

Volunteer Leavers and References Policy

People Directorate

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**Because no one
should face death
or grief alone**

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1. Equity Statement

Sue Ryder designs and implements policies, procedures and ways of working that meet the diverse needs of our clients, service users and employees. We ensure that our policies not only don't discriminate but also consider the unique needs of certain identities and communities. This document has been reviewed to ensure that no one receives less favourable treatment on the protected characteristics of their age, disability, sex, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity. We consider the provisions of the Equality Act 2010 whilst going above and beyond to protect people who aren't protected in the act, for example, non-binary people.

2. Introduction

Volunteers can choose to stop volunteering at any time and for any reason. We must take a positive approach to volunteers ending their role and thank them for the contribution they have made. This guide outlines the procedure for handling volunteer departures and reference requests

3. General Principles

3.1 Steps to take when a volunteer leaves

1. Personally thank the volunteer for the contribution they have made to Sue Ryder
2. Check that all property of the organisation is returned (e.g. ID badges, uniforms or keys)
3. Confirm they have deleted any data they held on behalf of the organisation
4. Change relevant passwords or codes for locks
5. Confirm you have the correct contact details for them and any additional consent to contact them in the future in line with data protection policies
6. Make sure all other staff and volunteers know they have left and do not share information or access to spaces that they should no longer have
7. Mark them as a 'Leaver' on the volunteer database or People Hub.

3.2 References

Occasionally you may get requests from volunteers asking for a reference to help a potential employer determine their suitability for a role.

- **Professional references** outline the start and end dates of volunteering activity, and a summary of the duties carried out

- **Character references** provide a description of the candidate's personality, work ethic and skills, provided by someone who knows them in a personal setting

We can provide a basic professional reference outlining the dates and nature of the person's placement with Sue Ryder. These requests should be sent directly to the Volunteering team at volunteering@sueryder.org

Character reference requests should be sent directly to the local Coordinator or Shop Manager. A template for providing a character reference is provided at the end of this guide. Character references must not be provided on Sue Ryder-headed paper.

3.3 Writing a character reference

Organisations and individuals can take action against people who provide inaccurate or misleading references, so keep it simple and relevant by providing the following information:

- State the date of volunteering or the length of time they have volunteered
- Their role title and brief description of duties
- Provide some positive statements on the persons attitude, performance, punctuality and reliability
- Provide your work contact details. Referees should be open to further questions and sign the reference accordingly

Appendix 1 provides a template for writing a character reference. Please note that because it is not a formal reference, character references are only to be provided on non-headed paper.

3.4 What if the character reference provided would be unfavourable?

There is no legal obligation to provide a character reference for a volunteer, however, if you do provide a reference, it must be fair and accurate. If you are asked to provide a character reference for a volunteer who did not perform well in their role, there are a few options to consider:

1. Say no - It may be worth taking the time to explain that they would be better off asking someone else who is more familiar with their work to write the character reference for them. This will give them the chance to ask another person who will give them a better chance at securing a new job.

2. Stick to the facts – You may choose to offer a professional reference instead. Make sure you stick to objective facts; when the volunteer worked with you, role title and a description of their role.

If you are ever unsure about providing a difficult reference and would like further guidance, please contact volunteering@sueryder.org who will be able to offer support.

4. Eligibility

In the context of this policy, a volunteer is a person who performs a service willingly and without pay to support Sue Ryder's work. This includes people spending time with Sue Ryder through work experience, supported volunteering programmes, and those who are referred to the charity through community sentencing.

The policy is for all Sue Ryder volunteers and any Sue Ryder staff who work alongside or provide support to volunteers.

5. Responsibility

Managers

Managers are responsible for providing factual and appropriate references when they are requested.

Other Teams

The Volunteering Team are responsible for providing guidance and support if you are not sure about the content or type of reference to provide.

6. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Character reference template

Appendix 1 – Character reference template

Date: [Date of writing the reference]

Dear [Person the letter is for] / To whom it may concern

Re: [Volunteer's Name]

I can confirm that [Full Name of Volunteer] was a volunteer at [location] between [dates of volunteering].

Their role was as a [volunteer role title] for [number of days/hours volunteering] a week. Their duties were [the tasks listed in the volunteer role profile].

They were [list a few positive attributes with examples if you wish regarding attitude, initiative, punctuality, and reliability].

Yours sincerely

[SIGN HERE]

[Your Full Name]

[Your job title]

Note - Character references are only to be provided on non-headed paper.