Compliments and Complaints Policy

Policy Owner (recruitment)	Liz Phelps	
Approved by	Board Of Trustees	August 2026
Relevant to	Trustees, Public and Volunteers	
Next Review Date	August 2027	

Version	**Date Approved**	**Summary of changes**
1	August 2026	N/A

Contents

Compliments and Complaints Policy 1
1. Purpose 3
2. Compliments 3
2.1. What is a Compliment? 3
2.2. Why We Encourage Compliments 3
3. The Compliments Procedure 4
3.1. Receiving a Compliment 4
3.2. Acknowledging Compliments 4
3.3. Sharing Compliments 4
3.4. Learning from Compliments 4
3.5. Confidentiality 5
4. Concerns and Complaints 5
4.1. Identifying Concerns and Complaints 5
4.2. Role of the Chair and Trustees 6
5. The Complaints Process 6
5.1. Stage One: The Complaint 6
5.2. Stage Two: Investigation 6
5.3. Stage Three: Appeal 7

1. Purpose

The North Meols Library Association (NMLA) is a charity which recognises the significance of volunteers in achieving its objectives of enhancing social cohesion and aims to provide positive and rewarding volunteer roles that both benefit the volunteer and the charity and the local community.

This document provides a policy framework for the selection and ongoing support of volunteers, who are defined as being members of the public who actively give time to NMLA to further its objectives.

2. Compliments

Our community library is committed to providing a welcoming, friendly and high-quality service for everyone. We value compliments because they help us understand what we are doing well and recognise the efforts of our volunteers. Receiving positive feedback helps us celebrate success, improve morale and share good practice across the library.

2.1. What is a Compliment?

A compliment is any positive feedback about our library, our volunteers, our services or our activities. Examples include:

- A welcoming atmosphere within the library.
- A volunteer who has been particularly helpful or friendly.
- An enjoyable event, activity or workshop.
- The quality of our book collection or facilities.
- Appreciation for a new service or improvement.
- Positive comments about customer service.
- Feedback that the library has made a positive difference to someone's life or wellbeing.

2.2. Why We Encourage Compliments

We encourage people to tell us when they have had a positive experience so that we can:

- Recognise and thank volunteers and contribute to volunteer morale and motivation.
- Help us identify good practice.
- Demonstrate the value of our library to the community.

- Support funding applications by providing evidence of our impact.
- Help trustees understand what matters most to our users.
- Continue providing excellent services.

3. The Compliments Procedure

3.1. Receiving a Compliment

Anyone can give a compliment, including:

- Library members
- Visitors
- Volunteers
- Partner organisations
- Schools
- Community groups

Compliments may be received verbally, in writing in our comments book, by email or through social media.

3.2. Acknowledging Compliments

A simple thank you lets people know their feedback is appreciated. Where contact details are available, we aim to thank the person within five working days.

3.3. Sharing Compliments

Wherever possible, compliments will be shared with the volunteer(s) concerned. Feedback may also be shared with the trustees, included in volunteer newsletters and used anonymously in reports or funding applications.

3.4. Learning from Compliments

Compliments are not only an opportunity to say thank you—they also help us improve. We will use compliments to:

- Identify examples of excellent customer service.
- Celebrate volunteers' achievements.

- Recognise successful events and projects.
- Identify services people particularly value.
- Inform future planning and improvements.

3.5. Confidentiality

Personal information will be handled in accordance with our Data Protection and Privacy Policy. If a compliment is shared publicly, we will obtain permission before identifying the individual who gave the compliment unless the feedback was already made publicly (for example, on a public social media page).

4. Concerns and Complaints

NMLA strives for high standards in volunteer behaviour towards other volunteers and members of the public. Should a volunteer or member of the public feel that a volunteer has exhibited unacceptable behaviour, they can follow the complaints procedure.

4.1. Identifying Concerns and Complaints

It is important to establish the difference between a concern and a complaint. Taking informal concerns seriously at the earliest stage will reduce the likelihood of their developing into formal complaints. An early discussion may also help to clarify whether or not the behaviour or action should be a concern or a complaint.

4.1.1. Concerns

A **concern** is an expression of worry, doubt, or an unmet need regarding a service or experience. An example might be a volunteer appearing rude or rushed when helping customers, meaning that some people may not feel comfortable asking for help.

If a person (either a member of the public or a fellow volunteer) has any **concerns** about the behaviour of a volunteer they should tell a session leader/lead volunteer as soon as possible, so they can quickly understand the person's concerns and try to put things right. In the case of the example above, it could be as a simple as raising their awareness.

4.1.2. Complaints

A **complaint** is a formal expression of dissatisfaction. In the example above, it would be a demonstration of rude or abrupt behaviour which makes the person feel unwelcome. It could also be that the person who raised the concern has not seen any behavioural change.

If a volunteer or members of the public wants to make a formal **complaint**, the procedure below should be followed.

4.2. Role of the Chair and Trustees

Wherever possible, the Chair and at least two other trustees should be kept out of the discussions and investigations. This is to reduce the risk of them being prejudiced ahead of any appeal.

If the complaint is about the Chair or the Secretary, the matter will be discussed with two other trustees, one of whom will act as the Chair for the remainder of the process.

5. The Complaints Process

There are three stages to the complaints' procedure:

Stage One – the complaint

Stage Two – investigation

Stage Three – appeal

5.1. Stage One: The Complaint

The individual is given a copy of this document and asked to submit a written statement. The statement should include the complainant's name and address, the name of the volunteer against whom the complaint is being made, the nature and date of the complaint and how they want to see it resolved. The statement must be signed and dated.

The written and signed statement should preferably be emailed to the NMLA Secretary at: secretary@cornerstonelibrary.org or marked ***Private & Confidential*** and sent by post or handed in at:

The NMLA Secretary
1C Marshside Road
Southport
PR9 9TL

On receipt by the NMLA Secretary, the complaint will be logged and allocated a reference number. **Complainants must receive an acknowledgement within five working days of receipt of a signed complaint.**

5.2. Stage Two: Investigation

All complaints at this stage should be dealt with by a lead volunteer and/or a trustee. **If they need to meet with the complainant they will do so within seven working days of receiving the written complaint.**

As part of the investigation the volunteer against whom the complaint was made should be shown the statement from the complainant and asked to comment on it. This response will form part of the evidence for the investigators to take into account.

Complaints will be fully investigated. **A written/email response provided to the complainant within twenty working days by the investigator**.

Should the investigations may take longer, such as for a complex matter, the complainant should be kept informed. **A further holding letter will be sent every twenty working days** and a final date given for a conclusion given as soon as possible.

The complainant will receive written/email confirmation of the outcome of any investigation **with the reasoning for the decision** plus details of any appeals process.

If the complaint is upheld the complainant will be informed of any recommendations or remedies made, such as reviewing of policies, further staff development and training of the volunteer or, exceptionally, the termination of the volunteer's appointment. They should be offered a formal apology.

The complaints register will be updated and any pending complaints flagged so they are followed up

5.3. Stage Three: Appeal

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome, it will be referred to the Chair of the Trustees. The Chair and/or trustees will **acknowledge receipt of the appeal notice within five working days**. They will review the Stage Two investigation and **recommend either:**

1. upholding the action taken by NMLA at Stage Two, or
2. making changes to the Stage Two recommendation/actions

They should be advised of the decision **within twenty working days** of the date the complainant stated they wanted to appeal.

The complainant should be informed of the outcome. They should be advised that the decision reached by NMLA is **final and that there will no further right of appeal within NMLA.** They should be advised that they could approach any of the following agencies for advice: a solicitor; Citizen's Advice Bureau; or Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council. **This should be done within one month of receiving the outcome from the appeal.**