



association for public service excellence

Local Authority State of the Market 2026

Allotment Services



Briefing 26/44
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Local Authority State of the Market 2026: Allotment Services

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Results at a glance

(2025)

Cost

Charge less than £100 per annum to rent a 250 sq m plot (inc. water) for 2025/26	51%	+3%
Offer concessionary rates	71%	+11%
Service remains subsidised	61%	-2%

Provision

Plan to increase allotment provision	39%	+4%
Offer smaller plots	93%	+17%

Waiting lists

Average waiting time over two years	52%	<i>Data change</i>
Waiting lists exceeding 1,000 people	31%	<i>No change</i>
Restrict plots to local residents	75%	-3%

Plot size / ownership

Reduced plot sizes within the last five years	77%	+1%
Restrict ownership to one plot per person	53%	-2%

Biodiversity/Sustainability

Promote water-saving measures	89%	-6%
Promote organic cultivation	65%	<i>No change</i>

1 Executive Summary

1.1 Summary of findings

The 2026 findings present a picture of a sector that continues to adapt positively despite sustained pressures.

1. Smaller plots are now mainstream

Over 90% of authorities offer smaller plots and more than three-quarters have actively reduced plot sizes. This approach is generally regarded as successful and has broadened access to allotment gardening.

2. Demand remains exceptionally high

Waiting times and waiting lists remain historically elevated, with one-third of authorities reporting over 1,000 people waiting for plots.

3. Financial pressures continue

Most authorities continue to subsidise provision, although there is a movement towards cost neutrality. Balancing affordability with rising maintenance costs remains a big challenge.

4. Concessions remain important

The increase in concessionary rates during 2026 demonstrates continued commitment to ensuring access for vulnerable groups and supporting wider health and wellbeing outcomes.

5. Expansion remains challenging

Funding and land availability continue to represent the most significant barriers to increasing provision. Whilst many councils wish to expand, resource constraints remain significant.

6. Sustainability is now firmly embedded

Environmental sustainability is no longer a peripheral consideration. Water conservation, biodiversity enhancement, pollinator support and organic growing have become core features of modern allotment management.

7. A sector continuing to evolve

Taken together, the findings suggest allotment services are continuing to modernise. Traditional approaches based around large plots and passive management are increasingly being replaced by:

- Smaller and more flexible plots
- Stronger governance arrangements
- Biodiversity-focussed management
- Wider links to health and wellbeing agendas

1.2 Purpose of the report

Each year APSE undertakes a survey on the state of the market in local authority allotment services. The survey is distributed to officers and elected members across the UK and includes a series of questions covering a diverse range of topics – from cost and waiting lists to amenities and strategies.

Where possible, this report adopts a comparative analysis with previous APSE allotment surveys. This approach enables trends to be identified and provides insight into the evolving challenges and opportunities facing allotment managers across local government.

In recent years, the findings of APSE's local authority allotment surveys have attracted national headlines, featuring in BBC Breakfast (2022)¹, The Times (2023)², Gardeners' World Magazine (2024)³, HortWeek (2024)⁴, The Mail Online (2025)⁵ and The Telegraph (2025)⁶.

1.3 Methodology

APSE conducted a survey of its member local councils between June and July 2026.

Respondents were relatively evenly spread across APSE's six areas of activity: APSE Scotland, APSE Wales, APSE Northern Ireland, APSE Northern, APSE Southern and APSE Central.

1.4 Allotment authorities

Whilst allotments may be provided by charitable trusts, community organisations or private providers, local authorities remain the principal providers across the UK.

The statutory framework established through the Allotments Acts continues to place responsibilities upon local authorities to meet demand where reasonably practicable (section 23, Allotments Act 1908).⁷

Against growing interest in sustainable food production and environmental stewardship, allotments remain one of the most valued community assets under local authority management.

¹ <http://www.apse.org.uk/index.cfm/apse/news/articles/2022/the-pressure-on-plots-apse-on-bbc-breakfast/>

² <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/could-an-allotment-cut-the-cost-of-your-weekly-food-shop-tr3rzfwst>

³ <https://gb.readly.com/magazines/bbc-gardeners-world-magazine/2024-01-18/6589edfca0bc61d3ac40b842>

⁴ <https://www.hortweek.com/demand-plots-remains-high-whilest-pressure-grows-allotment-services-cost-neutral-new-survey-finds/parks-and-gardens/article/1884506>

⁵ <https://www.dailymail.com/news/article-15097005/Council-squeeze-local-authorities-allotments-85-times-smaller-traditional-plots-demand.html>

⁶ <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2025/09/13/councils-allotments-size-funding/>

⁷ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Edw7/8/36/section/23>

2 Management

The 2026 APSE State of the Market survey reveals a striking continuity in how local authority allotments are managed, with virtually no change in management models since 2020.

According to the latest data:



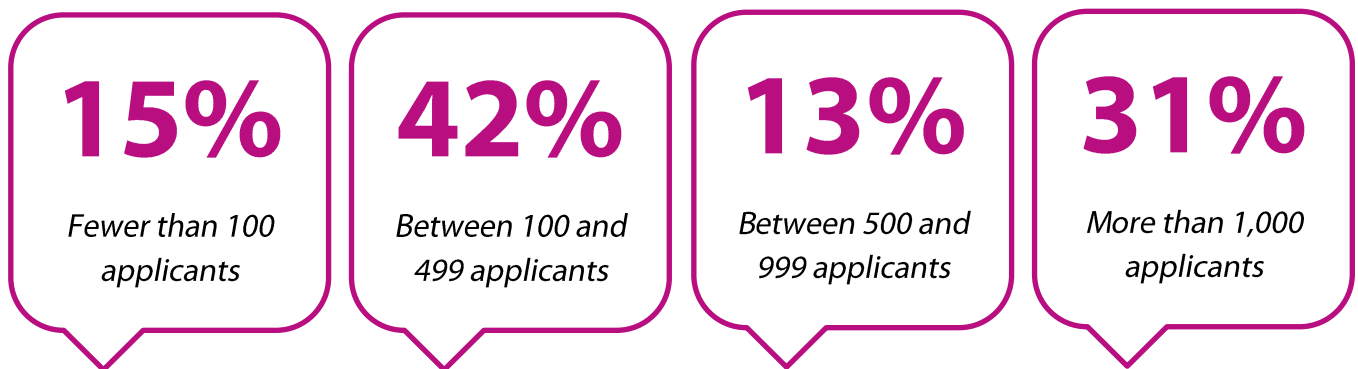
In an era of stretched resources, it is notable that many councils continue to invest in direct management. This enduring model demonstrates continued confidence in the role of local authorities in delivering well-maintained, accessible and accountable allotment services. Direct management also ensures that allotment provision remains aligned with wider council strategies on public health, sustainability, green space and community engagement.



Struggling to manage your allotments? APSE can help...

APSE Training has designed a highly interactive online course to help local authorities understand their obligations and the challenges involved in managing allotments e.g. funding, water, waiting lists, costs and enforcement, shared use, self-management, and site safety. For more information about Managing Allotments in Local Authorities, and how you can book your place, [click here](#).

3 Waiting Lists



Waiting times for allotments have made national headlines in recent years due to a surge in demand, particularly following the COVID pandemic. Since 2019, there has been a nearly four-fold increase in the number of authorities reporting waiting lists exceeding 1,000 people.

However, when compared to previous years, the number of authorities with waiting lists over 1,000 has remained steady. Notably, this year marks the third time since 2020 (when it was 66%) that a majority of authorities (67%) report fewer than 500 people on their waiting lists.

The stabilisation in demand may be linked to changes in the number of allotment sites provided and adjustments to plot sizes. These factors are explored in greater detail in sections 5 and 6.

However, demand remains acute in several authorities, particularly urban districts.

Authorities reported waiting lists of:

- 3,000 people
- 5,000 people
- 7,500 people
- 9,000 people

Waiting times

Waiting time (Average)	2026
Under 6 months	5%
6-12 months	15%
1-2 years	28%
2-5 years	44%
Over 5 years	8%

Examples provided by respondents included waiting times of:

- 6 years
- 10 years
- 16 years
- 20 years

Although waiting times appear more stable than in recent years, they remain exceptionally high by historical standards. In 2019 fewer than half of authorities reported waits exceeding 18 months. The evidence suggests that plot splitting and additional provision are helping manage demand rather than significantly reducing it.

Comments included:

- *"Very much dependent on which site - can vary from 1-2 years to 10 years."*
- *"As long as 16 years."*

4 Number of Tenants and Sites

Approximately how many allotment tenants are registered?



The survey demonstrates substantial variation in the scale of allotment services. Several large metropolitan authorities reported tenant numbers exceeding 4,000, highlighting the substantial scale of provision in urban areas.

How many allotment sites do you manage?

The majority of authorities (71%) manage more than 10 allotment sites, demonstrating that allotment provision continues to represent a significant management responsibility for many councils.

Almost a quarter (22%) manage more than 40 sites, whilst several large urban authorities reported portfolios exceeding 70 sites. The largest authority in the survey reported managing 117 allotment sites, highlighting the substantial scale of provision maintained by some local authorities.



Out of the loop with your council peers? APSE can help...

All APSE members can sign up to APSE's Parks, Horticulture and Grounds Maintenance Network. This online network provides at least four meetings across the year, with expert speakers from across local government and the wider parks and greenspace sector. The network is your chance to talk about the latest legislation, technology and best practice with your peers in local government. Be sure to sign up for the network [using this link](#).

5 Increasing Provision

Key findings

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%

39% of respondents reported plans to increase allotment provision, whilst 61% indicated that no expansion is currently planned. This suggests that although demand remains high, many authorities are constrained by practical and financial considerations.

Among those seeking to increase provision, a variety of approaches are being pursued.

Planned approaches to increasing allotment provision

Approach	% of authorities planning expansion
Developer-provided allotment sites	40%
Expansion of existing allotment sites	33%
Community-managed allotment sites	30%
New council-operated allotment sites	27%

The findings suggest that authorities are increasingly adopting a mixed approach to expansion rather than relying solely on the acquisition of new land.

Alongside creating new sites, many councils are making better use of their existing allotment provision. Several respondents reported increasing capacity through the subdivision of larger plots, bringing vacant or underutilised land back into cultivation and also introducing smaller and more flexible plot sizes (see 6).

Comments included:

- *"Reducing plot sizes is helping increase provision along with bringing derelict plots back into active use."*
- *"Improving turnover and accessibility through updated lettings processes, clearer tenancy management, the introduction of quarter plots, bringing unlettable plots back into use, provision of raised beds and investment in infrastructure."*

Main barriers to increasing allotment provision

Barrier	% of authorities
Funding constraints	85%
Lack of suitable land	80%
Staffing resources	44%
Planning constraints	18%
Low demand	2%

The findings indicate that funding remains the single greatest barrier to increasing allotment provision. Even where land is available, authorities frequently report challenges associated with site preparation, infrastructure costs and long-term maintenance commitments.

Comments included:

- *"We are open land poor."*
- *"Costs and practicalities associated with bringing underutilised or poor-quality land up to a suitable standard for allotment use."*

Whilst expansion remains challenging, the 2026 survey demonstrates that many authorities continue to seek innovative ways of increasing capacity. Rather than focusing solely on new sites, councils are increasingly looking to make better use of existing provision through plot subdivision, improved allocation processes and partnerships with developers, community groups and other landowners. As demand remains historically high, these approaches are likely to become an increasingly important feature of allotment management in the coming years.

6 Plot Size

Plot size reduction remains the most consistent trend identified by APSE's surveys. The proportion of authorities reducing plot sizes has increased from 73% in 2024 to 76% in 2025 and 77% in 2026, indicating that smaller plots are now an established feature of allotment provision.

40%

Standard plot size

Standard plot size

Typical plot sizes cluster around:

- 125m²
- 250m²
- 300m²

Many authorities now operate a range of plot sizes.

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

Plot size reductions

The rationale remains consistent with previous years:

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

Impact of reducing plot sizes

Impact	2026
Positive	66%
Neutral	32%
Negative	2%

Comments from all three surveys suggest smaller plots are proving popular with working-age households, beginners and those seeking more manageable growing spaces. What began as a response to demand pressures increasingly appears to reflect changing user expectations.

- *"Most plotholders find smaller spaces easier to manage."*
- *"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."*
- *"People appreciate having half-plots for new starters."*
- *"Sub-dividing a plot provides a more manageable but still productive plot area and reduces the waiting list."*
- *"Those offered smaller plots want to stay on the waiting list for an additional plot or reject the smaller plot to wait for a larger plot to become available."*

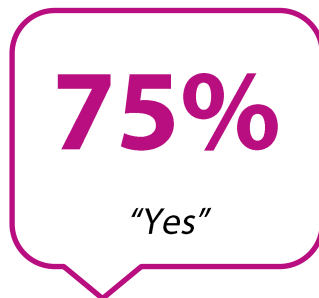


Smaller plots help tackle waiting lists in Sheffield

Sheffield City Council has developed a range of measures to help new gardeners succeed, including starter plot projects run with allotment societies and a formal process for creating half plots where tenants need a more manageable growing space. Coupled with widespread plot splitting, these approaches help reduce waiting lists while making allotment gardening more accessible for beginners and working households. [Sheffield City Council Allotments Policy and Regulations](#)

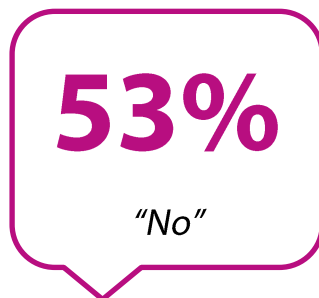
7 Plot ownership

Ownership policies have gradually become more restrictive as authorities seek to maximise access. The move towards limiting plot numbers and prioritising local residents reflects continued efforts to manage historically high demand levels.



Are the plots restricted to local residents?

Residency requirements remain widespread due to persistent demand pressures.



More than one plot per person?

Many authorities reported phasing out historical arrangements allowing multiple tenancies.

Several indicated that additional plots are now only allocated where there are no waiting lists.

By limiting ownership to one plot per household, authorities can prevent a small number of individuals from monopolising allotment space, helping to reduce waiting lists and increase fairness.

8 Cost

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%

The longer-term trend points to a gradual increase in allotment rents. In 2024, 64% of authorities charged less than £90 per annum for a typical 250m² plot. By 2025, just 48% charged less than £100, compared with 51% in 2026. Taken together, these findings indicate that rents have risen steadily over recent years, reflecting wider inflationary pressures, increasing water costs and the growing expense of maintaining site infrastructure.

However, the slight increase in the proportion of authorities charging less than £100 between 2025 and 2026 suggests that the pace of rent increases may be beginning to moderate, as councils seek to balance financial sustainability with affordability for plot-holders.

Despite these increases, allotment rents remain relatively modest when considered against the costs associated with maintaining sites and the significant health, environmental and community benefits that allotments provide.

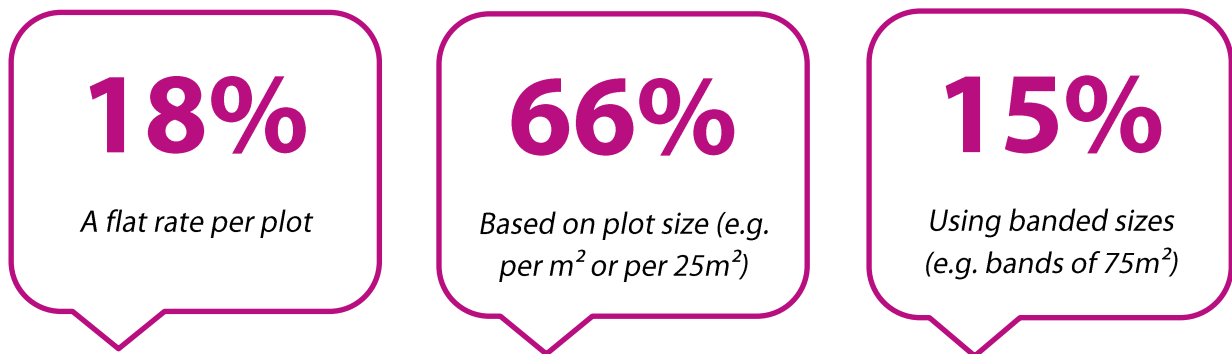


Allotment service troubles sprouting up? APSE can help...

APSE regularly receives queries on allotments from our member councils. We source responses to these queries by circulating them to our extensive UK-wide network of parks professionals.

If you belong to an APSE member council and have allotment queries – or any queries relating to grounds maintenance – the APSE network may have the answers. Connect with the APSE network and get involved with our Network Queries service [here](#).

How is plot rent calculated by your authority?



As plot rents continue to rise, especially in urban areas, how charges are calculated is becoming increasingly important, both for fairness and transparency.

The 2026 APSE survey shows that:

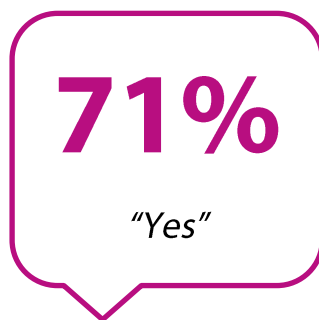
- 66% charge per square metre or similar unit. This remains the most common approach, allowing for proportionality and fairness – larger plots incur higher charges, reflecting greater usage of land and resources.
- 18% use banded plot sizes (e.g. charging by size range).
- 15% apply a flat rate per plot, regardless of size.

Charging by size remains the most common and widely accepted approach, seen as fairer and more reflective of actual land use. Banded systems offer a simpler alternative while still recognising size differences. Flat-rate charging is less common and, while administratively straightforward, may be seen as unfair where plots vary widely.

The increase in authorities charging according to plot size from 55% in 2025 to 66% in 2026 may reflect the growing prevalence of smaller and more varied plot configurations. As authorities continue to subdivide traditional plots, charging structures based upon area become increasingly important in ensuring transparency and fairness between tenants.

9 Concessions

Concessionary pricing remains an important feature of local authority allotment services.



Are concessionary / discount prices offered?

The pattern of concessionary pricing has fluctuated in recent years. Following a decline from 66% in 2024 to 60% in 2025, the figure increased to 71% in 2026. This suggests authorities remain committed to affordability despite ongoing financial pressures.

The most common groups receiving concessions are:

- Pensioners
- People receiving means-tested benefits
- People with disabilities
- Students
- Carers

The increase is notable given ongoing financial pressures and highlights the continued recognition of allotments as an important health and wellbeing intervention.

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

10 Budget and Subsidy

Budget pressures continue to shape the way local authorities deliver allotment services. While allotments are widely recognised for their health, wellbeing, environmental and community benefits, they compete for funding with statutory services and are therefore vulnerable to budget constraints.

Funding position

Position	2023	2024	2025	2026
Subsidised	68%	70%	63%	61%
Break even	29%	25%	35%	39%
Surplus	0%	6%	2%	0%

The financial direction of travel remains clear. The proportion of subsidised services has fallen from 70% in 2024 to 63% in 2025 and 61% in 2026, whilst the number operating at break-even has increased. This points towards a gradual move towards greater cost recovery across the sector. These changes are often framed as necessary to protect the service in the long run, though councils acknowledge the need to balance affordability for tenants with financial sustainability.

Comments indicate that councils continue to face challenges relating to:

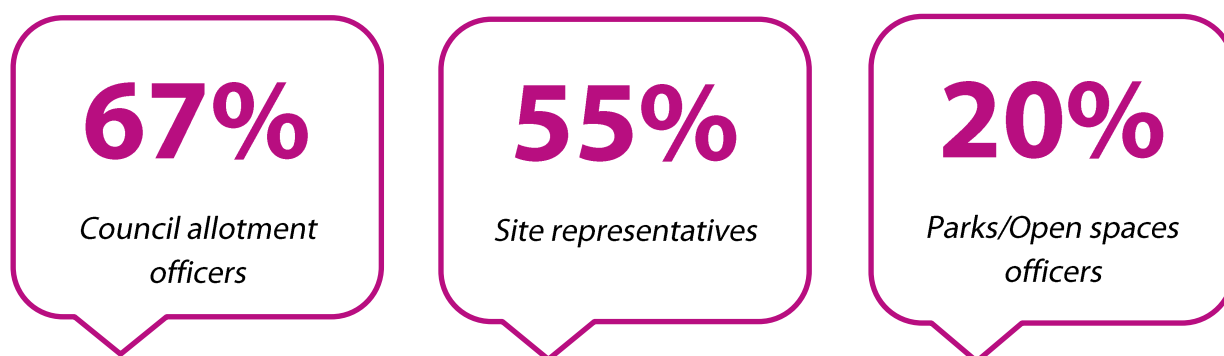
- Water costs
- Waste management
- Infrastructure maintenance
- Staffing resources
- Site improvements

Whilst the trend towards cost neutrality continues, most authorities remain committed to maintaining affordable access. Notably, no responding authority reported generating a financial surplus from allotment services, reinforcing the view that councils continue to regard allotments primarily as a public service rather than an income-generating activity.

11 Monitoring

Inspection practices continue to vary considerably between authorities, reflecting differences in staffing levels, site size, and local management approaches.

Site inspections



Inspection frequency

Frequency	2026
Monthly	33%
Quarterly	17%
Twice yearly	23%
Annually	7%
Ad hoc	20%

Monthly inspections remain the most common approach, adopted by one-third of authorities. This suggests that many councils place a high value on proactive oversight and regular engagement with tenants. However, a sizeable proportion continue to rely on less frequent inspections or ad hoc visits, indicating that monitoring arrangements are often influenced by available resources and local circumstances.

The spread of responses demonstrates that there is no single model for monitoring allotment sites. Instead, authorities appear to be balancing the need for effective oversight with practical considerations such as staff capacity, budget constraints, and the increasing use of self-management arrangements.

Uncultivated plots

Time before action taken	2026
1 month	19%
3 months	24%
6 months	7%
Case-by-case	50%

Half of responding authorities now address uncultivated plots on a case-by-case basis, making this by far the most common approach. This recognises that plot neglect can arise from a variety of circumstances, including temporary illness, personal circumstances, seasonal factors, or wider challenges affecting tenants.

The relatively low proportion of authorities waiting six months before taking action suggests that most organisations seek to engage with underperforming plots before significant deterioration occurs. Early intervention can help prevent sites becoming untidy and improve overall site appearance.



Getting on top of uncultivated plots? Hartlepool Borough Council has developed a clear framework

Hartlepool Borough Council operates a formal inspection regime using a traffic-light grading system, with plots assessed against clear cultivation and tenancy standards. Supported by routine inspections, photographic evidence and a staged enforcement process, the approach helps promote fair and consistent decision-making while supporting tenants to bring plots back into productive use before formal action is required. [Hartlepool Borough Council Allotment Rules and Regulations of Tenancy Booklet.](#)

Formal policies

Authorities reported having formal policies covering:

81%

*Appeals and tenancy
termination*

63%

Tenant disputes

59%

*Self-managed site
governance*

Authorities reported having formal policies covering a range of allotment management activities, including tenancy management, cultivation standards, plot inspections, waiting list administration, health and safety, and enforcement procedures.

As allotment demand remains high in many areas, formal governance arrangements are becoming increasingly important. Well-defined policies provide a framework for addressing common operational challenges while helping councils demonstrate accountability and effective stewardship of public assets.

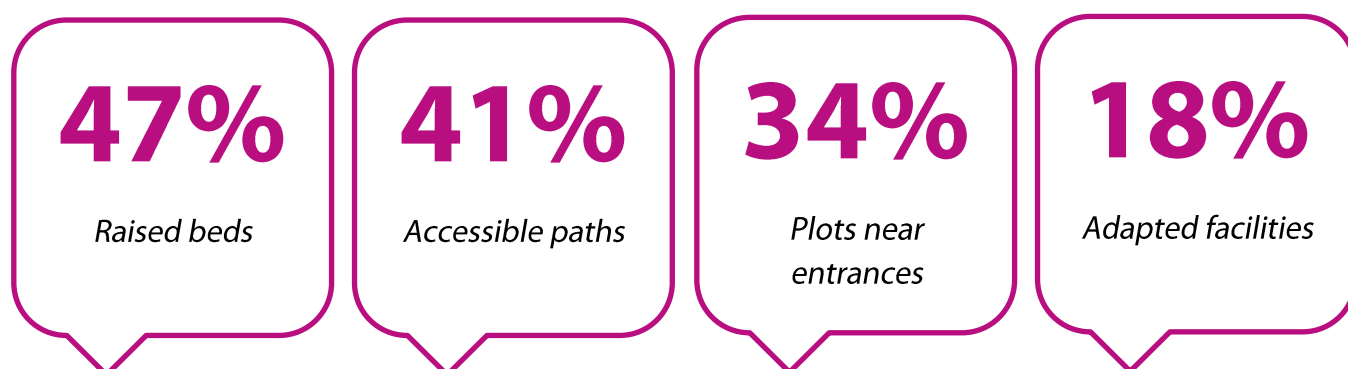


Maldon Town Council: Restricting pesticide use

Maldon Town Council has adopted a pesticide policy based on Integrated Pest Management principles. Allotment tenants are encouraged to use cultivation, crop rotation and biological controls before considering chemical treatments. Synthetic pesticides are only permitted in exceptional circumstances and require prior council approval.

12 Access

Accessibility remains an area of gradual improvement. Authorities reported providing:



However, 45% reported having no dedicated accessibility measures.

The responses suggest that accessibility is increasingly being considered within allotment services, although provision varies considerably between sites. Many authorities provide support through raised beds, accessible paths, adapted facilities and the allocation of plots near entrances. Several respondents reported making reasonable adjustments on a case-by-case basis, working with tenants to identify suitable solutions and plot locations. New allotment developments are increasingly designed with accessibility in mind, whilst some councils are actively pursuing projects to improve access through raised beds and improved infrastructure.

The more detailed responses received in 2026 suggest accessibility is becoming a greater consideration in allotment design and management, although provision remains inconsistent across the sector.

Funding constraints remain a significant barrier, particularly for improvements such as accessible paths and site adaptations, meaning that many authorities continue to rely on flexible management arrangements and individual adjustments rather than dedicated accessibility infrastructure across all sites.



Wirral Council's accessible and multi-use plots

Wirral Council has developed a programme focussed on accessible and multi-use plots, including raised beds and plots designed for gardeners with mobility needs. These schemes help ensure allotment gardening remains available to a wider range of residents while supporting health and wellbeing objectives. [More allotment sites being created across Wirral](#)

13 Strategies

A significant number of authorities reported reviewing or updating their allotment strategies.

Examples include:

- New food-growing strategies
- Allotment action plans
- Biodiversity frameworks
- Governance reviews

Authorities increasingly link allotments to:

- Health and wellbeing objectives
- Climate adaptation strategies
- Food resilience programmes
- Biodiversity action plans

Compared with earlier surveys, allotments are increasingly being linked to wider health, food-growing, biodiversity and climate objectives. This suggests councils are viewing allotments as multifunctional community assets rather than standalone leisure facilities.



Thinking beyond traditional allotment management

[Perth and Kinross](#), [Sefton](#), [Richmond upon Thames](#), [Doncaster](#) and [Watford](#)

Councils have developed allotment strategies that connect food growing with climate resilience, biodiversity, public health, accessibility and community development objectives. By embedding allotments within wider corporate priorities, councils can strengthen the case for investment and ensure sites continue to deliver social, environmental and wellbeing benefits for local communities.

13.1 Wellbeing evidence from the National Allotment Society

The National Allotment Society (NAS) undertook a major Allotments and Wellbeing survey (February–May 2025). Its findings provide further evidence of the powerful role allotments play in supporting health and community outcomes, complementing the trends highlighted in this report.

The NAS survey revealed that nearly 64% of respondents rated the mental health impact of allotments at the maximum 10/10, with over 90% scoring it at least 8/10. Many described allotments as providing stress relief and mindfulness – “walk in stressed, walk out smiling.” Similarly, the physical health benefits were strongly recognised, with over half of respondents again giving the maximum score, emphasising gardening as “exercise with purpose.”

On social outcomes, 80.3% of plot holders said they had built new social connections, though almost half also noted a lack of designated social spaces, pointing to opportunities for councils and associations to enhance community facilities. Nutritional benefits were also clear: 89.2% reported eating more fresh produce, with a wide range of crops, herbs and flowers contributing to healthier, seasonal diets.

Importantly, only 5.2% reported any link to social prescribing schemes, suggesting an untapped opportunity to embed allotments more firmly within local public health strategies.

Taken together, the APSE and NAS surveys show that allotments are not only a valued leisure and food-growing resource but also a proven driver of wellbeing, resilience and community connection. Strengthening provision, improving accessibility and linking allotments more systematically to planning and health strategies will be crucial if these benefits are to be maximised in the years ahead.

Charlotte Watts, Marketing and PR Officer, and Company Secretary/General Manager, Sonia Gallagher, spoke on the NAS survey at the report online launch – *Gloves, Peas and Harmony: Local Authority Allotments Webinar – Data, Trends and Wellbeing Benefits* on Thursday 14 August. Their presentation is available to download from the APSE website [here](https://apse.org.uk/index.cfm/apse/members-area/apse-networks/parks-horticulture-grounds-maintenance/past-presentations/2025/gloves-peas-and-harmony-local-authority-allotments-webinar-free-for-members/).⁸

⁸ <https://apse.org.uk/index.cfm/apse/members-area/apse-networks/parks-horticulture-grounds-maintenance/past-presentations/2025/gloves-peas-and-harmony-local-authority-allotments-webinar-free-for-members/>

14 Amenities and Grounds Maintenance

Grounds maintenance delivery

Waiting time	2026
Council grounds maintenance delivery	74%
Plot holders/site associations	64%
Volunteers	33%
External contractors	33%
Dedicated allotment teams	26%

For 74% of authorities, grounds maintenance at allotment sites is carried out as an integral part of grounds maintenance operations/contracts. 26% of authorities employ a dedicated allotments team/person to carry out grounds maintenance; a 7% increase on 2025.

64% of authorities report that site associations are responsible for maintaining sites. One benefit of this approach is that, at a time restrained local authority budget pressures, associations often have a better chance of raising funds than local authorities. These funds can then, in turn, be invested into the sites.

However, there is a risk that non-local authority management of sites culminates in poor management. Even if backed by a robust legal structure, as noted by the South West Counties Allotment Association (SWCCA): *"There are negatives to self-management especially if it is accepted at the wrong time with little support: plot-holders stop turning up for meetings; nobody has the time to do plot inspections; plots become abandoned and, more often than not, one over-worked person ends up trying to cope with all the tasks required to run the site."*⁹

⁹ <https://allotmentsstockport.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/a-guide-to-self-management-2.pdf>

15 Biodiversity/Sustainability

In May 2024, the four UK administrations published a joint UK Biodiversity Framework which aims to coordinate efforts to meet the UK's international obligations.¹⁰

In England, the Environment Act 2021 places a 'biodiversity duty' on public authorities. This means that, as a public authority, you must:

1. Consider what you can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity.
2. Agree policies and specific objectives based on your consideration.
3. Act to deliver your policies and achieve your objectives.¹¹

Under the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004, all public bodies in Scotland are required to further the conservation of biodiversity when carrying out their responsibilities.¹² The Environment (Principles, Governance and Biodiversity Targets) (Wales) Act received Royal Assent on 27 April 2026.¹³ The Act creates a framework for setting legally binding biodiversity targets in Wales. In Northern Ireland, DAERA has consulted on a Nature Recovery Strategy for Northern Ireland to 2032, which will fulfil its statutory duty to publish a Biodiversity Strategy.¹⁴

Pursuant to the above requirements, local authorities across the UK look to their allotment sites as sources of biodiversity conservation and enhancement.



Adapting greenspace to climate demands? APSE can help...

APSE's report – 'Adapting Parks – explores how councils are adapting greenspaces to climate change. It calls for moving away from resource-heavy, manicured parks towards resilient planting, wildflower meadows and climate-suitable trees. Case studies show councils trialling reduced mowing, perennial planting and urban greening. It stresses the importance of private gardens and long-term planning to secure biodiversity, health, and climate benefits.

[Download the report via the APSE website.](#)

¹⁰ [UK Biodiversity Framework](#)

¹¹ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/complying-with-the-biodiversity-duty>

¹² <https://www.gov.scot/publications/biodiversity-duty-reporting-templates/>

¹³ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asc/2026/4/contents>

¹⁴ <https://consultations2.nidirect.gov.uk/daera/nature-recovery-strategy-for-northern-ireland/>

Sustainability practices promoted

Practice	2026
Water-saving measures	89%
Organic cultivation	67%
Pollinator-friendly planting	65%
Biodiversity areas	61%
Renewable technologies	28%

The biodiversity findings demonstrate a clear progression across the three survey periods. In 2024 authorities significantly increased promotion of pollinator-friendly planting and wildlife habitats. By 2025 biodiversity actions had become more widespread, with 80% of authorities reporting areas set aside for wildlife. The 2026 findings indicate these approaches are now embedded within mainstream allotment management. Rather than being treated as standalone environmental initiatives, biodiversity enhancement, water conservation and sustainable cultivation increasingly form part of routine site management practices.



Glasgow City Council: Helping allotments become urban wildlife havens

Glasgow City Council has identified significant opportunities to enhance biodiversity across its greenspaces, including allotments; demonstrating how local authorities can balance operational requirements with nature recovery. Through habitat creation, pollinator-friendly management and strategic approaches to ecological enhancement, the council is helping to support wildlife while delivering wider benefits for communities and climate resilience. [Identifying opportunities for biodiversity](#)

16 Conclusion

Adapting allotment services to meet sustained demand

The 2026 APSE State of the Market survey reveals a sector that continues to evolve in response to changing societal expectations, financial pressures and ongoing demand.

Demand remains exceptionally high. Whilst there are signs that waiting lists have stabilised compared with their post-pandemic peaks, many authorities continue to experience significant unmet demand.

The most significant response remains the widespread adoption of smaller plots. More than three-quarters of authorities have reduced plot sizes whilst 93% now provide smaller alternatives. Councils consistently report positive outcomes from this approach.

Financial sustainability remains a challenge. Most services continue to require subsidy, although authorities are increasingly seeking routes towards greater cost recovery while maintaining affordable access.

Perhaps most significantly, the findings demonstrate that allotments are increasingly recognised as multifunctional community assets.

They contribute towards:

- Physical health
- Mental wellbeing
- Community cohesion
- Food growing
- Climate resilience
- Biodiversity enhancement

The growth in concessionary pricing and ongoing investment in accessibility further demonstrate the sector's commitment to inclusion.

Looking ahead, funding and land availability remain the principal challenges. However, the findings suggest councils remain committed to protecting and developing allotment provision wherever possible.

As governments across the UK continue to pursue biodiversity recovery, climate adaptation and public health objectives, allotments are likely to become increasingly important components of sustainable and resilient local communities.

How can APSE help?

All APSE members can sign up to APSE's Parks, Horticulture and Grounds Maintenance network, which is an online network providing four learning events across the year, with expert speakers from across local government and the wider parks and greenspace sector. You can sign up to the network using [this link](#).

16.1 Training

APSE Training has also designed a special interactive online course for those who work in allotment services:

- **Managing Allotments in Local Authorities** - This 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. You can book your place [here](#) or using the QR code:



16.2 Benchmarking for your parks service

APSE Performance Networks is the largest voluntary public sector benchmarking organisation in the UK. With over 200 authorities in membership, Performance Networks assists local councils by:

- Demonstrating progression on carbon reduction/ecological actions
- Helping to set a clear baseline on which competitiveness, efficiency and value for money can be measured in a systematic manner.
- Identifying the impact of service changes and interventions for your own local authorities and for others.
- Assessing the quality, cost and competitiveness of the services that councils provide on a regular basis.
- Helping to report data in meaningful ways to both elected members and the public.
- Identifying direction of travel and pace of change with regard to service delivery.
- Identifying inefficiencies such as poor productivity and high cost.
- Supporting service improvement through process benchmarking and sharing best practice examples.

For more information about how your greenspace service can benefit from Performance Networks membership, click [here](#).

Sign up for APSE membership to enjoy a whole range of benefits

APSE member authorities have access to a range of membership resources to assist in delivering council services. This includes our regular network meetings, specifically designed to bring together elected members, directors, managers and heads of service, together with trade union representatives to discuss service specific issues, innovation and new ways of delivering continuous improvement. The networks are an excellent forum for sharing ideas and discussing topical service issues with colleagues from other councils throughout the UK.

Networks are a free service included as part of your authority's membership of APSE and all end with an informal lunch to facilitate networking with peers in other councils. If you do not currently receive details about APSE Network meetings and would like to be added to our list of contacts for your service area please email enquiries@apse.org.uk.

Our national networks include:-

- FM and Building Cleaning
- Catering (School Meals)
- Cemeteries and Crematoria
- Highways and Street Lighting
- Housing, Construction and Building Maintenance
- Social Value, Procurement and Commercialisation Network
- Parks, Horticulture and Grounds Maintenance
- Renewables and Climate Change
- Roads, Highways and Street Lighting
- Sports and Leisure Management
- Vehicle Maintenance and Transport
- Veterans and Military Champions Network
- Local Government Reorganisation Network
- Waste Management, Recycling and Street Cleansing

Visit www.apse.org.uk for more details.



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