



## Reference Checking Volunteers

When recruiting volunteers, reference checks are an important part of the process. These checks allow you to build a picture of the prospective volunteer and help to ensure that you are getting a good fit for your team.

Reference checks are a key part of volunteer recruitment, helping to verify information and ensure a good fit for your organisation. They provide insight into a candidate's background and suitability for the role.

Before conducting a reference check, it is important to ensure you are familiar with what you can and cannot be asked in regards to the Human Rights Act. Any question that cannot be asked during an interview with the volunteer also cannot be asked as part of a reference check.

### Who Should be a Referee?

During the volunteer's application process, request the name and contact details of at least two referees, and permission to contact them. Ideally the referee should be someone who supervised them in a previous role. If they are unable to provide a suitable work referee, they may consider colleagues, teachers or lecturers. It is advisable to only use a personal referee if there are no other options.

### Contacting Referees

- Have a script and list of questions prepared
- Identify yourself and your organisation
- Let them know that the applicant has listed them as a referee
- Ask if now is a good time to talk or if they would rather schedule another time
- Give a brief description of the role you are recruiting for, so they can comment in context
- Give them time to answer your questions, don't cut them off or finish their sentence
- Close with an open ended question e.g. Is

there anything else you'd like me to know about this individual?

- Thank them for their time

### What do I ask?

It is important to tailor a reference check to suit your organisation and the volunteer role you are recruiting for. You should have questions that cover the following areas: personality, work ethic, interpersonal/social skills and job specific skills.

Some examples of common questions include:

- How do you know the applicant? How long have you known the applicant?
- What job did the applicant do for you and what were their main responsibilities?
- Was the applicant successful in fulfilling their duties?
- What unique skills did the applicant bring to your organisation?
- What were their strengths?
- What were their weaknesses or areas that needed improvement?
- Do you think the applicant is suitable for the position he/she has applied for?
- Would you reemploy the applicant?
- Is there anything else you would like to add?

A simple list of questions will help you to select the best person for your role, your organisation and your clients. Spending a little time completing reference checks as part of your recruitment process may just help you avoid issues with unsuitable volunteers later.