**Getting References Procedure**

1. Introduction

This procedure supports Barnardo’s [Getting References Policy](https://inside.barnardos.org.uk/employee-and-volunteer-support/recruiting-employees-and-apprentices/getting-references-policy). It is non-contractual and may be subject to change, from time to time.

Further guidance and advice relating to any aspect of this procedure can be obtained from the People Team.

1. **Procedure**

**2.1 For prospective colleagues**

2.1.1 Recruiter to request references using the standard reference request pro forma and covering letter, enclosing a copy of the job description. All reference requests should be saved into the candidate’s Electronic Staff Files and notified to the line manager for approval and clearance.

2.1.2 Recruiter to chase outstanding references at regular intervals until the necessary level of referencing is obtained and will advise the line manager if there are challenges in getting any of the required references.

2.1.3 There is an **exception in Retail only** where a new colleague can start within 5 days of the offer being made without references if:

* all the required Right to Work in the UK checks have been carried out (see [Checking the right to work in the UK | Inside Barnardos)](https://inside.barnardos.org.uk/checking-right-work-uk);
* the colleague has confirmed that they have read and understood Barnardo’s safeguarding Code of Conduct and signed it;
* there are no safeguarding implications for that particular role and a risk assessment has been completed, where the outcome of a basic criminal records disclosure is pending;
* the recruiting manager decides to apply this exception the recruiter will continue to chase the outstanding references for a maximum of 4 weeks following the start date. If references are still outstanding after this time the file will be passed over to the People Team, who will discuss with the line manager and provide appropriate advice. After 4 weeks, if references have not been received that are satisfactory in accordance with this policy, the employee’s employment may be terminated under the Probation & Transition Policy.

2.1.4 Line manager to check the returned references, and decide if the references

are satisfactory.  References should be compared for consistency against the information provided within the candidate’s application. Any discrepancies should be taken up with the candidate.

Line managers should seek advice from the Recruiter or People Team when:

* + there are difficulties getting references;
  + unsatisfactory references are received;
  + when there is a concerning level of absence identified;
  + there is incomplete information, particularly regarding the reason for leaving (see point 2.5); or
  + there are discrepancies between the information provided by the applicant and referee.

2.1.5 Line manager to follow up by phone with the referee any areas of concern on the references, making a note of any conversations. The note should be signed and dated and saved to the candidate’s Electronic Staff File.  
  
2.1.6 The line manager must advise the referee that although any information provided during the conversation will be treated in confidence and that whilst Barnardo’s will endeavour to ensure it remains confidential this may not always be possible to ensure compliance with data protection legislation  
  
2.1.7 In addition, for all **regulated activity/work posts** references should be checked to ensure all questions have been answered satisfactorily, including reason for leaving. If some questions have not been answered satisfactorily or the reference is vague or unspecific, line managers must follow up with a telephone call to the referee to seek answers or clarification as appropriate and to ensure the validity of the reference. The line manager must make a note of conversation, sign and date it, and save it to the candidate’s Electronic Staff File.

2.1.8 Line manager to undertake a risk assessment (see [General Risk Assessment Form](https://inside.barnardos.org.uk/people-and-culture/health-and-safety/general-risk-assessment-form) located on Inside.Barnardo’s), if potential concerns are highlighted in the reference and/or questions have not been answered satisfactorily e.g. if an applicant’s reason for leaving remains unclear where the role has involved working with children and/or adults at risk. 

2.1.9 In consultation with the People Team, job offers should be withdrawn where

the risk is considered too high and Barnardo’s referencing requirements cannot be met. The line manager should keep a written record of the rationale for their decision.

2.1.10 Once the referencing is complete the manager must sign the

[references sign-off form](https://inside.barnardos.org.uk/employee-and-volunteer-support/recruiting-employees-and-apprentices/getting-references-policy) to confirm that the references are satisfactory and comply with the conditions of this policy.  A copy of the form must be sent back to the Recruiter and a copy saved to the candidate’s Electronic Staff File.

2.1.11If development areas are highlighted in the reference of a selected candidate

these should be discussed during induction and form part of the Probation and Transition Period agreement prior to confirmation in post.

**2.2 For existing colleagues already employed by Barnardo’s changing roles or**  
 **taking up new roles internally**

2.2.1 Once a conditional offer is accepted, the Recruiter will raise a Hub ticket for Business Services, People, requesting completion of the [existing colleague sign-off form](https://inside.barnardos.org.uk/employee-and-volunteer-support/recruiting-employees-and-apprentices/getting-references-policy) to:

* verify that all details recorded on D365 and the colleague’s staff file are up to date.
* verify that there is no relevant information on the colleague’s HR record that may need to be considered in relation to their suitability for the new role e.g. live formal warnings, formal performance matters.
* confirm that the reference is satisfactory and complies with the conditions of Barnardo’s [Getting References Policy](https://inside.barnardos.org.uk/employee-and-volunteer-support/recruiting-employees-and-apprentices/getting-references-policy)

2.2.2 A copy of the form will be returned to the Recruiter and saved on the colleague’s Electronic Staff File.

2.2.3 Once a job offer has been confirmed, the current line manager and new line manager will meet to discuss the colleague’s transition into the new role and any specific areas of support and development for the transitioning period (see [Probationary and transition periods policy | Inside Barnardos)](https://inside.barnardos.org.uk/employee-and-volunteer-support/performance/probationary-and-transition-periods-policy)

**2.3 Data Protection**

Reference information must be processed in accordance with Data Protection Legislation.  
  
**Note**: Under the Data Protection Act 2018 any employment reference **provided in confidence** is exempt from disclosure under a subject access request. This means that if Barnardo’s receives a subject access request, confidential employment references received from and given to third parties about an individual, will be exempt from disclosure. In all other instances, disclosure will generally be the norm. See additional guidance on ‘[Access to References](https://inside.barnardos.org.uk/sites/default/files/uploads/Exemptions%20to%20the%20Right%20of%20Access%20to%20Personal%20Data%20%E2%80%93%20Confidential%20References.pdf)’ on Inside.Barnardo’s.

**3. Version History**

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| Document History | Date | Author | Comments | Approval |
| 1 | 01.07.24 | People Strategy & Projects Team | Update to include provision of a separate procedure, new brand, new section on existing colleagues changing roles or taking up new roles. |  |