Alsager Town Council

Health and Safety Guidance for Plot Holders

FINAL

Approved 29 October 2026
Review due October 2028

Guidance purpose

To provide a clear framework for managing health and safety risks across Alsager Town Council allotment sites, protecting allotment tenants, visitors, Council representatives, volunteers and members of the public, while setting out responsibilities, risk assessment arrangements, remedial action and emergency procedures.

1. Introduction

Under civil law, anyone involved in allotment management has a common duty of care to ensure that allotment sites are run in as safe and appropriate a manner as possible. This duty extends to people accessing the allotment site and its boundaries, including allotment holders and tenants, Town Council representatives carrying out duties, members of the public, bona fide visitors and volunteers.

There are also environmental laws to be observed. Alsager Town Council will use risk assessments as the principal framework for identifying hazards, assessing their relative severity and deciding what measures are required to remove or reduce risks.

This guidance is intended to provide a consistent approach to health and safety management. It does not seek to give advice about individual gardening activities. Tenants remain responsible for working safely on their own plots and for the safety of people they permit or allow to be on their plot.

2. Scope

This guidance applies to:

- All Alsager Town Council allotment sites and their boundaries.
- Individual allotment plots, communal areas, paths, gates, shelters, shared facilities and other site infrastructure.
- Allotment tenants, co-workers, their visitors and anyone working on or visiting a tenant's plot.
- Council officers, Town Councillors, Rangers, contractors and other representatives carrying out Council duties at allotment sites.
- Volunteers and bona fide visitors.
- Members of the public who may access or be affected by the site or its boundaries.

3. Responsibilities

3.1 Alsager Town Council

- Oversee health and safety issues across Council allotment sites.
- Carry out and retain records of site-wide risk assessments.
- Identify the person or organisation responsible for addressing each identified risk.
- Action risks for which the Council is responsible, where possible.
- Notify tenants in writing where remedial action is required from them or another responsible person or organisation.

- Provide information to allotment tenants on issues that are directly relevant to them.
- Retain records of risk assessments and remedial action notices.

3.2 Allotment tenants

- Take responsibility for their own health and safety while on the allotment.
- Take reasonable care for the safety of others whilst on their allotment plot.
- Recognise that their duty of care extends to anyone on their plot, regardless of whether they have given permission for that person to be there.
- Use tools and equipment responsibly and safely.
- Keep their plot and associated areas in a condition that does not create avoidable hazards.
- Report hazards affecting communal areas or other users to Alsager Town Council.
- Follow remedial action or notice requirements issued by the Council within the stated deadline.

4. Risk Assessment Framework

4.1 Objective

The objective of risk assessment is to remove a risk completely or reduce it to an acceptable level. Risk assessments should identify what could cause harm, who could be harmed and how, what additional controls are needed, record the findings and be revised when necessary.

Risk assessments also help the Council prioritise decisions and allocate resources. The assessment process considers the likelihood that harm could occur in practice and the precautions required to reduce that likelihood.

4.2 Council site inspections and risk assessments

A risk assessment will be carried out by an officer of Alsager Town Council. The assessment will cover the full site and will be undertaken methodically. This includes, as appropriate, the external boundary, entrance gate, internal boundary, communal areas and each allotment plot.

Risk assessments will be carried out at least once each year and additionally when necessary because of changes, incidents, newly identified hazards or other circumstances affecting the level of risk.

5. Key Health and Safety Controls

5.1 General site condition and housekeeping

- Plots, pathways and communal areas should be kept reasonably tidy so that avoidable trip, slip and contact hazards are reduced.

- Sharp objects, broken glass, waste timber and objects left lying around can cause injury and should be dealt with appropriately.
- Necessary repairs should be reported and addressed promptly according to responsibility.

5.2 Manual handling

- Use proper lifting techniques for heavy loads.
- Use wheelbarrows or trolleys where appropriate for transporting items.
- Users should use safe manual handling practices and avoid attempting loads beyond their capability.

5.3 Watering and irrigation

- Keep pathways clear of water, debris and tools.
- Maintain even, slip-resistant pathways where reasonably practicable.
- Ensure appropriate drainage so that water does not create avoidable pooling or slipping hazards.

5.4 Gardening tools

- Tools should be in good condition and stored safely when not in use.
- Users should use tools correctly and safely.
- Protective gloves and appropriate footwear should be used where appropriate.

5.5 Chemicals

- Fertilisers, pesticides, weedkillers, wood preservatives and similar products can be hazardous and must be used correctly.
- Chemicals should be stored securely and clearly labelled.
- Users should follow safe handling and application practices and use appropriate PPE, including gloves, goggles or masks where required.

5.6 Machinery and powered equipment

- Powered equipment should only be used by people who have received adequate information, instruction and training.
- Equipment should be suitable for its intended use, maintained in a safe condition and inspected to ensure it remains safe.
- Protective devices, markings and warnings should be used where appropriate.
- Machinery should be stored securely when not in use.

5.7 Children

- Children can encounter hazards including bacteria, machinery, tools, glass, water storage containers, poisonous plants, weedkillers and pesticides.
- Parents or guardians must supervise children at all times.

- Children must not visit a plot without an adult.
- Children should be encouraged to wash their hands after helping on an allotment.

5.8 Water, pests and contamination

- Stored water can present drowning risks and some bacteria can thrive in water and cause illness.
- Rats and mice can carry diseases harmful to people as well as damaging crops.
- Tenants should report significant hazards affecting communal areas or other users to the Council.

5.9 Weather, stings and allergic reactions

- Users should wear weather-appropriate clothing.
- Users should remain aware of weather-related risks and maintain hydration during hot weather.
- Allergenic plants or insect nests should be identified and removed where appropriate and safe to do so.
- Individuals who have prescribed or necessary medication should carry it with them as appropriate.

5.10 Personal protection

- Sturdy footwear should be worn.
- Gloves should be used when handling manure or chemicals.
- Cuts and grazes should be covered with a waterproof dressing.
- Users should be aware of the risks associated with manure and other animal products and maintain good hand hygiene.

6. Remedial Action and Enforcement

Following a risk assessment or other identification of a hazard, Alsager Town Council will determine who is responsible for carrying out the remedial action. Responsibility may lie with the Council as landlord, the allotment tenant, or another responsible person or organisation, depending on the nature of the issue.

Where remedial action is the responsibility of someone other than the Council, written notification will be issued. Where the responsibility rests with a tenant, the Council may issue a 'Notice to Remedy' to the tenant or, where appropriate, a collective notice at the allotment site.

A Notice to Remedy will identify, as appropriate:

- The hazard or hazards identified;
- The correction or remedial action required;
- The deadline for completion; and
- The tenant's duty of care.

Where hazards have not been rectified by the required deadline, enforcement may ultimately include service of a termination notice in accordance with the tenancy agreement. Enforcement of this guidance will be through risk assessments, remedial action notices and, in extreme circumstances, a termination notice.

7. Reporting Hazards and Incidents

- Tenants should report hazards affecting communal areas or other users to Alsager Town Council as soon as reasonably practicable.
- Serious accidents and fires must be reported to the Council by the allotment tenant.
- Records of risk assessments and remedial action notices will be retained by the Council.
- Where an incident or newly identified hazard indicates that an existing assessment may no longer reflect the site, the assessment should be reviewed.

8. Emergency Action Plan

Fire or serious accident phone 999 from a mobile phone if available.

1. In the event of fire, leave the allotment site immediately.
2. Gather at the main gate.
3. Allotment tenants should ensure that people working on their allotment garden are accounted for.
4. Tenants are encouraged to look out for gardeners or visitors on adjoining allotment gardens and assist with safety and evacuation where it is safe to do so.
5. The allotment tenant must inform Alsager Town Council following a fire or serious accident.

No person should place themselves at unnecessary risk when assisting others or attempting to deal with an emergency.

9. Implementation, Monitoring and Review

Alsager Town Council will oversee the implementation of this guidance. Health and safety will be monitored through site inspections, risk assessments, reported hazards, remedial action and enforcement where necessary.

This guidance will be reviewed at least bi-annually and whenever a significant change, incident, newly identified hazard or other circumstance indicates that the guidance or associated risk assessments should be reconsidered.

FINAL