

## 4. Requesting References

Seeking references are an important part of our membership procedure. **Membership Secretaries are required to request 2 references for each new member who is engaged in any childcare role within the Woodcraft Folk.**

All referee information should be provided on the membership application form. In the case of [online members](#) **Membership Secretaries will need to contact these members directly for this information.**

It's important that you gain references for every member in a childcare role as they describe an applicants' suitability to work with children and young people, whereas DBS/PVG certificates only inform us of past criminal convictions and cautions (*someone who could be deemed as unsuitable may not necessarily have a criminal record*).

To assist Membership Secretaries in requesting references there are (*available in appendices*):

1. **New!! Online reference form for referees to complete and submit directly to Folk Office.**  
[www.woodcraft.org.uk/online-reference](http://www.woodcraft.org.uk/online-reference). *More instructions below.*
2. **Standard reference request letter**
3. **Referee form with sample questions (*can be used for both written and verbal references*)**
4. **Reference notification sheet**

You should seek written, verbal or emailed references from the applicants:

- **Employer, or previous employer**
- **Work colleagues**
- **Teacher or Lecturer**
- **Doctor**
- **Friends**
- **Previous or other volunteer placement**

It is good practice to seek references from non-Woodcraft Folk members, and with this in mind you should always try and obtain at least one external referee.

If you do not receive a written reference you, can either:

1. **Chase the original referee by phone, and encourage them to complete the form**
2. **Phone the referee and make notes on the conversation**
3. **Ask the applicant for an alternative referee**

If you are concerned about anything written in a reference you can, either:

1. **Ring the referee to clarify or seek further information**
2. **Contact the Membership & Groups Officer on 020 7703 4173 for support.**

Once you've received satisfactory PAPER references it is important that you:

1. **File the references safely in line with our data protection guidelines**
2. **Contact the Membership & Groups Officer to confirm receipt, you can do this by email or complete the reference notification sheet.**

How long should we keep references for?

1. **All current members' references should be kept on file whilst they're still volunteering in a group.**
2. **If a volunteer ceases their involvement then we should hold their reference for 3 years after which time they can be destroyed. Although a record should be kept that they were collected and deemed acceptable. For more advice on record keeping see our ['Reporting and Record Keeping Guidelines'](#)**

**How does online referencing work? [www.woodcraft.org.uk/online-reference](http://www.woodcraft.org.uk/online-reference)**

In our attempts to improve the uptake and submissions of references for new members we've created an online referencing system. Referees can now be directed to an online form which can be completed and submitted directly to Folk office. Membership Secretaries will no longer need to notify Folk Office of receipt as the information will come directly to the office via the form.

Folk Office will then upload these references to the member's individual record on the membership database which you can then be accessed by the Membership Secretary.

This system will support Membership Secretaries in their role and free up their time as some of the responsibility of requesting references is now shared. New members should be encouraged to forward the link directly to their referees and they are advised of this in their welcome email.

To ensure 100% uptake Folk Office will email new members a monthly reminder them to ask them to provide contact details of their referee details or signpost their referees to the online form.

For further advice and guidance on seeking references please contact the Membership & Groups Officer at [membership@woodcraft.org.uk](mailto:membership@woodcraft.org.uk) or 020 7703 4173.

*In the essence of a prompt service Folk Office will process membership and DBS/PVG applications promptly on receipt, unless you inform us of any concerns. As such it could be possible for a member to receive their membership details before references have been confirmed.*