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| Title of Document | Employee References Policy |
| Name of Department | People Team |

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| What type of document is this? | Policy | |
| Which Helping Hands POL/SOP/W.I does this document relate to? | Obtaining References Work Instruction | Reference number of POL/SOP/W.I W.I-094 |

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| Which Operational Priority/Priorities does this document link to? | Governance Framework | Superior Client Care | People, Performance & Culture | |
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| Custodian of document | Chief People Officer | Committee/Group responsible for this document | Policy Committee |
| Approval date and committee chairperson signature | 25.03.25 | When is its next scheduled review? | 25.03.28 |

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|-----------------------|--------------------------------|-----|--------------------------------|----|---|----|
| Who does it apply to? | All Helping Hands staff | | | | | |
| | Does it apply to bank workers? | Yes | Does it apply to agency staff? | No | Does it apply to third party contractors? | No |

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| Purpose of the Policy | <p>This policy ensures that all candidates meet our standards for employment and suitability, particularly for customer-facing roles.</p> <p>The aim is to determine if applicants are of good character and have the qualifications, competence, skills and experience which are necessary for the work to be performed by them, and to maintain a high standard of trust, safety, and</p> |
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professionalism in our workforce, all new hires must provide written references as part of the onboarding process.

This is to satisfy and meet the relevant regulations for England: Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) Regulations 2014: Regulation 19 particularly relating to the information specified in Schedule 3. Alongside For Wales the Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016: Regulation 35 particularly relating to the information specified in schedule 1.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

| Role | Responsibility |
|-------------------------|--|
| Chief People Officer | Is responsible for reviewing and updating this policy and ensuring that the policy is communicated across the company through the Senior Management Team(s). |
| Helping Hands Managers | Is responsible for implementing and embedding this policy within all teams across the company. |
| Helping Hands Employees | Is responsible for adhering to this policy as directed by line managers. |

1. Reference Requirements by Role Type

Customer-Facing Roles for New Applicants:

- **Employment History:** Applicants must provide two referees to enable the company to gain **two written references**
 - This could be two past employment references; one must be from the last place they worked as well as a previous employer.
 - Alternatively, if the above is not possible the written references must be one from the last place they worked and one character reference.
 - If the applicant has worked in the **care industry**, working with vulnerable adults or children then we will need at least **one reference from the most current employer within the care sector**.

- If the applicant has **no prior work experience**, they must instead provide **two written character references** from individuals who can attest to their integrity, work ethic, and reliability.

Please note that if one of the employment references satisfies the requirement for a reference in the care industry then you only need two references not three as suggested above.

Non-Customer-Facing Roles:

- **Employment History:** Applicants must provide **two written references** one from previous employers and the other must be a character reference.
 - If the applicant has **no prior work experience**, they must instead provide **two written character references** from individuals who can attest to their integrity, work ethic, and reliability.
- If the applicant is recruited for a non customer facing role (IT, People Team, Finance etc.) then an applicant can start work with the condition that referencing is completed whilst employed or they can be withdrawn at a later date as per their contract of employment.
- Returners to the company
 - If the applicant has previously worked for us and been out of the business for 3 months or more then we need to follow the above process for new applicants.
 - If left for less than 3 months, then we need to have the gap referenced.

2. Reference Verification Process

- All references must be verified as authentic by the People team.
- Employment references should confirm dates of employment, the applicant's previous role, performance, reason for leaving, and suitability for the intended position.
- Character references should confirm the applicant's reliability, character, and any relevant skills applicable to the role.

4. Compliance

- The People team will support the hiring manager in collecting and verifying all references prior to the applicant's start date.
- Candidates who fail to provide adequate references within the specified timeframe may experience delays in onboarding or disqualification from the position.

5. Exceptions and Special Circumstances

- Exceptions to this policy require prior approval from the line manager by completing a risk assessment form signed by the registered manager with CQC and ACM, then sent to the People Team. This is a last resort and may be granted only in special cases where verification sources are limited or unavailable.

This policy ensures that all employees meet our standards for suitability, accountability, and customer safety, aligning with our values and commitment to quality service.

TRAINING

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| Is training required? | Yes / No |
| Details of training | [please detail or state 'Not Applicable' if there isn't any] |

COMPLIANCE

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| How is compliance with the POL going to be monitored | Document in this section how compliance is going to be monitored, taking into consideration local, regional technical and integrated audit compliance processes. |
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EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND PROCEDURAL INFORMATION

| | Positive / Negative / N/A | Comments |
|---|---------------------------|----------|
| Does the document have a positive or negative impact on one group of people over another on the basis of their: | | |
| • age? | N/A | |

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| • disability? | N/A | |
| • gender reassignment? | N/A | |
| • pregnancy and maternity (which includes breastfeeding)? | N/A | |
| • race (including nationality, ethnic or national origins or colour)? | N/A | |
| • marriage or civil partnership? | N/A | |
| • religion or belief? | N/A | |
| • sex? | N/A | |
| • sexual orientation? | N/A | |
| If you have identified any potential impact (including any positive impact which may result in more favourable treatment for one particular group of people over another), are any exceptions valid, legal and/or justifiable? | N/A | |
| If the impact on one of the above groups is likely to be negative: | | |
| • Can the impact be avoided? | N/A | |
| • What alternatives are there to achieving the document's aim without the impact? | N/A | |
| • Can the impact be reduced by taking different action? | N/A | |
| • Is there an impact on staff, client or someone else's privacy? | N/A | If yes, privacy impact assessment required |

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| What was the previous version number of this document? | N/A | |
| Changes since previous version | This is a new Policy | |
| Who was involved in developing/reviewing /amending the POL? | Head of Quality People Services Director | |
| How confidential is this document? | Restricted | Can be shared freely within Helping Hands but NOT outside |

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| References | Health and Social Care Act 2008 (regulated Activities) Regulations 2014 Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016 |
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| Associated Documents | <i>Obtaining References Work Instruction</i> |

Appendix 1 – FAQs

Which previous employers should references be obtained from?

The last employer you worked for.

What if a candidate refuses to provide contact information for a previous employer?

If a candidate is hesitant or refuses to provide a reference, the hiring manager should explain that references form part of our compliance checks and without them we may not be able to proceed with employment.

How does the People Department handle reference requests?

The People Department will:

- Contact previous employers using standardised templates to request a reference.
- Follow up if needed to ensure responses are received promptly.
- Document the reference information in the candidate's file for compliance and record-keeping.

How long does it typically take to obtain a reference?

Timing will vary depending on the responsiveness of the previous employer.

What questions are asked during the reference check?

The People Department uses a standardised questionnaire covering:

- Employment dates and job title confirmation
- Key responsibilities and performance
- Reason for leaving (if permissible by the employer)
- Any information related to conduct or regulatory requirements

How will hiring managers be updated on the progress of reference checks?

Hiring managers will receive status updates from the People Department, notifying them when references are completed and an applicant has been roster linked. If there are delays and reference

are still outstanding, the People Department will reach out to ask hiring managers to obtain further referees.

A monthly report will also be shared with Area Care Managers.

Are there specific compliance requirements we need to follow?

Yes, regulatory requirements mandate that references be accurate, relevant, and kept on file. This change in process helps us fulfil those obligations by centralising the process through the People Department.

Where can I find more information on this new process?

For more detailed information, visit **Helping Hands Staff / Company Policies, Procedures, Form's and Letters / Processes, Information & Guidance / HR** where you'll find:

- A step-by-step process guide
- Work Instruction

Can I allow my applicant to shadow whilst waiting for their references?

If your applicant is in a customer facing role, no. All appropriate compliance checks must be returned before an applicant can start work in any capacity.

What is a customer facing role?

Any role that involves direct contact with a customer such as, but not limited to, a Carer, Branch Care Manager, Care Coordinator, Care and Training Practitioner etc.

I don't have references but I want to send my applicant out to work, can i?

The initial process must be followed. However, if the references are still not returned, the hiring manager will be able to complete a risk assessment and choose from the following.

- employ as normal
- employ with extra supervision/restrictions, e.g. no meds, financial
- terminate

Do I have to complete a risk assessment for each applicant?

No. An employment risk assessment only needs to be completed in cases where we have been unable to obtain suitable references via the usual process. If a manager wishes to continue with the employment of an applicant despite this, they must complete and sign a risk assessment.

Can we ask for additional references beyond the two required?

In certain cases, such as senior roles or regulatory requirements, the People department may request additional references.

Can a hiring manager request the references instead?

In order to ensure consistency, we advise that the same process is followed for all reference requests. If a hiring manager does obtain a reference during the recruitment process, we ask this is sent to the People department so they can update their records.

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