



The **Regulation** and  
**Quality Improvement**  
**Authority**

**To all providers of Regulated Services**

**22 March 2018**

Dear Registered Provider

**Guidance on the Management of Pre-employment References**

Under The Health and Personal Social Services (Quality, Improvement and Regulation) (Northern Ireland) Order 2003, and associated regulations and standards, a registered provider must receive two references prior to the appointment of a new employee.

Where a previous employer has not provided a reference, it is your responsibility to ensure that you apply robust recruitment and selection processes, which conform to all relevant legislation and standards.

To support you in this regard, and to ensure that service users are kept safe and risks of harm are minimised at all times, you may find the enclosed guidance on the management of references helpful.

Please note this guidance refers solely to the management of references, and it is essential that you adhere to legislation and standards in respect of all other recruitment and selection checks.

Should you require further clarification on this issue, please contact RQIA's inspector for your service at tel: (028) 9536 1111.

**Olive Macleod**  
**Chief Executive**

## Guidance on the Management of Pre-employment References

	Question	Answer
1	I have been unable to source a detailed reference and can only confirm employment dates. Is this acceptable?	Yes: We know some employers are now choosing not to provide detailed, comprehensive references. If this is the case it is acceptable to accept a reference which confirms employment history.
2	I am unable to make contact with the previous employer as they are not responding to my telephone calls. What should I do?	<p>It is important that all reasonable steps are taken to source two references for the applicant. If telephone calls are not being returned then you should request the information in writing by letter or email.</p> <p>The applicant may also provide the contact details of an alternate referee.</p> <p>Keep a record of all your actions and correspondence.</p>
3	The previous employer will not provide a written reference. Can I take a reference over the telephone?	Yes: We suggest that you use the reference request form and complete it as fully as possible based on your conversation with the referee. Record the time and date of the call, the name of the person you are speaking to, and any witness to your conversation.
4	The applicant is a school leaver and has not been employed previously or the applicant has been out of the workforce for an extended number of years. There is therefore no recent employer. How do I source two references?	<p>The following are examples of referees who would be suitable: School headmaster/ head of year. (This will inform you of a school leaver's commitment and time keeping and educational ability.)</p> <p>The previous employer even if the employment was a number of years ago is acceptable Character references could be sought from a GP, religious official or friend who is not a relative.</p>
5	What other information do I need?	A full schedule of information required is detailed within the standard specific to your service. You may find this helpful. You may wish to review your current application form to ensure that you ask the following; "Have you ever been dismissed from any employment?"