

Section 8 - Pre-appointment Checks

8 minutes read

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Version: 1

Requirements

8.1 All appointments to posts that fall within the scope of this guidance must be subject to the completion of satisfactory pre-appointment checks and procedures, as outlined in this section.

8.2 All pre-appointment checks must be:

- Confirmed in writing
- Scrutinised to ensure authenticity
- Documented and recorded
- Followed up if they are unsatisfactory or if there are any discrepancies in the information received.

8.3 Proof of identity

- All applicants must be able to provide proof of identity.

8.4 References

- For **all** roles:
 - A minimum of two written references must be obtained
 - Referees must be over 18 and not be family members or relatives
 - 'Self-supplied', 'to whom it may concern' and verbal references must not be accepted.
- For **volunteers**:
 - At least one of the references must be from outside of the current Church body

- At least one of the references must comment on the applicant's ability to work with the group with whom he/she will be volunteering.
- If the applicant is currently working/volunteering with children, young people or vulnerable adults, or has done within the past two years, then a reference must be sought from that organisation
- If the applicant has come to the Church body from another Church body within the past two years, a reference must be sought from that previous Church body.

- For **employees**:

- At least one of the references must be from the applicant's current/most recent employer and/or voluntary position
- A minimum referencing period of two years must be applied. This means that it may be necessary to request more than two references depending on the applicant's work history.

8.5 DBS

- If a DBS check is required for the role, an application at the appropriate level for the role must be made
- If an applicant does not want to complete a Confidential Declaration form or allow the results of his/her DBS check to be seen, then the application must be terminated.

8.6 Overseas Criminal Record Checks

- If a DBS is required for the role and the applicant has lived, worked or volunteered outside the United Kingdom for a continuous period of six months or more at any point within the previous 10 years, an overseas criminal records check must also be carried out, either via a third party provider or by the applicant requesting a Certificate of Good Character from the relevant embassy(ies)
- If the appropriate documentation cannot be obtained from an embassy, the applicant must provide evidence of their attempt to obtain a certificate.

8.7 Qualifications

- If applicable, applicants must be able to provide original proof of qualifications.

8.8 Professional Status

- If applicable, applicants must be able to provide original proof of professional status.

8.9 Health Information

- Where the nature of a role makes it reasonable to do so, applicants who are successful at interview must be asked to provide health information
- If there are any queries about an individual's health in relation to the post applied for, clarification of this must form part of the pre-appointment checks.

Good practice advice

Why?

Carrying out pre-appointment checks is important for safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults as it helps a body to establish a more rounded picture of the candidate's suitability to work with these groups.

If at any point during this process a discrepancy is highlighted in the information provided by the applicant, he/she should be given the opportunity to explain the discrepancy. Examples could be dates of employment or reasons for leaving provided on an application form differing to those received on a reference. It is a good idea to keep a written record of such clarifications with the individual's application form.

Whilst reference checking plays an important part in the pre-appointment checks process, references don't always say that much and therefore it is important to consider what else can be done to build up as true and rounded picture of the applicant as possible.

How?

Employment/Volunteering/Education References

This type of reference should be sought directly from the relevant organisation, including overseas where relevant, not an applicant's colleague and, ideally, be provided on headed paper to verify the legitimacy of the organisation providing it. If received via email, it should be sent from a verified (as far as possible) business email address.

Details requested should include:

- Where the individual has been employed/volunteered/studied;
- The dates of employment/volunteering, or duration of study;
- The position held, or study undertaken;
- Individual's suitability to work with children, young people or vulnerable adults;
- Any concerns about the individual working with children, young people or vulnerable adults;
- Any substantiated allegations, disciplinary warnings, including time-expired warnings, in relation to working with children, young people and vulnerable adults;
- The reasons for leaving employment, voluntary work, training or study (if known).

Church bodies should consider reserving the right to contact any one of the applicant's current/previous employment, volunteering or education contacts in case of any anomalies or discrepancies.

Personal References

Personal references should only be sought as a last resort due to their limitations in terms of evidential effectiveness. Personal references might be sought from group/club leaders, mentors, neighbours, or family friends. The referee should know the person well and have up-to-date knowledge of them.

Details requested should include:

- How they know the individual;
- How long they have known the individual;
- An honest overview of the individual's character;
- Individual's suitability to work with children, young people or vulnerable adults;
- Any concerns about the individual working with children, young people or vulnerable adults;
- Any knowledge of the individual being investigated over safeguarding issues.

Verbal confirmation/verification

It is recommended that wherever possible all written references are followed up with a telephone call, to verify the identity of the referee. Talking to referees when you have read the reference will give the opportunity to clarify any anomalies or discrepancies between the information that the referee has provided and the information that the applicant has given. It is good practice to keep a note of the call - when it took place, who was involved, what was said – to be stored alongside the written reference received.

Reference checking challenges

References can sometimes prove difficult to obtain. If, despite best efforts, all required references have not been obtained or the minimum referencing period not covered, then it is recommended that church bodies document all efforts made to seek references from all sources and demonstrate a clear approach to how they addressed such challenges for each individual case.

It is not unusual these days for written references to provide very limited information e.g. limited to confirmation of dates when someone worked at a particular organisation. As detailed above, it is recommended that wherever possible, but particularly if such references are received, that a telephone conversation takes place as a follow up to the references received.

There are a number of situations where people will struggle to provide a referee, e.g. if just leaving school, returning to work or volunteering after a break. In these situations, the only possible references might come from friends and family, in which case they should always be followed up verbally and attempts to contact a previous teacher, employer or other contact as detailed above made wherever possible. Similarly, we are aware that there are circumstances where the sending Bishop – for reasons unrelated to the character or conduct of the individual concerned – will not provide a reference as per the usual procedure. In these circumstances, it is important to note the steps that were undertaken to try and elicit a reference, that other sources of reference were explored and taken up (including a verbal follow up where possible), and that adequate risk management processes are in place on appointment.

Timing of reference requests

There may be occasions when taking up references after short listing and before interview may be advantageous. If a church body decides to do this, then they must ensure all appropriate consents from the applicant are in place for the referee to be approached and this must be stated in the Privacy Notice.

Toolkit

- [Reference Request Forms for Volunteer Positions](#)

Health information

The purpose of requesting such information is to ascertain whether an individual has any disability or health issues in order that the church body can identify what support or reasonable adjustments might need to be provided for them to be able to undertake their job or volunteering duties safely.

Health data is special category personal data under current data protection legislation, which means bodies must ensure that it is protected and only accessed by those who need to see it.

Care needs to be taken when asking someone about their health. Only questions that relate to the applicant's ability to perform the core duties of the role and are necessary should be asked. This means asking whether the applicant suffers from any health problems that might prevent them from performing the particular function in question, rather than sending them a general medical questionnaire.

It should be made clear that answers to such questions will not necessarily prevent the individual from taking up the role, but that it is important for the body to be aware of any relevant health information so that they can support the individual in that role.

Proof of ID

Identity checks should be undertaken to establish, as far as possible, that the individual is who he/she claims to be. Ideally, this should be through formal photographic identity, such as a passport or driving license and confirmation of current address. It is a good idea to ask to see an original birth certificate (issued within a year of the birth), any name change documentation and current documentation (e.g. passports and drivers' licences) so that all names are 'checked'.

External Resources

- Right to work

This document is version 1 and was printed on 29 April 2024. The most up to date version of this policy can be found on the Church of England website: <https://www.churchofengland.org/safeguarding>

Source URL: <https://www.churchofengland.org/safeguarding/safeguarding-e-manual/safer-recruitment-and-people-management-guidance/section-8-pre>