



Association for Public Service Excellence

State of the Market: Allotment Services

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Local Authority State of the Market 2026

Allotment Services





Why do we do this survey?

- 🌱 Survey of UK local authority allotment teams.
- 🌱 Conducted between June and July 2026.
- 🌱 Covering a diverse range of topics – from cost and waiting lists to amenities and strategies.
- 🌱 Identification of trends in the sector.

**Aggregated figures – may not reflect the experiences of your council*

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Smaller plots are now mainstream as councils respond to allotment demand, new APSE survey reveals

Local councils have adopted smaller allotment plots as the new norm to help respond to sustained demand, according to APSE's State of the Market 2026 survey.

11 August 2026



As National Allotment Week begins, findings include that councils are letting smaller plots, which may be linked to



Results at a glance

Indicator	2006
Offer smaller plots	93%
Reduced plot sizes	77%
Offer concessions	71%
Service subsidised	61%
Planning expansion	39%
Waiting lists over 1,000	31%



Seven big themes

1. Smaller plots are now mainstream
2. Demand remains exceptionally high
3. Financial pressures continue
4. Concessions remain important
5. Expansion remains challenging
6. Sustainability is now firmly embedded
7. A sector continuing to evolve



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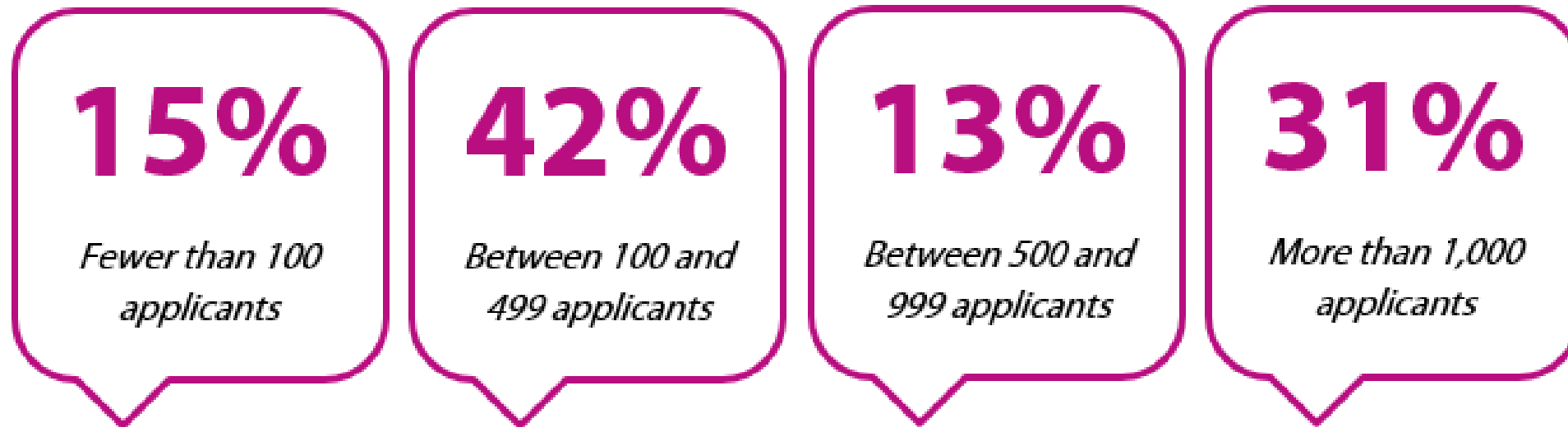


Briefing 26/44
August 2026



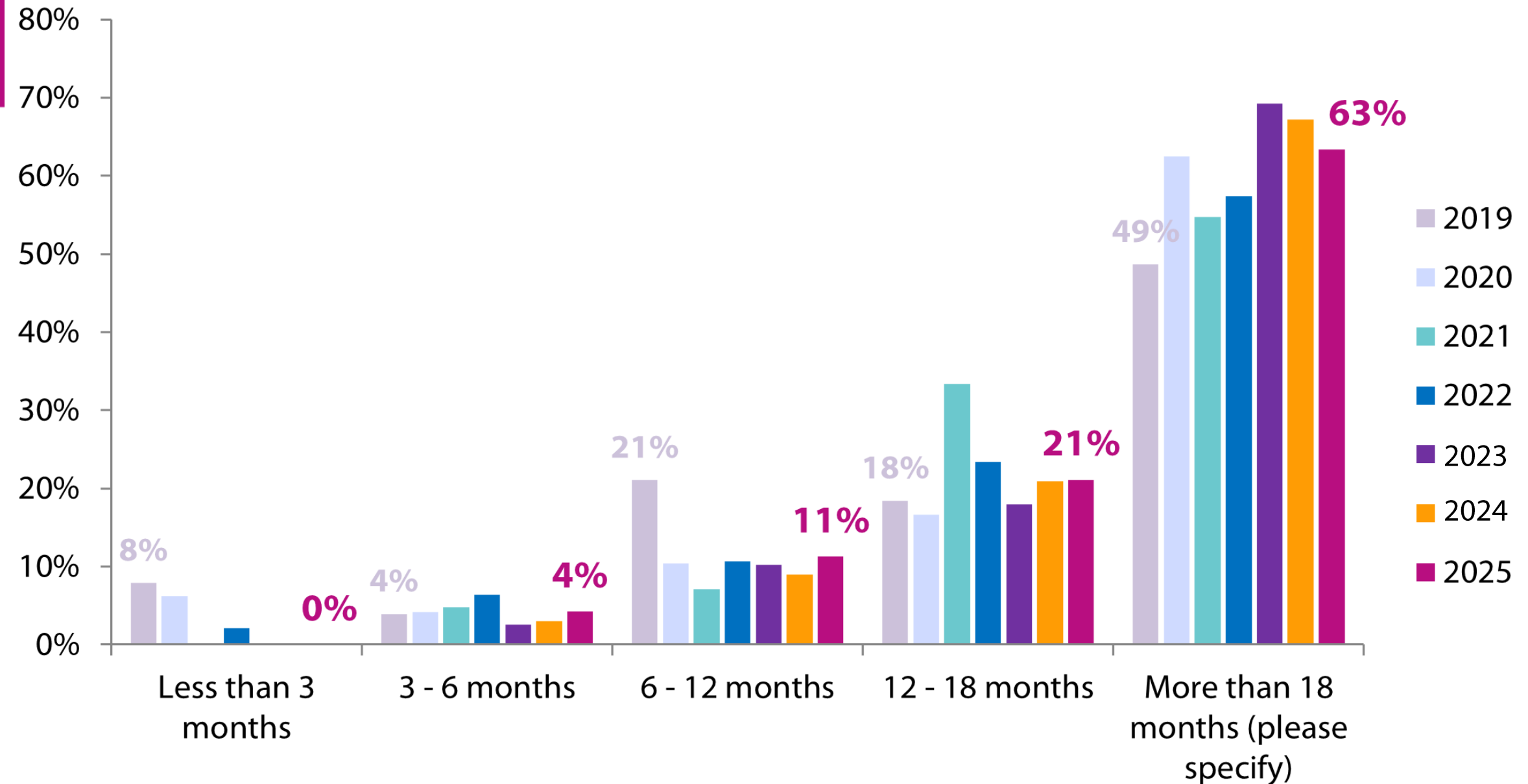
Demand has stabilised but at a very high level

Waiting Lists



🌍 Some authorities report waiting lists of 3,000, 5,000, 7,000, and 9,000

What is the average waiting time to receive an allotment plot?





Expansion Remains Difficult

Indicator	%
Authorities planning to increase provision	39%
Authorities not planning to increase provision	29%
Authorities citing funding as a barrier	85%
Authorities citing lack of land as a barrier	80%
Authorities citing staffing pressures as a barrier	44%

*“We are
open land
poor”*

A plot size revolution?

93%

Offer smaller plots

Offer smaller plots

An overwhelming 93% now offer smaller plots.

These include:

- Half plots
- Quarter plots
- Starter plots
- Micro-plots
- Raised-bed plots

Typical smaller plots range from approximately 50m² to 150m².

77%

*Reduced plot sizes within
the last five years*

The rationale remains consistent with previous years:

- Reducing waiting lists
- Improving accessibility for beginners
- Supporting working-age growers
- Increasing overall provision



Are Smaller Plots Working?

Impact of reducing plot sizes

Impact	2026
Positive	66%
Neutral	32%
Negative	2%

"It enables tenants to have a balanced life."



Why Are Smaller Plots Succeeding?

"Tenants with smaller plots cultivate the usable land better instead of wasting space. It's also easier for the tenants to maintain, making it more enjoyable."

Benefits identified:

- 🌱 Easier to manage
- 🌱 Better cultivated
- 🌱 Greater accessibility
- 🌱 Appeals to beginners
- 🌱 Helps reduce waiting lists



Affordability remains key

Typical annual rent for a 250m² plot

Typical annual rent for a 250m ² plot	2026
Less than £50	12%
£50-£99	39%
£100-£149	39%
£150-£199	5%
Over £200	5%



Towards cost recovery

Funding position

"We struggle to raise our allotment prices due to political approvals who want to keep rates low for tenants, so struggle to break even or invest in allotments for the future."

Year	Subsidised
2024	70%
2025	63%
2026	61%

Year	Break Even
2024	25%
2025	35%
2026	39%



Supporting access through concessions

Are concessionary / discount prices offered?



Typical concession levels	2026
0-20%	27%
21-40%	24%
41-60%	47%
Over 60%	5%

Accessibility: Progress, but more to do...

47%

Raised beds

41%

Accessible paths

34%

Plots near entrances

18%

Adapted facilities



45% reported having no dedicated accessibility measures.

'We struggle to raise funds for accessible paths but are working towards it.'

Biodiversity is now mainstream

89%

*Water-saving
measures*

67%

*Organic
cultivation*

65%

*Pollinator-
friendly planting*

61%

*Biodiversity
areas*



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More than just growing food

Councils increasingly link allotments to:

- 🌱 Physical health
- 🌱 Mental wellbeing
- 🌱 Community cohesion
- 🌱 Food resilience
- 🌱 Climate adaptation
- 🌱 Biodiversity



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What Does This Mean For Allotment Managers?

Managing demand

- 🌱 Waiting lists remain high
- 🌱 Land remains scarce

Financial Sustainability

- 🌱 Pressure to recover costs
- 🌱 Need to remain affordable

Modernising Sites

- 🌱 Accessibility
- 🌱 Biodiversity
- 🌱 Governance

Modern allotment manager: Community development officer, environmental manager and food-growing champion all rolled into one.



What Are Councils Doing Differently?

-  Plot splitting
-  Quarter plots and starter plots
-  Clearer tenancy management
-  Improved allocation processes
-  Raised beds and accessible plots
-  Biodiversity-focused management



Looking Ahead

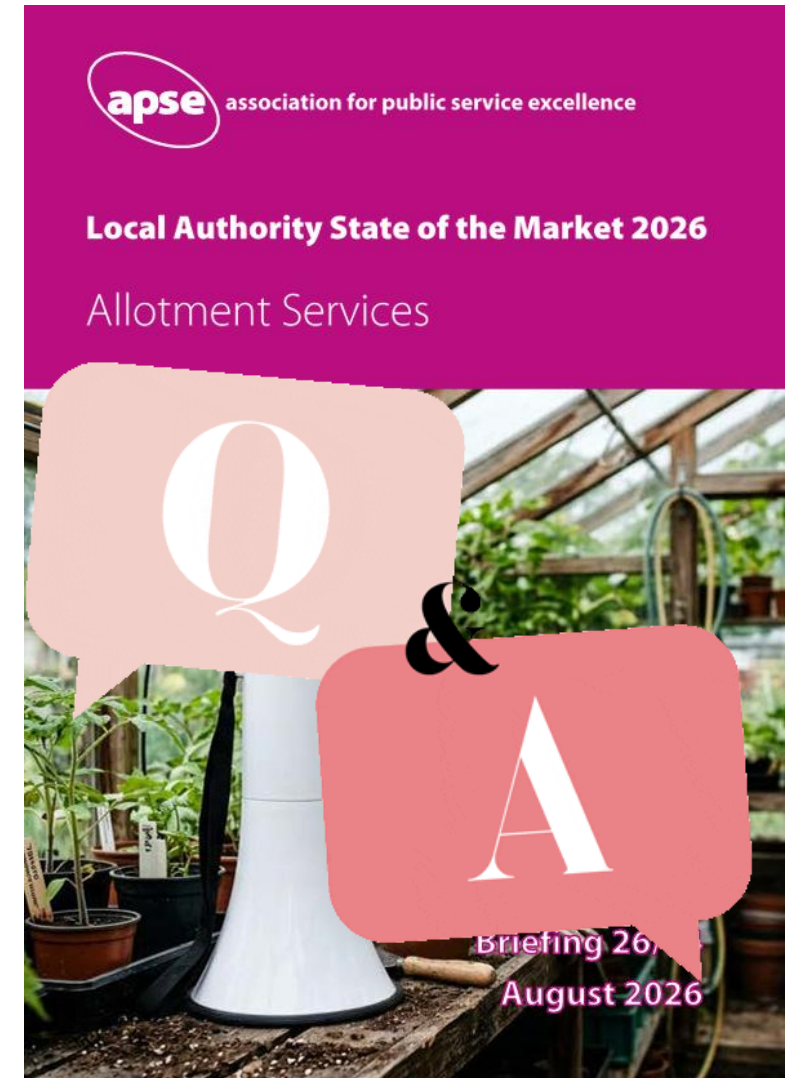
- 🌱 Smaller and more flexible plots
- 🌱 Stronger governance arrangements
- 🌱 Greater accessibility
- 🌱 Health and wellbeing partnerships
- 🌱 Biodiversity and climate resilience



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Managing allotments in local authorities

Online training course

This online training course provides an introduction to the key issues and principles of allotment management. If you are looking to move towards a more senior position, or you want to grow the skills to understand, develop, and cope with the demands faced by managers, this course will provide a robust overview.

Next date: 10-11 September 2025

