



PROVIDING REFERENCES POLICY

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This procedure sets out the Council's Policy on the provision of references for employment or other matters e.g. confirmation of salary for the purpose of obtaining a mortgage.
- 1.2 This should be distinguished from a manager's obligation to seek, and assess, employment references for candidates for posts within the Council, under the Recruitment and Selection Policy.

2 Employment References

Completion

- 2.1 The following people are the authorised to complete employment references:
- For current employees – the current line manager or a more senior manager
 - For former employees – the employee's line manager at the time the person left the Council. If that manager is no longer employed, the reference should be completed by the HR & Payroll Team.
 - For agency workers – the request should be returned to the organisation which sent it, with the advice that the individual was not in our employment, but that of an agency, and as such the reference should be provided by that agency. An employment reference should not be completed in respect of an agency worker.
- 2.2 An employee who provides a reference when they are not authorised to do so may be liable to action under the Council's Disciplinary Policy.
- 2.3 If a personal reference is provided, the referee must ensure that the recipient is clear about its status i.e. It should not be presented as representing the view of the Council and the reference must not be on Council headed paper or sent from a Council e-mail address.

Content

- 2.4 Although employers are not under any legal duty to provide job references, a failure to do so could hinder an employee's future job prospects. It is therefore expected that managers will provide an employment reference on request.

Effective From	Replaces	Originator	Page No.
1 January 2011	New	HR Policy Team	Page 1 of 3



London Borough of Hounslow

- 2.5 Managers must note that they are under a duty of care to ensure that any reference provided is factual and accurate, that it is fair to the individual and that it is not misleading.
- 2.5 A standard reference provides limited, factual information about the employee. This is likely to be limited to the person's job title, their dates of employment and the reason for leaving (if they are no longer employed).
- 2.6 Where a former employee left the Council more than 6 years ago, managers should complete a standard reference. This will be based on the information held on the Council's HR management system.
- 2.7 As a minimum the line manager should provide a standard reference. However, if they wish to offer more information they may provide a detailed reference. The manager may choose to:
- provide a character reference based on their experience of the individual and / or
 - respond to any questions asked directly by the organisation seeking the reference.
- 2.8 Where specific information is sought, the manager must note the following:
- (a) **Sickness Record**
Where available, managers should provide the number of days' sickness in the previous 12 months, and the number of occasions over which these days were taken. If the employee is no longer employed, this information should be based on the 12 months prior to their leaving the Council. The reasons for sickness, which are confidential, must not be disclosed.
- (b) **Disciplinary Record**
Managers should only disclose any live disciplinary warnings which exist on the employee's personal file and should simply state the sanction applied and the reason e.g. 'written warning for persistent lateness'.
- Where an employee has left whilst disciplinary proceedings were not concluded, this should be stated without reference to the nature of the alleged misconduct e.g. 'Investigations were being conducted in accordance with the Council's Disciplinary Policy, though these had not been concluded at the time the individual left the Council.'

Presentation

- 2.9 References should be provided on headed paper with the line manager's name and title printed under the signature.

Effective From	Replaces	Originator	Page No.
1 January 2011	New	HR Policy Team	Page 2 of 3



- 2.10 Where a proforma is provided for completion, the manager should clearly print their name, job title and the Council address.
- 2.10 If the response is being provided by email, a copy of the reference must be retained either electronically or as a hard copy
- 2.11 Where a reference is completed by means of an electronic form, the manager must ensure it is clear that the response is provided on behalf of the Council. A copy should also be retained.

3 Employment References for Internal Applicants

- 3.1 Managers who are asked to provide a reference for a current employee, who is applying for a post internally, should provide a detailed reference.
- 3.2 The Council has a policy of 'open references' for internal applicants. This means that the employee is entitled to be provided with a copy of their reference, from their named referee, on request.

4 Mortgage / Other Reference Requests

- 4.1 Requests for references regarding an existing employee's application for a mortgage or other matters should be forwarded to the HR & Payroll Team for completion.

5 Copies of References Provided

- 5.1 A copy of any reference provided should be forwarded to the HR&Payroll Team for inclusion on the employee's personal file.

6 Further Advice

- 6.1 If employees are in doubt about whether they should complete a reference or on the content of any reference, they should contact the HR Advisory Team for further advice.

Effective From	Replaces	Originator	Page No.
1 January 2011	New	HR Policy Team	Page 3 of 3