



24.08.26

To Whom this may Concern,

I am pleased to provide a reference for Rauf whom I have known professionally for over 20 years.

Throughout this time, I have known Rauf through our shared work within the charitable and voluntary sector. We have both held a range of sector-representative roles on boards, partnerships and forums, giving me the opportunity to see first-hand his commitment to improving communities and his ability to work constructively with people from a wide range of organisations and backgrounds.

Until recently, Rauf has been a member of the Pride in Place Board for Nelson, which I have the privilege of chairing. His contribution to the Board was particularly valuable and instrumental in helping us establish and embed a genuinely community-driven approach to decision-making, and distribution of funding, to make an impact short term as well as long term and not only in delivery of projects but in also in community perception and trust.

What I have valued most is his ability to challenge traditional approaches constructively and to ensure that the voices and experiences of local communities remain central to decisions that affect them. Rather than simply accepting a somewhat institutional approach to funding, Rauf brought a strong understanding of the voluntary and community sector and helped the Board develop a model in which communities could have a meaningful influence over priorities and investment, whilst also working within the parameters of governance and legal requirements. This requires more than knowledge of the sector; it requires good judgement, diplomacy, collaboration and the confidence to challenge established thinking.

I have also seen his consistency and commitment over a significant period of time. He is someone who understands the importance of partnership working and, importantly, understands that effective partnership is about listening, building trust and creating shared ownership.

I believe Rauf would bring considerable value to any organisation, board or partnership fortunate enough to benefit from his experience, community focus and collaborative approach.

Kind Regards

Claire Bennett, Chair of Nelson Pride in Place & CEO Positive Action in the Community