

Safety check – Reference check questions

Reference checking is an important part of doing a children's worker safety check. It helps you to find out if there are any gaps or differences from what the applicant has told you during the interview process.

Contact at least one referee (contact two if possible) and ask them questions about the applicant's suitability to be a children's worker and whether they pose a risk to children's safety.

We have some example questions to help you. Choose from these and change to suit your own situation. There is space between the questions so you can take notes during the reference check.

If there are any inconsistencies between the information provided by the referee and the applicant or issues with conduct or competence were discussed, give the applicant an opportunity to provide an explanation.

Keep these questions and notes as a record of the reference check.

Applicant details

Referee details

Questions about the applicant's experiences and relationships working with children

Describe how the applicant behaves around children.

How does the applicant get along with children or how do children get along with the applicant?

What relationships has the applicant had with children outside the working or volunteer environment?

Have you ever witnessed the applicant abusing a child? For example, smacking, verbally abusing or shaming a child?

Do you think the applicant is safe and suitable to work with children? Why?

Questions about the applicant

What complaints have been made about the applicant's professional practice? How did the applicant respond and what were the outcomes?

Do you know if the applicant has ever been convicted of an offence? What were those offences?

Why do you trust the applicant, or what reasons do you have to doubt the applicant's honesty?

Why did the applicant leave previous jobs?

Would you work with the applicant again in the future?

Invite the referee to share anything else they might think is relevant.