children.
Where 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, previous experience and the other references provided. Allowing the Norlander to proceed to the interview stage without two recent positive references will be at the discretion of the Head of Agency and Agency Manager.

What is the procedure if the referee has a 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 concerns regarding 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. These concerns will then start Norland's cause for action procedure, where the employer's issues and allegations will be investigated to see whether any further action is required.

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