

Giving References Policy

The Bristol Methodist District. (Charity Number 1134873)

First Issued	January 2025
Last review	January 2025

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This policy sets out the procedure to follow where a reference request is received in respect of a former or current employee.
- 1.2 The policy does not form part of your contract of employment, and we reserve the right to amend or withdraw it at any time.

2 Scope

- 2.1 This policy applies to employees employed by us. It does not apply to workers, contractors, consultants or any self-employed individuals working for the organisation.

(Option 1 – Employer provides references)

3 Receiving a request for a reference

- 3.1 A reference for a former or current employee may be given only by the employee's Line Manager, or a manager senior to them.
- 3.2 If you are not authorised to give a reference, any reference request should be passed to the employee's Line Manager or, in their absence, a manager senior to them.

4 Employee's consent

- 4.1 If you are providing a reference, you must ensure that the individual to whom the request relates has given their written consent for the reference to be provided.
- 4.2 If you have any doubts about whether the individual has given their consent, you should contact the individual to check that they want the reference to be provided.

5 Format for a reference

- 5.1 Any references provided must be in writing.
- 5.2 The reference should explain that it is the organisation's policy to respond to requests for information in a standard format. The only factual information that may be provided is:
 - 5.2.1 the dates of the employee's employment with the organisation;
 - 5.2.2 the employee's job title;
 - 5.2.3 a short description of the employee's key job duties and level of responsibility;
 - 5.2.4 whether any disciplinary warnings have been issued to the employee during the last 12-months or, if the reference is for a former employee, in the 12-months prior to their leaving;
 - 5.2.5 where the employee has left the organisation, the reason for termination of employment, for example resignation, redundancy, or the expiry of a fixed-term contract.
- 5.3 You must not provide personal opinions about the individual's performance or conduct.
- 5.4 If you are providing a reference, it is your responsibility to ensure that the information provided is factual, true, accurate, fair and not misleading.

5.5 A disclaimer should be included in the reference making it clear that, while the information provided is, to the best of the organisation's knowledge, completely accurate, the organisation cannot accept any liability for decisions based on it.

5.6 The reference must be marked "private and confidential" and "for the addressee only" and it should be sent by post or email directly to the prospective employer.

6 Individual requests to see the reference

6.1 You may allow the employee to see the reference before it is provided to the prospective employer, but this is not obligatory.

7 Further enquiries raised by the prospective employer

7.1 If you receive an enquiry from the prospective employer for clarification of any information provided in the reference, you must ensure that you do not go beyond the content of the reference in the information provided.

7.2 You should, where possible, deal with any such request in writing to avoid any subsequent confusion. If the enquiry is dealt with over the telephone, you should make a written record of the conversation.

8 Retaining a copy of the reference

8.1 A copy of the reference or written note of any subsequent enquiries should be retained securely for 12-months. Thereafter, the reference should be disposed of securely.

(Option 2 – employer does not provide references)

9 Receiving a request for a reference

9.1 We operate a strict policy of not providing written or verbal references for current or former employees.

9.2 You must not depart from this policy.

9.3 Any reference request should be passed to the employee's Line Manager, or, in their absence, a manager senior to them who will write to the prospective employer explaining that it is the organisation's policy not to provide references.

10 Review

10.1 This policy may be reviewed at any time at the request of any member of staff, but it will be automatically reviewed two years after initial approval and thereafter on a biennial basis unless organisational changes, legislations, guidance, or non-compliance prompt an earlier review.

11 Definitions

11.1 The Bristol Methodist District ("we", "us", "our")

11.2 The Employee ("you", "your")

Document control box

Policy title:	Giving References Policy
Date approved:	January 2025
Version:	1.1
Supersedes:	NA
Next review date:	January 2027
Lead contact:	District Policy Committee