



association for public service excellence

Local Authority State of the Market 2025

Allotment Services



Briefing 25/21
August 2025

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Local Authority State of the Market 2025: Allotment Services

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Results at a glance

(Change from 2024)

Cost

Charge less than £100 per annum to rent a 250 sq m plot (inc. water) for 2025/26	48%	Data change
Do not recover costs from managing the allotments and therefore subsidise the service	63%	-7%
Not increased the cost per annum to rent a plot during the past 2 years (beyond an inflationary increase)	56%	-21%
If the price has increased beyond inflation, the allotments service is still subsidised	65%	+7%

Number of sites

More than 20 allotment sites in the authority	51%	-2%
Plan to increase the number of allotments	35%	-18%

Waiting lists

Average waiting time of more than 18 months	63%	-4%
Contain more than 1000 people	31%	+2%

Plot size / ownership

Have reduced the size of standard plots to create smaller-sized plots	76%	+3%
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Concessions

Offer concessionary / discount prices	60%	-6%
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Biodiversity

Areas being set aside for wildlife	80%	+5%
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1 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 state of the market surveys. This allows for the identification of trends in the sector, as well as the challenges, opportunities and issues that local authority parks and greenspace teams are facing. The results of the survey are shared with local authorities and other organisations to help them better understand the needs of the sector.

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, and HortWeek (2024).⁴

1.1 Methodology

APSE conducted a survey of its member local councils between June and August 2025.

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.

1.2 Allotment authorities

While some allotments are provided by private individuals, charities or trustees, the majority are provided by local authorities. All allotment authorities have power to provide allotments. They also have a duty to do so if there is a sufficient demand for allotments (section 23, Allotments Act 1908).⁵

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

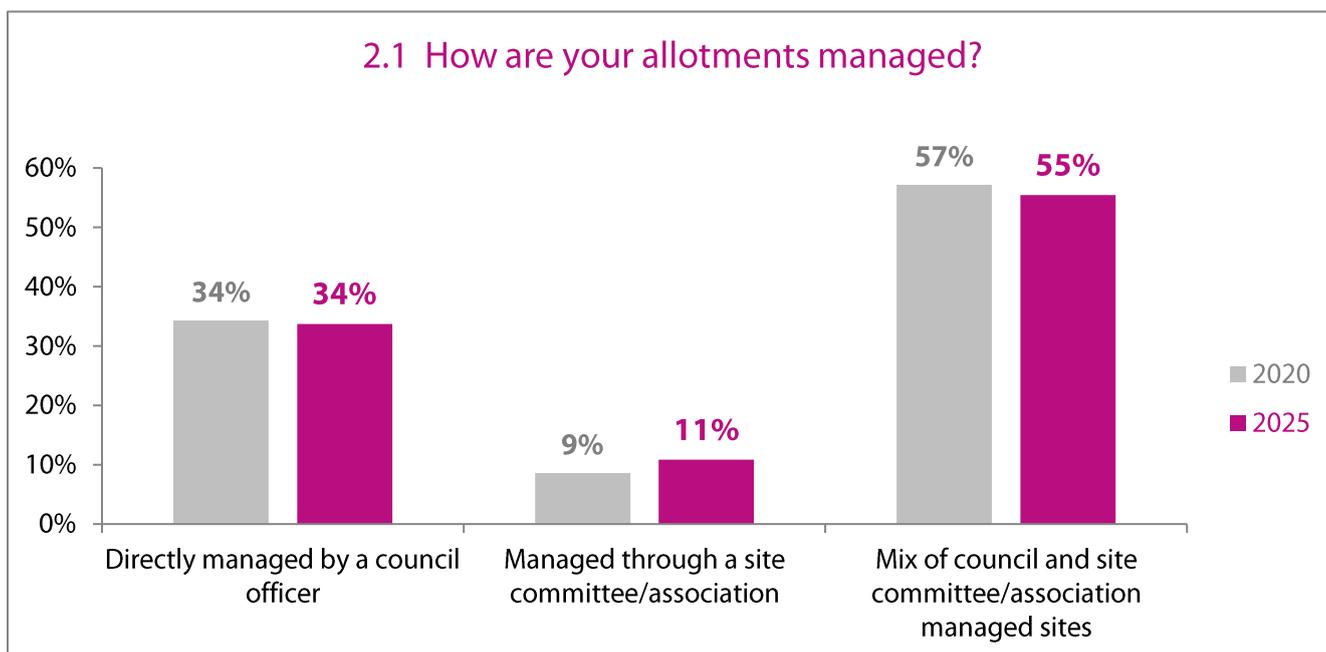
² <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/could-an-allotment-cut-the-cost-of-your-weekly-food-shop-tr3rzwst>

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.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Edw7/8/36/section/23>

2 Management



The 2025 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:

- 34% of allotment services remain directly managed by a council officer,
- 11% are managed solely by a site committee or association, and
- the majority – 55% – continue to operate under a hybrid arrangement involving both council oversight and local site committees or associations.

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...

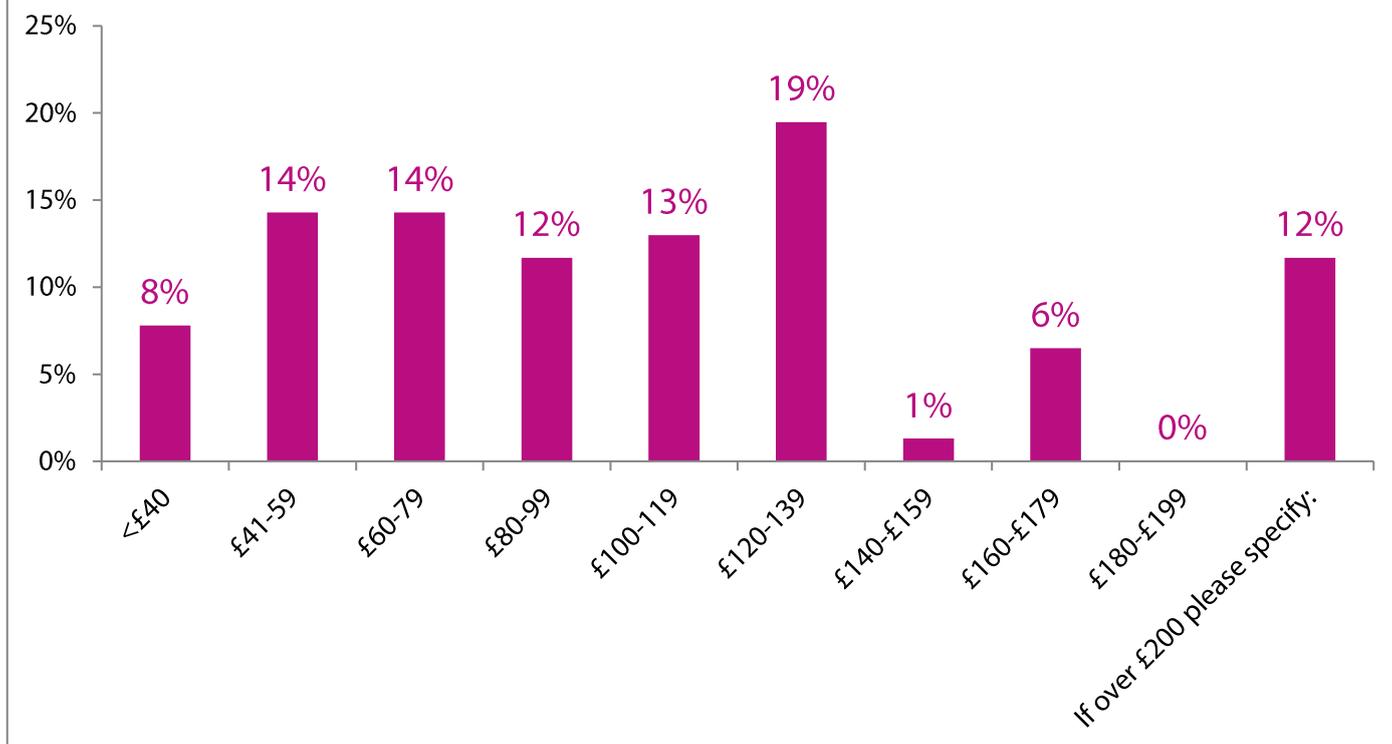
APSE Training has designed a highly interactive online course to help local authorities understand their obligations and the challenges involved in managing allotments e.g. funding, water, waiting lists, costs and enforcement, shared use, self-management, and site safety. For more information about

Managing Allotments in Local Authorities, and how you can book your place, [click here](#).

3 Cost

3.1 What is the cost per annum to rent an allotment plot in 2025/26?

(Note: if you have different costs according to size of land, please use the cost for a typical 250 square metre plot including water)

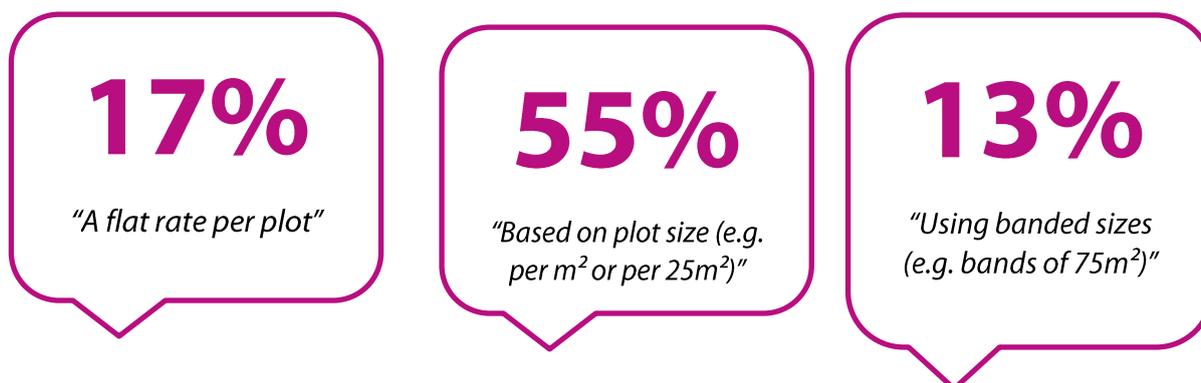


The uneven charging regimes for allotment plots across the UK can be attributed to several factors. These include variations in land availability and the level of demand for allotments in different regions. Furthermore, differences in maintenance costs and amenities provided by each allotment site can also contribute to the disparity in charging regimes.

3.1 reveals the uneven charging regimes in place for allotment plots across the UK. Using the cost for a typical 250 square metre plot including water, just over a fifth of those surveyed charge less than £60 a year (22%), whereas just under a fifth charge over £140 (19%). For those authorities charging over £200 for allotments, recorded figures range from £200 to £250. As expected, the bulk of councils charging over £140 are located in urban areas. The upper reporting limit for charges has been revised for the second consecutive year – rising from £90 to £200 in 2025 – reflecting not only the continued increase in allotment fees, but also the combined effects of inflationary pressures, local authority budget constraints and surging demand for plots.

Regarding those authorities pricing allotment plots at <£60 per annum, there has been a 10% drop since 2023 (32%) and a 32% drop since 2019 (55%).

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.

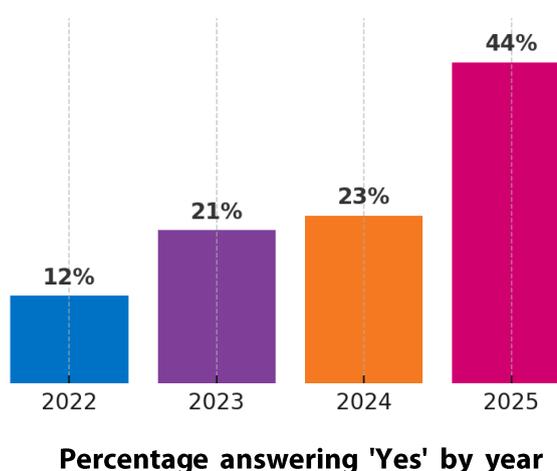
The 2025 APSE survey shows that:

- 55% 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.
- 13% use banded plot sizes (e.g. charging by size range).
- 17% 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.

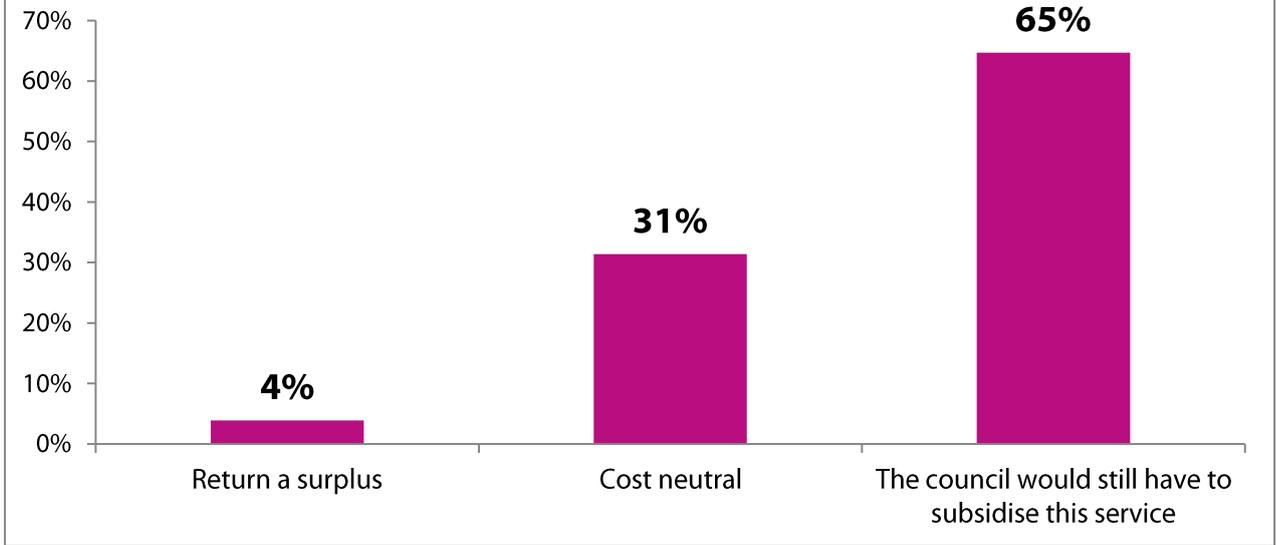
Has the cost per annum to rent an allotment plot increased (beyond an inflationary increase) during the past 2 years?

In terms of increased costs, 44% of respondents reported raising plot rents above the standard rate of inflation – a rise of 21 percentage points compared with 2023, and 32 points compared with 2022. As noted in the 2023 report, this trend "suggests moves to at least make the provision of allotments cost neutral."¹



¹ <https://apse.org.uk/index.cfm/apse/members-area/briefings/2023/23-37-state-of-the-market-survey-allotments-2023/>

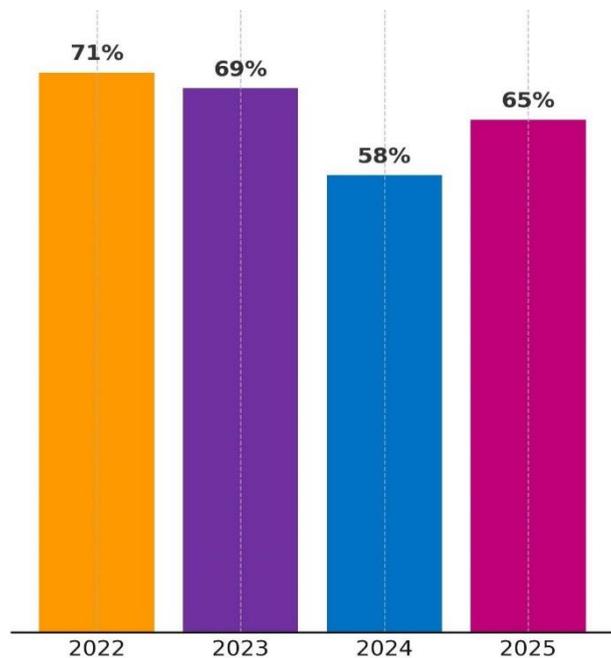
3.2 If yes, would this increase make the service:



3.2 shows that, among those who have increased costs beyond inflation, almost two-thirds (65%) are still subsidising the service. In other words, these are steps towards cost neutrality, but many councils continue to subsidise their allotment provision.

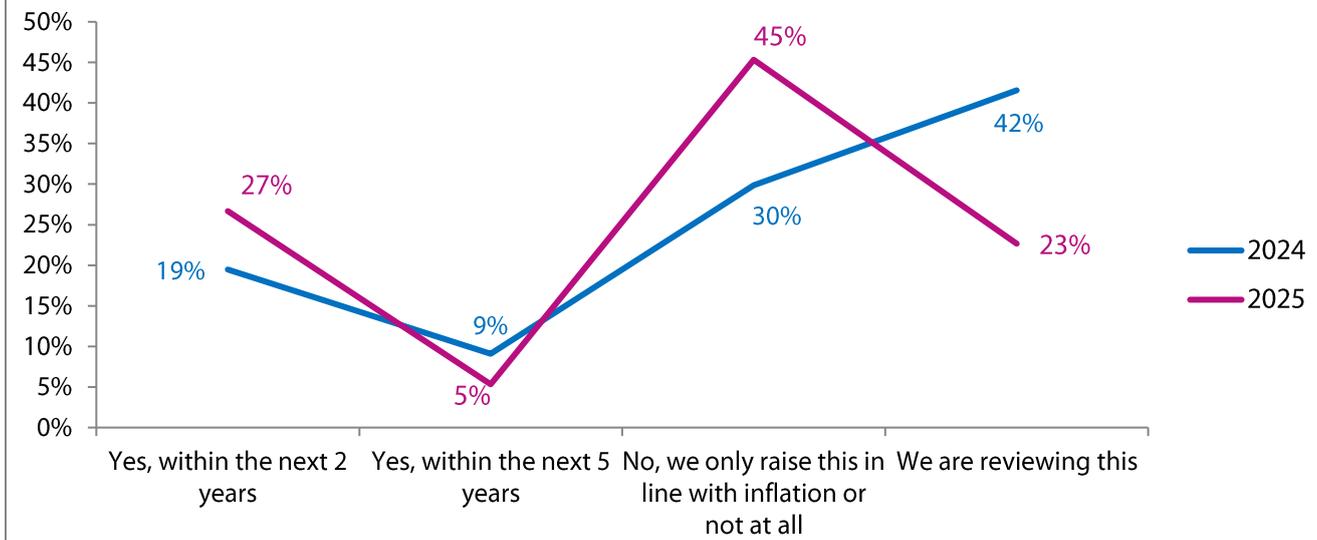
In 2025, the 65% of councils still subsidising their allotment service marks a reversal of the downward trend seen from 2022 to 2024.

This reversal may be driven by rising running and maintenance costs, alongside policy decisions to keep allotments affordable for certain groups, meaning full cost recovery remains an aspiration for many authorities.



The council would still have to subsidise the service

3.3 Are you intending to increase the price of allotment plots?



3.3 shows that the picture on allotment pricing has shifted since 2024.

There has been an 8 percentage point rise in respondents planning to increase plot prices within the next two years (from 19% to 27%), suggesting growing short-term financial pressures. In contrast, those planning increases within the next five years have fallen slightly by 4 percentage points.

Notably, there’s been a 15 percentage point increase in authorities stating they will “only raise prices in line with inflation, if at all,” alongside a 19 percentage point drop in those currently “reviewing” pricing. This may reflect a move away from active pricing reviews toward more inflation-linked or fixed approaches, aiming to balance cost recovery with affordability.



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.

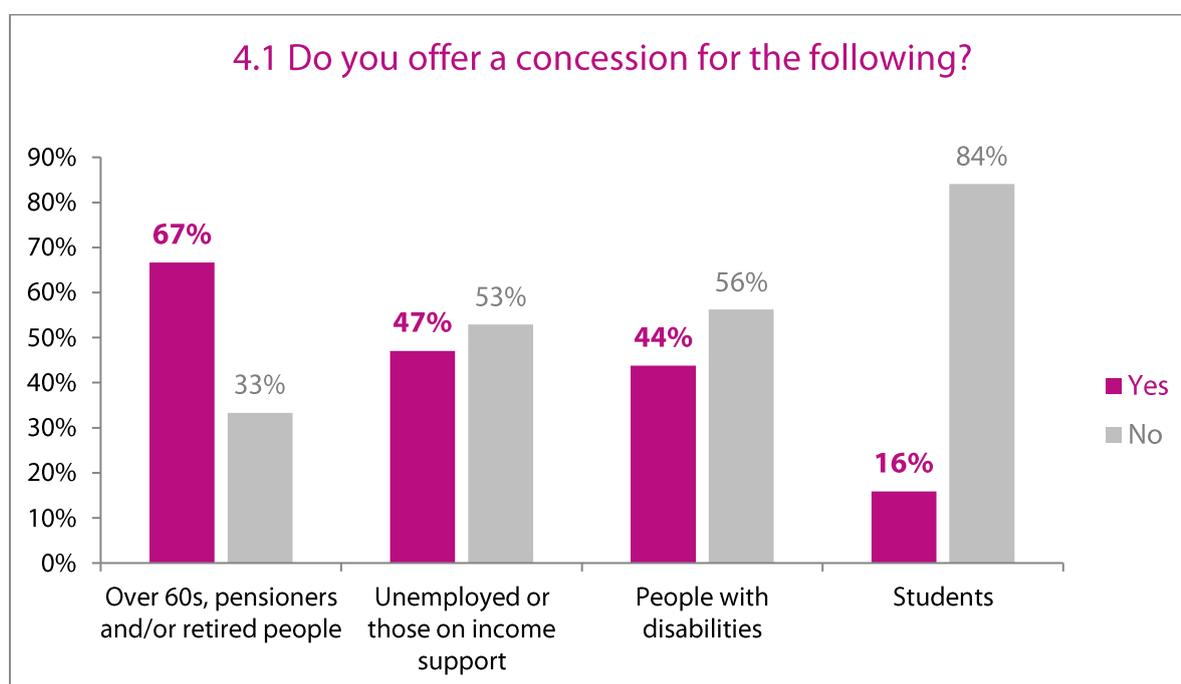
If you belong to an APSE member council and have allotment queries – or any queries relating to grounds maintenance – the APSE network may have the answers. Connect with the APSE network and get involved with our Network Queries service [here](#).

4 Concessions

60%
"Yes"

Are concessionary / discount prices offered?

Concessionary or discounted rents remain a feature of most local authority allotment regimes, with 60% of councils offering some form of concession in 2025. This represents a small decline from 2024 but indicates continued recognition of the social and health benefits allotments provide to vulnerable groups.



4.1 reveals "Over 60s pensioners and/or retired people" remain the most likely recipients of concessionary prices for allotment plots with 67% of respondents offering discounts to this protected group (a small decrease of 3% from 2024). There has also been a small uptick in those offering discounts to "People with disabilities" from 2024, highlighting a growing recognition of the importance of accessibility and inclusion within allotment schemes.

The number of allotment authorities offering concessionary prices to the "Unemployed or those on income support" remains steady at 47% though there has been a further decline in the number offering concessions to "Students" (16%). This is down 8% from 2024 (24%) and a further 8% from 2023 (32%). This may indicate a perception that students have less need for subsidised allotments; signaling a shift in focus towards other demographic groups or a reassessment of who benefits most from concessions.

4.2 % of concessions

	0-10%	10-20%	20-30%	30-40%	40-50%	Over 50%
Over 60s, pensioners and/or retired people	6%	12%	21%	15%	47%	0%
Unemployed or those on income support	4%	13%	13%	9%	57%	4%
People with disabilities	5%	14%	14%	19%	43%	5%
Students	0%	29%	29%	29%	14%	0%

When setting a concession, 4.2 shows the 40-50% range remains by far the most popular amongst authorities when applying the discount to protected groups. The 20-30% range is the second most common.

Some authorities continue to adopt generous local policies – for example, full discounts for site volunteers or site secretaries – while others have tightened criteria in response to budget pressures.

Comments include:

"Based on the condition of the plot at the time of the tenancy being taken on. If a plot is overgrown, then we will offer the plot as is in return for discounted rent (free period)."

"Those on pension credit/universal/council tax reduction (excluding student/single person)/ housing benefit."

"Armed forces."

"30% for all tenants over the national retirement age, currently 67. 50% for all tenants over the age of 60 who have been an allotment tenant since the 22nd August 2016."

" People on means tested benefits- PIP, Disability living allowance, attendance allowance, jobseekers Housing Benefit, Council Tax Support, Univ Credit, Working Tax credit, Pension Credit, Employment Support Allowance."

"Site Secretary 100% on one full plot."

5 Access

57%

"Yes"

Do you make provision for people with disabilities to access allotment plots?

A majority of respondents (57%) reported making provision for people with disabilities to access allotment plots, indicating steady progress towards greater inclusivity in local allotment services. Common adaptations include the provision of raised beds, accessible pathways and plot allocations near entrances, parking, or toilets.

Many councils also highlighted efforts to tailor plot allocation to individual needs through communication during the application process. While some sites have made significant investments such as installing wide access gates, surfaced paths and disability-friendly community plots, others noted limitations due to site restrictions or ongoing development to meet accessibility standards. Overall, the responses indicate positive progress towards making allotments more accessible, though the level of provision varies across councils.

"We have recently opened a new community allotment site which has been designed to have accessible areas and facilities such as raised beds and wide pathways."

"If we are made aware of a disability on an application for an allotment we will endeavour to allocate a suitable plot."

"Reasonable adjustments when practicable, including identifying plots near parking/site entrances/plot swaps, improving plot access through wider gates and surfaced paths, and supplying raised beds."

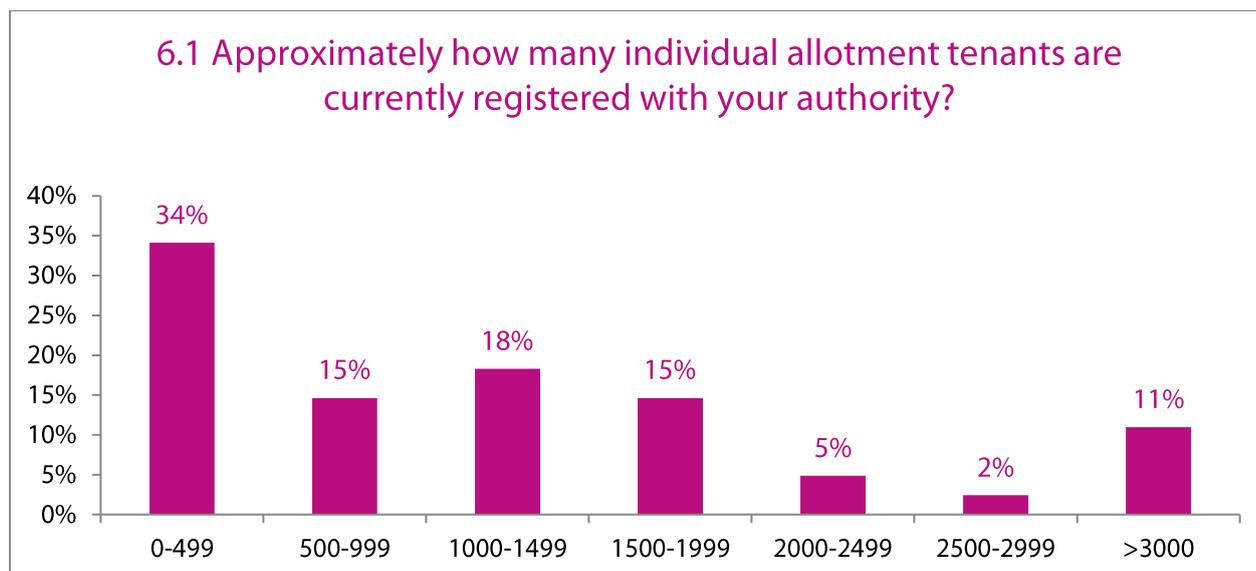
"Council grant-aided upgrading of access path at one site."

"We try to locate those with disabilities closer to the main access gate on a more level plot or we have some sites with raised planters that can be offered."

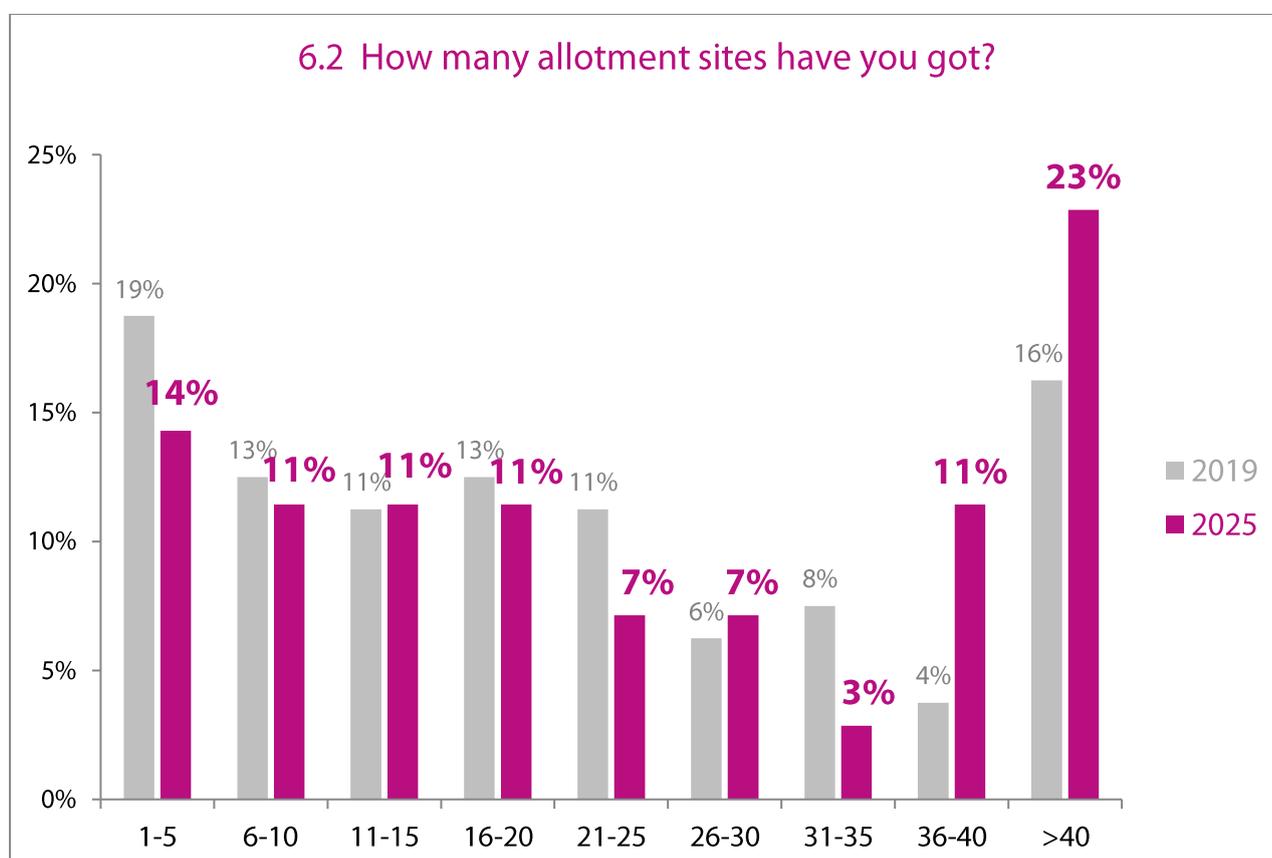
"New sites being developed meet DDA requirements. We also provided wheelchair accessible raised beds on sites developed prior to the enactment of the DDA."

"Most allotment associations also provide and design areas to be accessible and help support people with disabilities."

6 Number of tenants/sites/plots



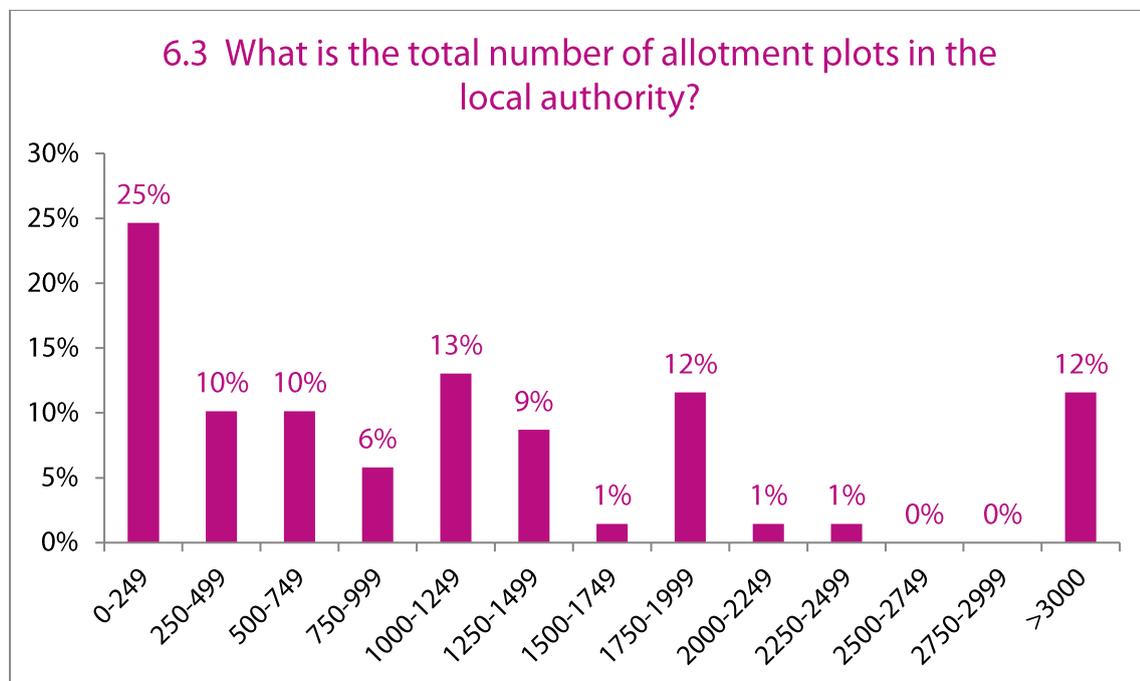
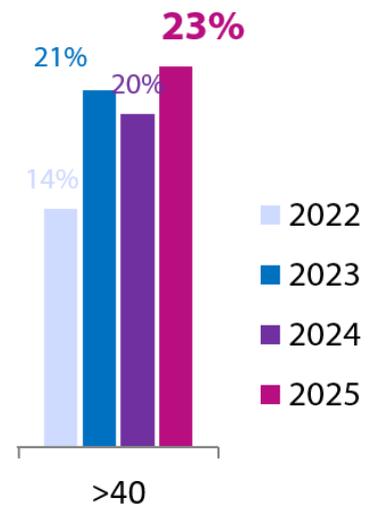
6.1 shows a wide range in the size of allotment tenant populations across authorities. Around a third (34%) have fewer than 500 registered tenants, mainly reflecting smaller or more rural councils. Meanwhile, 18% report between 1,000 and 1,499 tenants, and a combined 32% fall within the 500 to 1,999 range, indicating a substantial number of medium-sized allotment services. Larger authorities with more than 2,500 tenants account for 13% of respondents, including 11% with over 3,000 tenants, mainly representing major urban areas.



The findings from 6.2 have been cross-referenced with the 2019 findings as this was the last pre-COVID survey and, as a result, the last survey before the general surge in demand for plots.

In 6.2, by plotting against 2019, one can observe authorities are being proactive in trying to meet demand. In this instance, by increasing the number of allotment sites in the local area: 37% of authorities now possess >30 allotment sites as opposed to 27% in 2019.

There has also been a 9% increase in the number of authorities in possession of >40 sites from 2022, suggesting continued expansion in high-capacity areas.



35%
"Yes"

Does the council have plans to increase the number of allotments?

Almost a third of those surveyed intend to increase the number of allotments in their local area to help meet demand. This is an 18% drop from 2024 which may suggest that many local authorities might still be constrained by land availability, budgetary limits or competing resource priorities.

If you plan to increase the number of allotments, what will be the method of provision?

	2022	2023	2024	2025
Direct provision by the council of additional plots	73%	75%	50%	68%
Provision by builders/developers as part of a housing/planning policy	50%	30%	56%	55%
Provision by community groups supported/facilitated by council	41%	45%	37%	32
Provision by other council departments (e.g., Education, Social Work) as part of a healthy lifestyles/eco-schools/health type project	32%	20%	8%	23%
Other	18%	5%	13%	18%

The latest data reveals the preferred methods of increasing the number of allotments are:

- **Direct Council Provision (68%)** has returned to being the most common method, recovering from a dip in 2024 (50%). This rebound suggests renewed investment or reprioritisation of council-led community growing projects.
- **Builders/Developers (55%)** have increased involvement compared to 2023 (30%), likely due to stronger planning policy integration or incentives for housing developers to include allotments.
- **Community Groups (32%)** show a drop from 2023 (45%), perhaps due to reduced funding.
- **Other Council Departments (23%)** has seen a partial recovery from 2024's low (8%), indicating tentative reintegration into health and wellbeing initiatives.
- **Other Methods (18%)** have returned to 2022 levels.

Comments noted that ongoing resource constraints continue to hinder council capacity to directly provide new allotments. Therefore, incorporating allotments into broader urban planning frameworks and negotiated planning permissions – requiring private developers to include allotments as part of new housing developments – can ensure the continued creation of allotment spaces without straining public resources. However, the risk with this approach lies in ensuring developers maintain these sites and do not let them fall into a state of dereliction. Comments noted that where this occurs, the council is expected to step in and take responsibility for the site.

The National Allotment Society have recently produced a set of practical, design-led and policy-based guidelines for planners and developers who are looking to include allotments in new developments.²

² <https://thenas.org.uk/uploads/NAS%20Development%20Brochure%202023%20LR.pdf>

7 Plot size

76%

"Yes"

Have you reduced the size of your plots to create smaller-sized plots to allow waiting lists to be reduced?

A little over three-quarters of those surveyed (76%) report reducing the size of their plots to create smaller-sized plots. This is a 3% increase on 2024 and 12% higher than reported in 2022. Comments noted that, though reducing waiting lists is the overriding reason why plots are being downsized, smaller plots are frequently described as more attractive to younger or working applicants and hobby gardeners who lack time for larger plots:

"On some sites dependent upon demand and design of the site."

"We are considering entry level plots which are 5mts x 3mts as a lot of people are simply aspirational gardeners and cannot manage and maintain our present minimum sized plot (quarter plot/10mts x 6mts."

"Wherever possible, larger plots are being spit to make them more manageable / enjoyable, this has also helped to reduce our waiting lists."

"Once a tenant leaves we ask the next person on the list show them the plot to see if they can manage the size, if not we will reduce the size."

"We are reducing our historical full size plots which have proven in the last few years too big for most applicants and are being split to produce to standard plots up to 179sqm each plot."

"As legacy plot holders move on, plots are divided into smaller plots."

"We have been splitting 10 rod plots into 5 rod plots where feasible."

"We offer half plots, unless plot cannot be split. We also offer quarter plots."

"Some large plots have been turned in to starter plots that are more manageable to working families."

"We have created starter plots smaller for people with less time."

If you have reduced plot size to create more allotments how has the public reacted?

Authorities report that public reaction to downsizing remains largely positive where change is managed collaboratively with associations and existing plot-holders:

"Very happy people cant manage large plots - no time - but just want to grow something. They have a sense of community and they have fresh air and exercise."

"It has been welcomed and accepted by allotment associations and plot holders, however it is not something that we actively publicise."

"Very positively, the smaller plots are managed well, with tenants using the space more efficiently."

"Favourably. Large plots are hard to modern families to manage."

"Positively for getting people on allotments and off the waiting list. But this does put additional pressure on associations and the council to manage more people and plots."

"There have been no complaints about this. There are very few people left that can manage a 25mts x 10mts plot."

"Plots are gradually reduced and a new site with starter plots was established. There were no complaints."

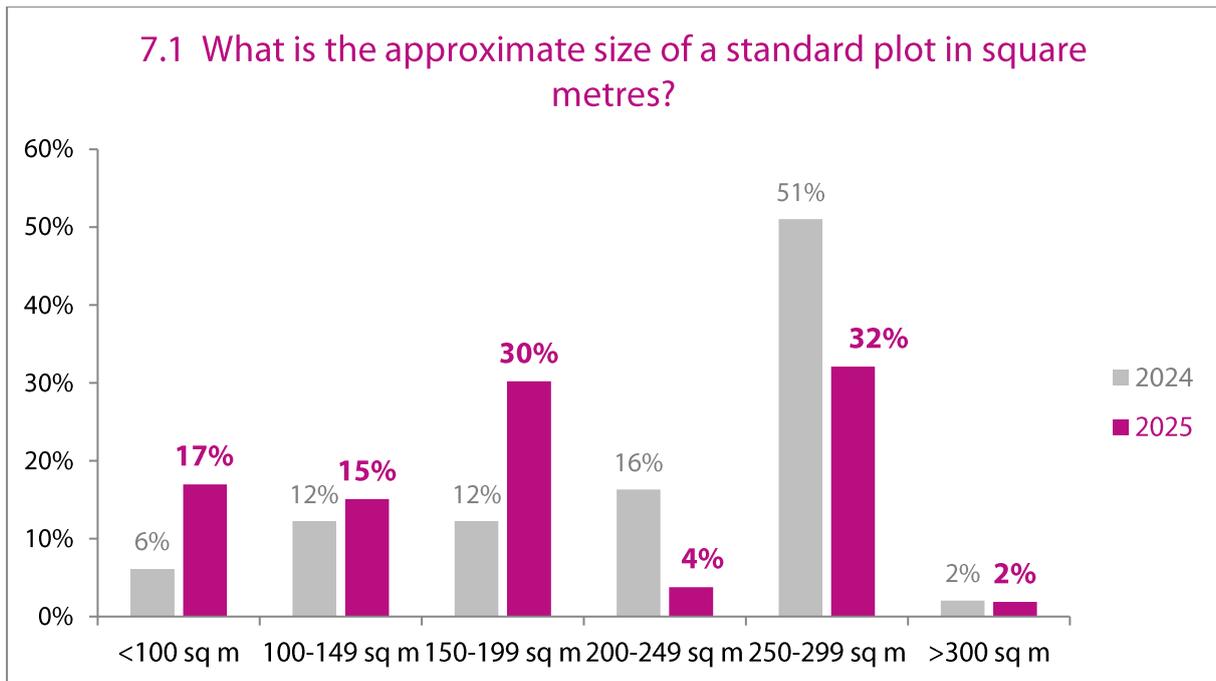
"Most applicants would struggle with larger plots in excess of 179sqm and this allows more applicants the chance of a plot."

25 sq.m

Smallest plot

What is the size of your smaller plots?

The smallest plots of those surveyed range from 25sq.m at the lowest end to 125sq.m at the highest end. In the comments, these smaller plots are referred to as "micro plots" or "kitchen garden plots", illustrating the broadening of allotment typologies to suit differing user needs.



7.1 reveals a notable shift in the definition of a “standard” plot, with a 19% drop in respondents identifying 250–299 sq.m as standard and a near-equivalent rise in those selecting 150–199 sq.m. Overall, 7.1 shows a clear trend towards smaller standard plot sizes, though 250–299 sq.m remains the norm for roughly one-third of 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](#).

8 Plot ownership

55%

"Yes"

Do you restrict plot ownership to a person or a household? i.e. one plot per household?

For the first time since APSE began conducting this survey, a majority of allotment authorities (55%) now restrict plot ownership to a single person or household. This represents a 12% increase compared to last year and suggests growing efforts by councils to manage limited allotment resources more equitably, ensuring broader access within communities. 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.

65%

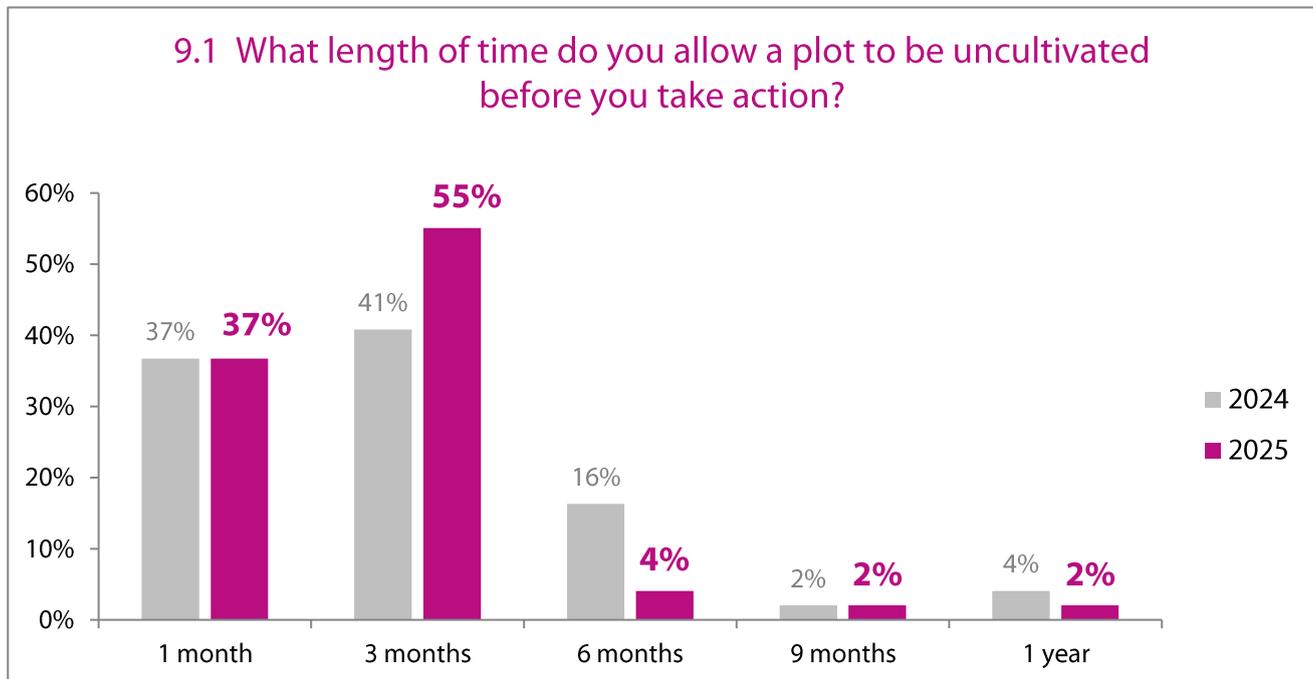
"No"

Can plots be passed on to families and friends?

The decisive majority of authorities surveyed do not permit allotments to be transferred to family members or friends (up 3% from 2024). While historically some plot-holders were allowed to hold multiple plots, an increasing number of councils are now phasing out this practice to better manage high demand and ensure fairer access for more individuals.

9 Monitoring

The primary focus of monitoring is to ensure compliance with tenancy agreements, including maintenance standards, permissible structures and the prevention of waste accumulation.



9.1 reveals that just 8% of authorities now allow allotments to remain uncultivated for more than three months before taking action, marking a substantial decrease from 22% in 2024. This reduction likely reflects councils' increasing efforts to address issues caused by neglected plots - such as safety hazards and pest infestations - and to promote more effective use of allotments. By tightening enforcement of plot maintenance, authorities encourage active cultivation or timely relinquishment of unused plots, helping to reduce idle land and better manage waiting lists of prospective plot-holders.

30%
"Yes"

Are plot-holders required to undertake a probationary period to ensure they can manage their plot effectively?

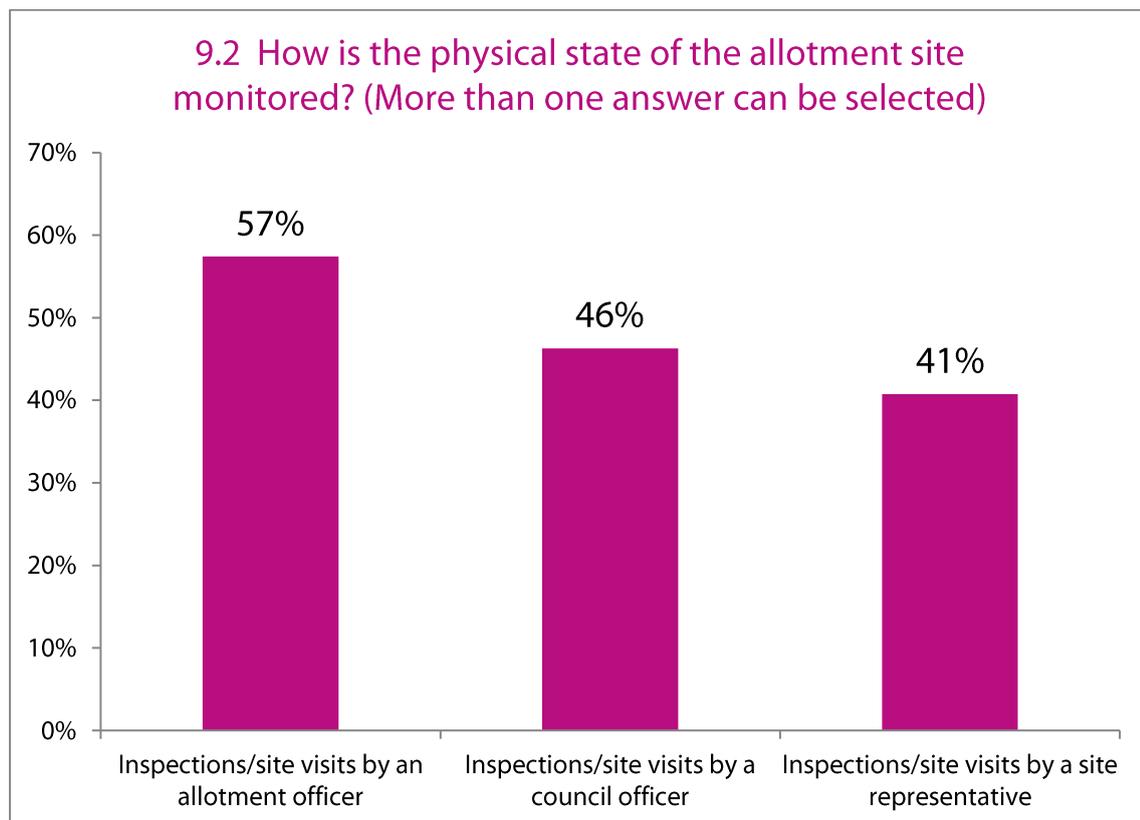
Around 30% of authorities now require plot-holders to undertake a probationary period to ensure they can manage their allotment effectively an increase of 12% from 2024. Given the lengthy waiting lists across many UK authorities (see section 7), it is understandable that those who secure a plot take their responsibilities seriously.

The probationary periods mentioned by authorities generally range from 3 to 6 months, with 3 months dominating responses.

Some authorities noted that plot-holders are expected to begin cultivating their plots within 3 weeks of allocation. Others highlighted that while probation periods are encouraged, management of this process is not always consistent.

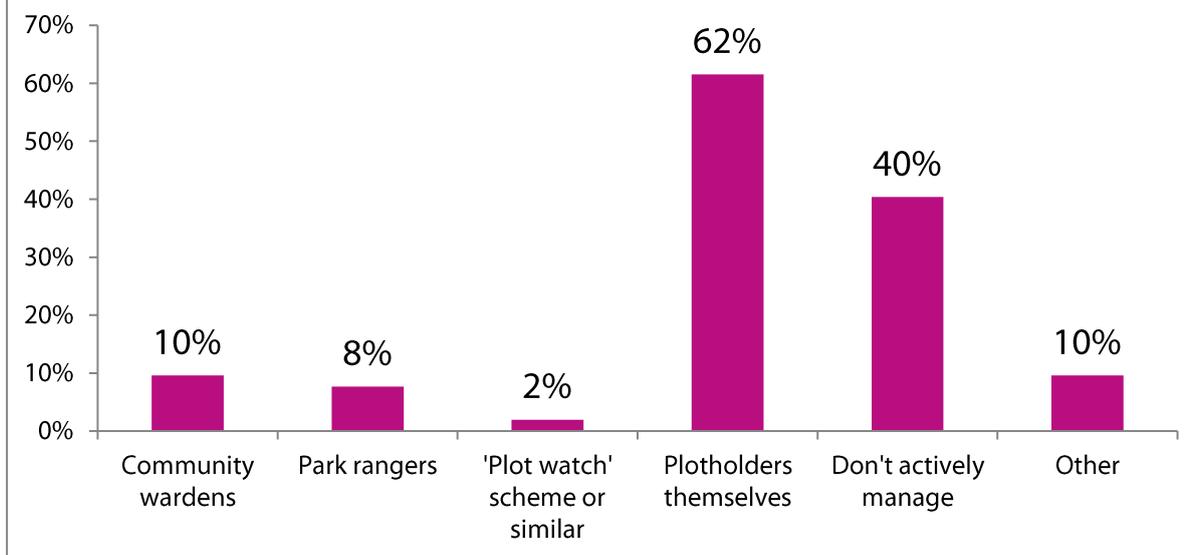
A few councils also mentioned trial approaches such as starting new plot-holders on smaller “micro plots” before upgrading to full-sized plots. This helps new gardeners understand the time and effort required to maintain a plot effectively.

Overall, many authorities see probationary periods as a positive step towards ensuring allotments are well managed and used responsibly.



Monitoring the physical state of allotment sites involves multiple approaches. The most common method, used by 57% of respondents, is inspections or site visits conducted by an allotment officer, reflecting a specialised role focused on allotment management. Council officers also play a significant role, carrying out inspections in 46% of cases, which may indicate broader oversight within local authority teams. Additionally, 41% of sites are monitored by site representatives.

9.3 How do you manage security on allotment sites? (More than one answer can be selected)



Security management on allotment sites primarily relies on plot-holders themselves, with 62% of respondents indicating this approach. This reflects a strong community role in monitoring and protecting the sites. However, 40% of respondents reported not actively managing security, suggesting a potential area for improvement or differing local contexts where formal security measures may be less necessary. Formal security measures such as community wardens (10%) and park rangers (8%) play a smaller role, while schemes like 'plot watch' are relatively rare (2%).

In the comments, it is noted that physical security measures, including locked gates, fences, and security codes are commonly used to safeguard sites. Additionally, collaboration with local police and targeted patrols by council safer communities teams further support site security.

"The Council's Safer Communities team provide targeted patrolling on specific sites when required."

"We attempt to maintain good secure fences and gates all locked. Key return following change of tenancy does cause concern."

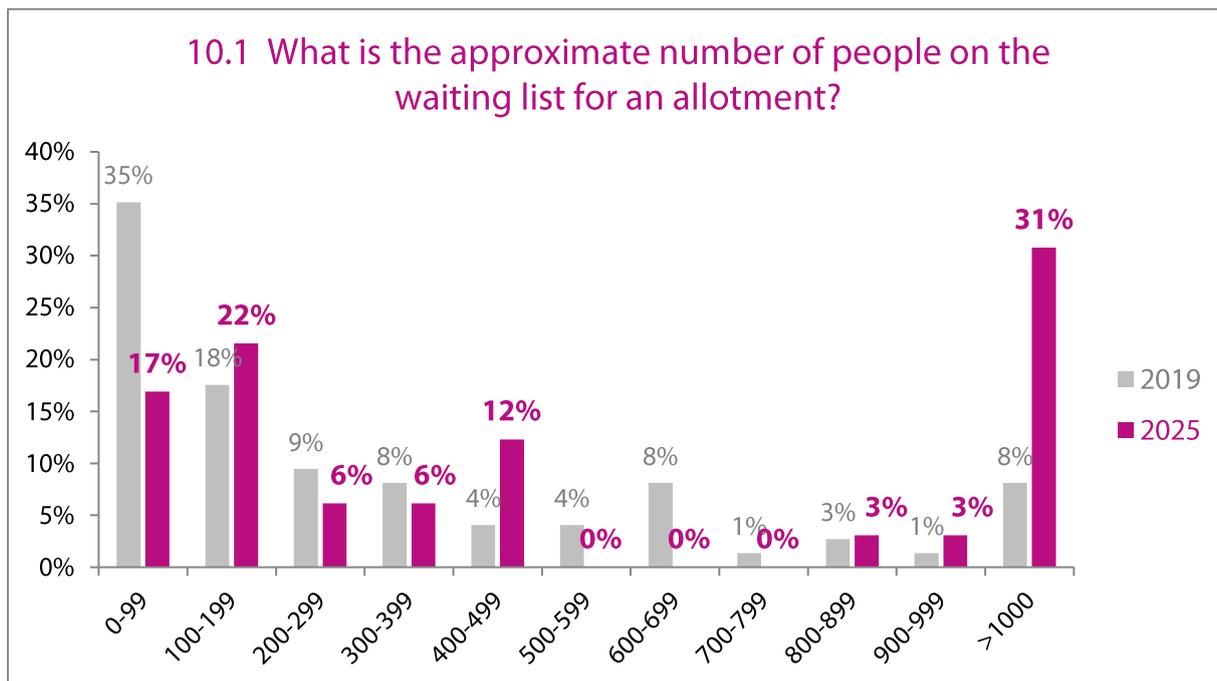
"Volunteer site wardens."

"Liaise with local community police officers."

"Gates are supplied with padlocks on most sites."

"Security codes at access gates."

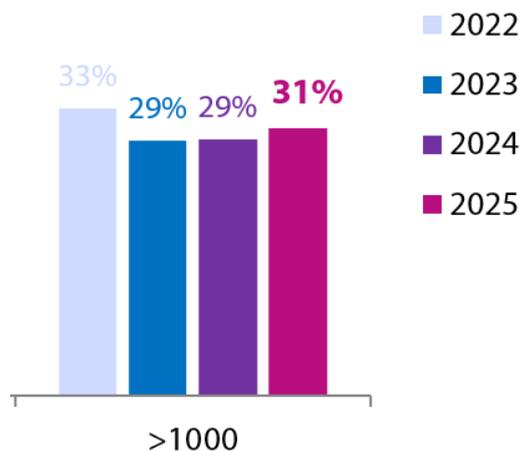
10 Waiting lists



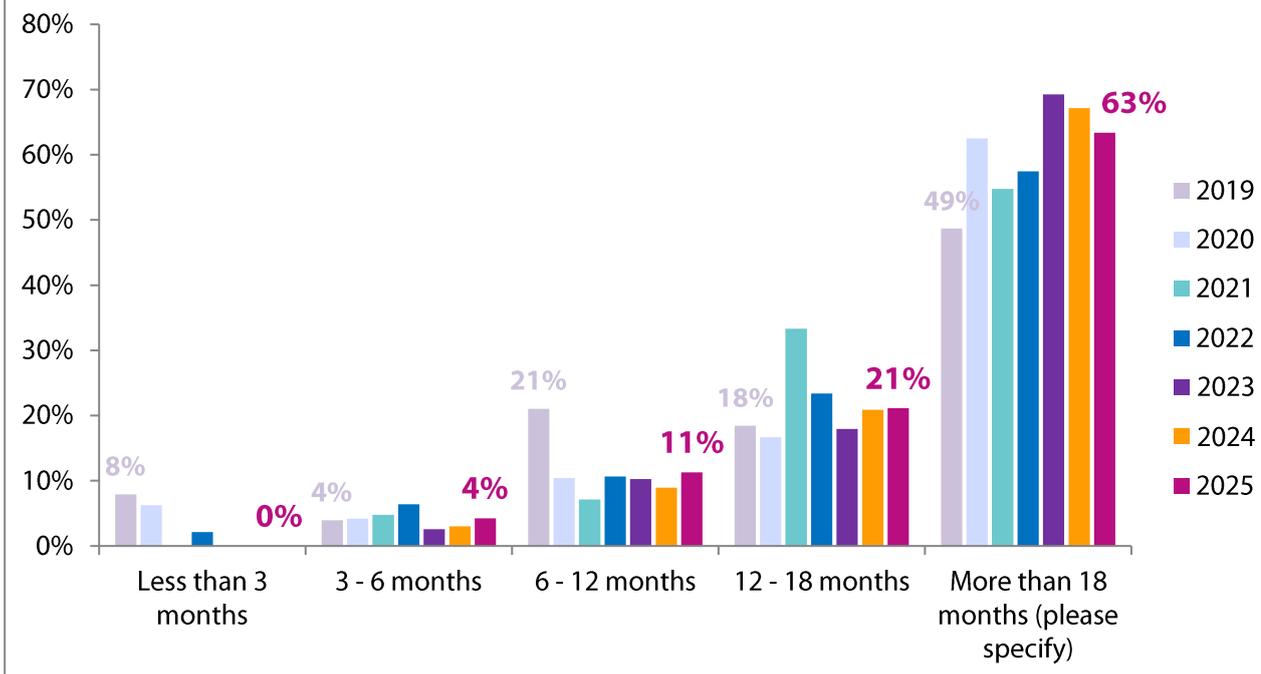
Waiting times for allotments have made national headlines in recent years due to a surge in demand, particularly following the COVID pandemic. Section 7.1 highlights how acute this demand has become over the past six years, with nearly a four-fold increase in the number of authorities reporting waiting 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 second time since 2020 (when it was 66%) that a majority of authorities (63%) 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.



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



The average waiting time for an allotment plot has decreased slightly from the record high seen in 2023, but it remains significantly long, with 63% of authorities reporting extended wait times. This figure is still considerably higher than in previous years, compared to 49% in 2019 and 40% in 2018, illustrating a sustained and growing demand for allotment spaces over the past several years.

Additionally, it is noteworthy that for the third consecutive year, no authorities reported average waiting times of less than three months. This underscores the ongoing challenges faced by local authorities in meeting demand.

63%

Waiting time of more than 18 months

0%

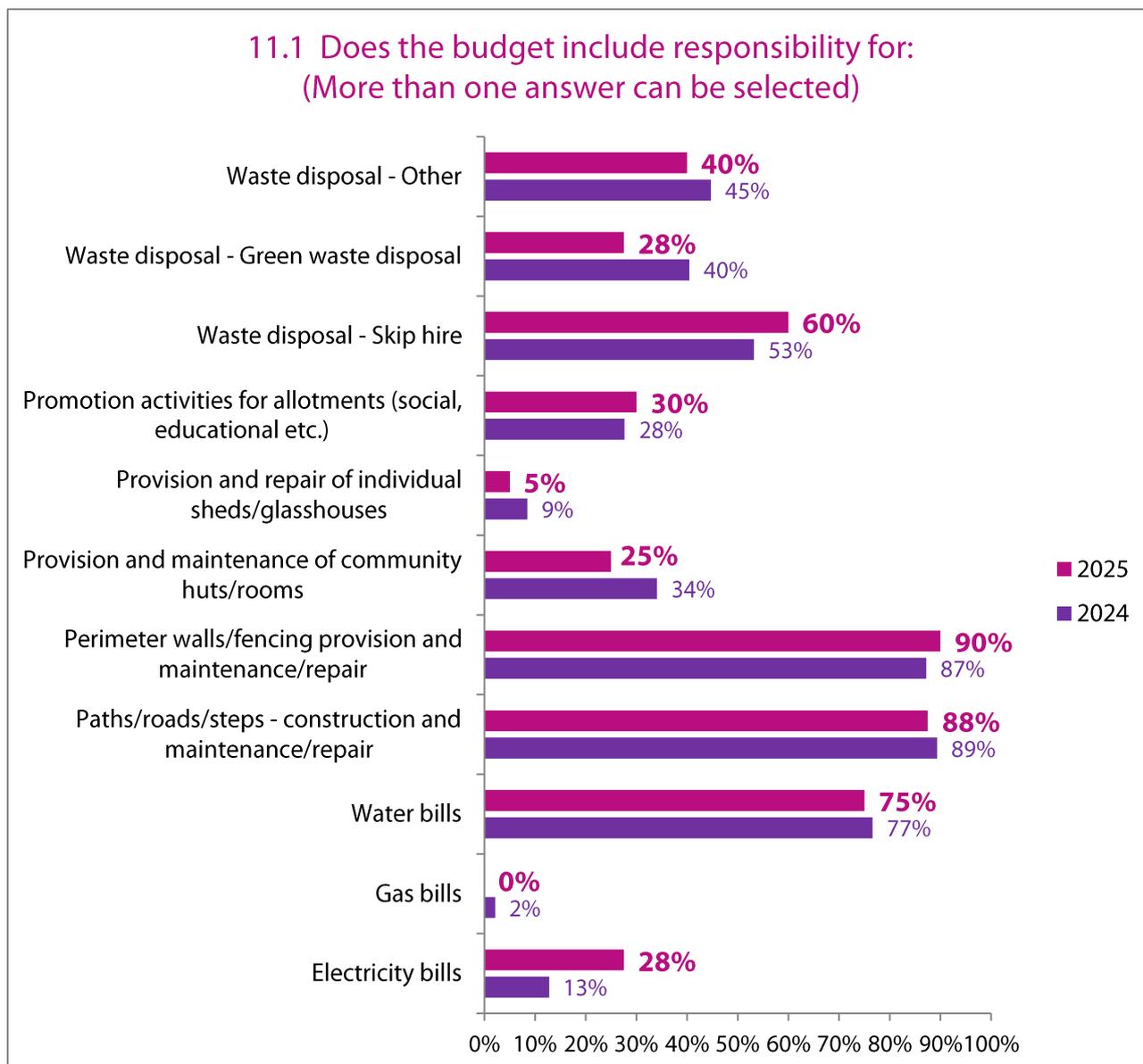
Waiting time of less than 3 months

78%

New tenancies restricted to people living within the local authority area

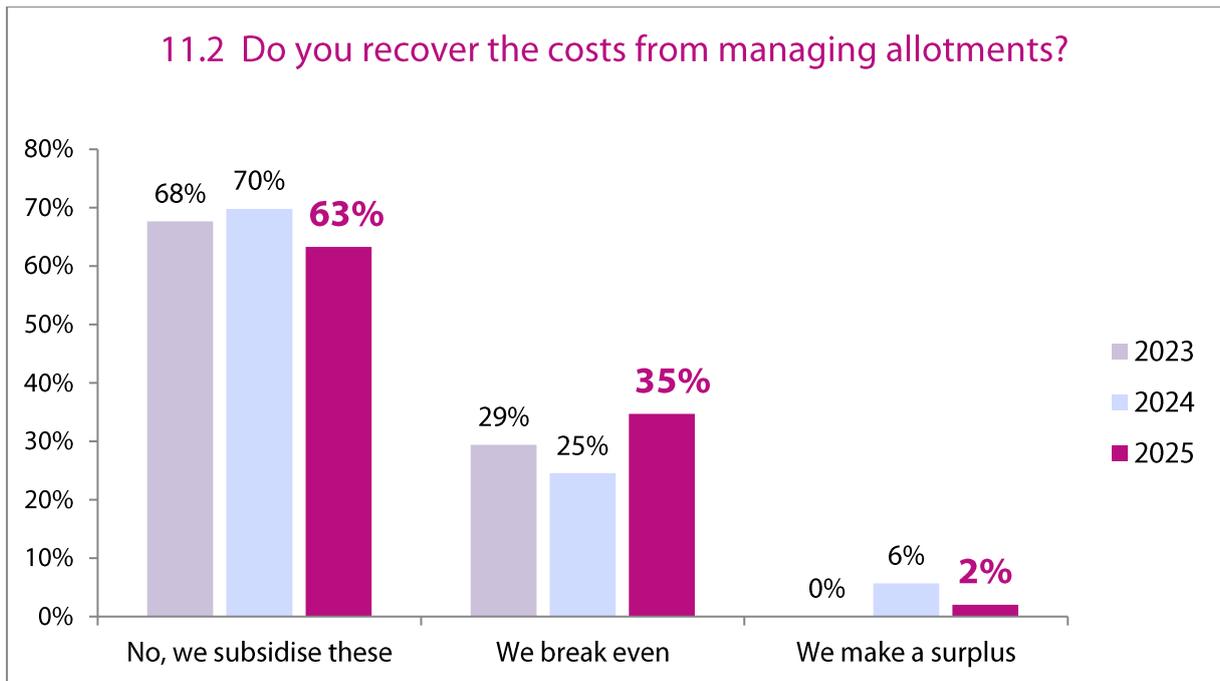
Despite authorities splitting plots to create smaller plots, which many people are willing to take in order to reduce their waiting time, demand remains very high. Therefore, it is unsurprising that 78% of respondents stated that new tenancies are restricted to people living within the local authority area.

11 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.

It is possible many of the infrastructure costs are no longer able to be borne by allotment associations even where sites are jointly managed; income from rents are no longer sufficient to cover expensive works associated with infrastructure maintenance and improvements.



11.2 Reveals almost two-thirds of respondents confirmed that their allotment services continue to be subsidised, but the trend is towards reducing the scale of that subsidy. Several councils reported recent rent increases designed to narrow the funding gap, with some aiming for full cost recovery over the medium term. 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.

12 Strategies

35%

"Yes"

Does the council have an allotments strategy?

Less than half of authorities report having an allotment strategy. For those authorities who do not have a strategy, some report that allotments are covered in their local plans (see below). In Scotland, authorities report that their food growing strategies – a statutory obligation under Part of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 – incorporates allotments.

32%

"Yes"

If not, is the council planning to develop one within the next two years?

For those authorities without a strategy in place, less than half report plans to develop one within the next two years. APSE's own training course – "Managing Allotments in Local Authorities" – equips allotment managers with the tools necessary for designing a successful strategy. You can learn about the course [here](#).

57%

"Yes"

Does your Health and Wellbeing strategy recognise the value of allotments?

The health and wellbeing benefits of maintaining an allotment plot are well-documented. 57% of authorities surveyed report their health and wellbeing strategies recognise the value of allotments.

57%

"Yes"

Does your Local Plan include specific policies as to the protection/provision of allotment sites?

Allotments are recognised in para 96 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) as having a role in enabling and supporting healthy lifestyles.³ Para 124 of the NPPF also asks that "*Planning policies and decisions should: recognise that some undeveloped land can perform many functions, such as for wildlife.. and food production.*"⁴ For this reason, more than half of authorities report their Local Plans include specific policies as to the protection/provision of allotment sites.

³ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/8-promoting-healthy-and-safe-communities>

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/11-making-effective-use-of-land>

12.1 Wellbeing evidence from the National Allotment Society

Alongside APSE's own survey, the National Allotment Society (NAS) recently undertook a major Allotments and Wellbeing survey (February–May 2025), which received nearly 2,000 responses from members and non-members across the UK. 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.

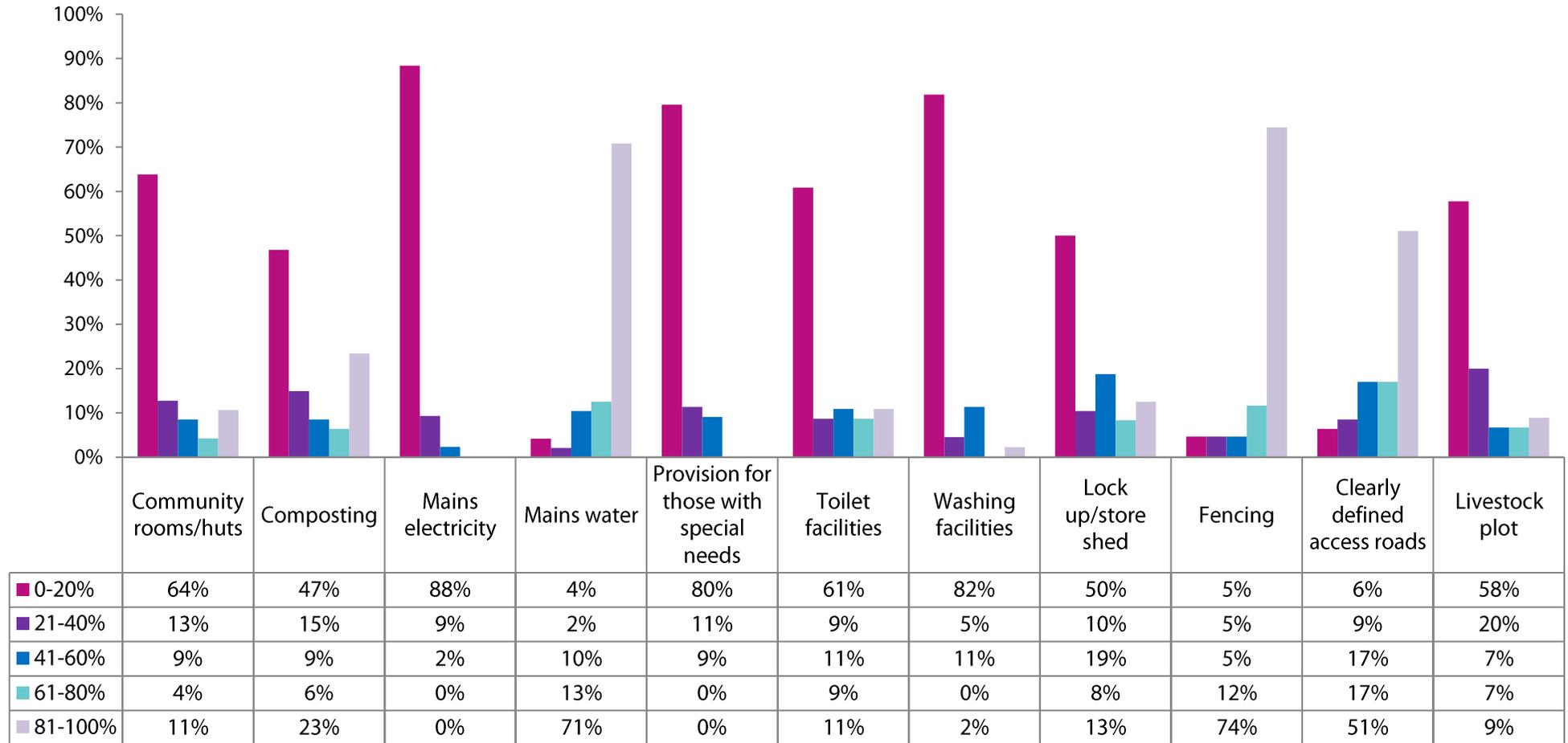
Taken together, the APSE and NAS surveys show that allotments are not only a valued leisure and food-growing resource but also a proven driver of wellbeing, resilience and community connection. Strengthening provision, improving accessibility and linking allotments more systematically to planning and 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/).⁵

⁵ <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/>

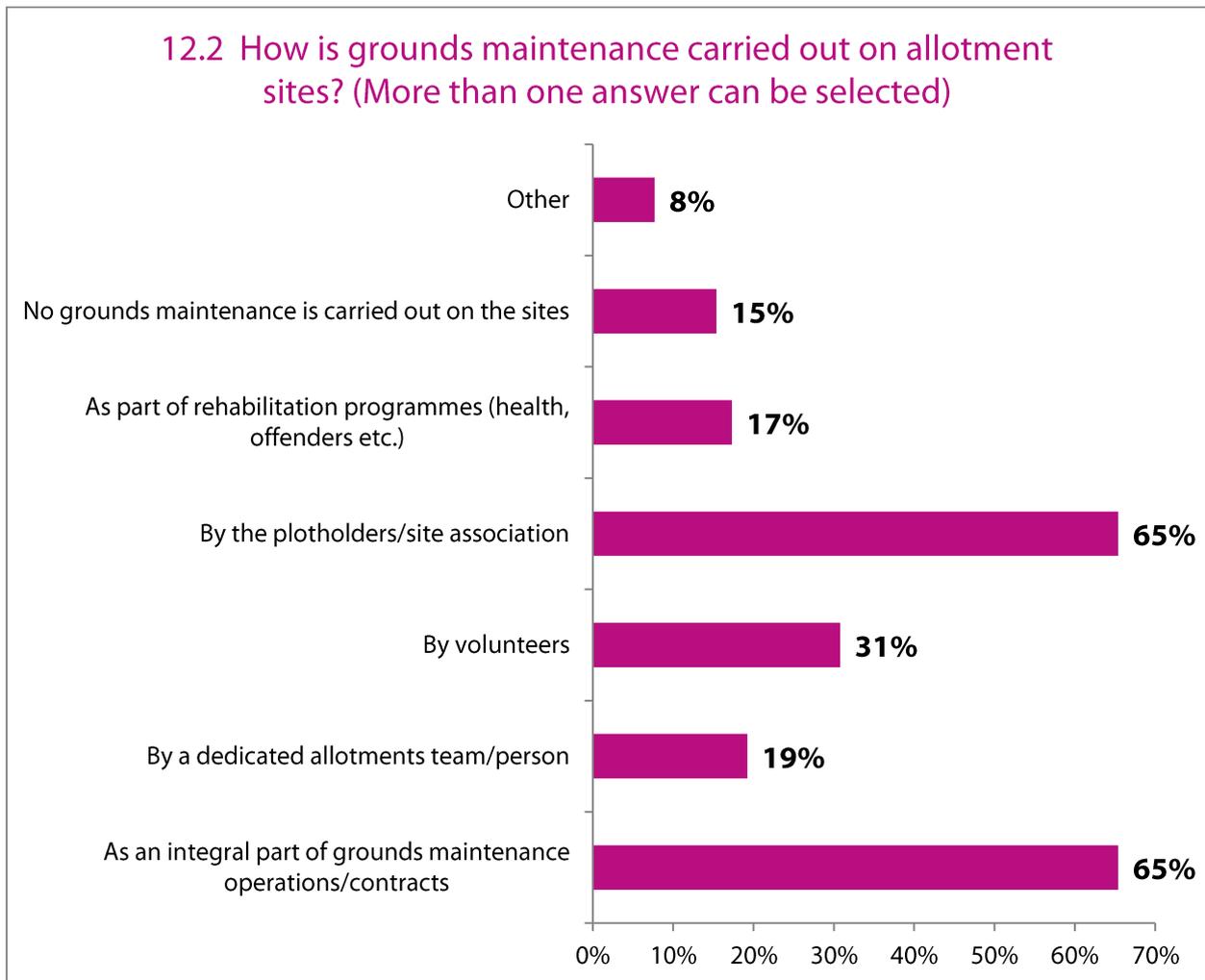
13 Amenities

13.1 What is the approximate percentage of allotment sites with:



12.1 provides a breakdown of the facilities included on allotment sites. Some key observations:

- 71% of authorities provide mains water to 81-100% of sites.
- 24% of authorities provide community rooms/huts to 41-100% of sites.
- 20% of authorities provide toilet facilities to 61-100% of sites.
- 51% of authorities provide clearly defined access roads on 81-100%.
- 74% of authorities provide fencing to 81-100% of sites.



13.2 Reveals that, for 65% of authorities, grounds maintenance at allotment sites is carried out as an integral part of grounds maintenance operations/contracts. 19% of authorities employ a dedicated allotments team/person to carry out grounds maintenance; this is the first time the figure has dropped below 20% since 2020.

Across the UK, many local authority allotment sites continue to be handed over to allotment associations as part of self-management initiatives. In 12.2, it is revealed that 65% 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, echoing the point raised in 6, 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.”*¹¹

25%
“Yes”

Do you charge separately for water supply?

A quarter (25%) of respondents said they charge separately for water supply on their allotments. This suggests that while separate charging isn't the norm, it is a notable practice among allotment sites.

Of those who charge separately, most said they charge a flat rate for water supply on their allotments, with some basing the amount on plot size (e.g., £3 per pole, with one pole equating to 25 sqm) or a set annual fee (e.g., £8.65 per plot). A few mentioned charges linked to usage from the previous year, while one noted that a flat rate would be reviewed if costs became very high.

¹¹ <https://allotmentsstockport.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/a-guide-to-self-management-2.pdf>

14 Biodiversity/Sustainability

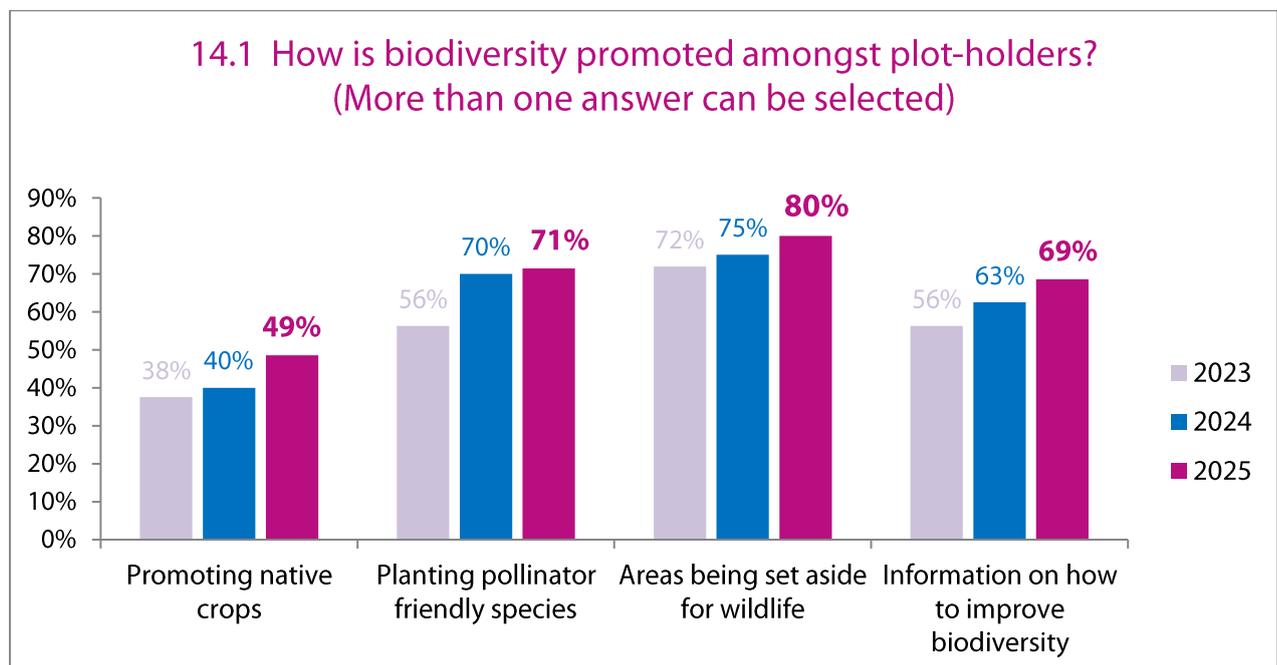
In May 2024, the four UK administrations published a joint UK Biodiversity Framework which aims to coordinate efforts to meet the UK's international obligations.¹²

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.¹³

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.¹⁴ The Environment (Principles, Governance and Biodiversity Targets) (Wales) Bill was formally introduced in the Senedd on 2 June 2025. It proposes embedding environmental principles into law,¹⁵ whilst Northern Ireland's new Agriculture, Environment, and Rural Affairs Minister, Andrew Muir MLA, has spoken of the need to develop a new Biodiversity Strategy.¹⁶

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



¹² [UK Biodiversity Framework](#)

¹³ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/complying-with-the-biodiversity-duty>

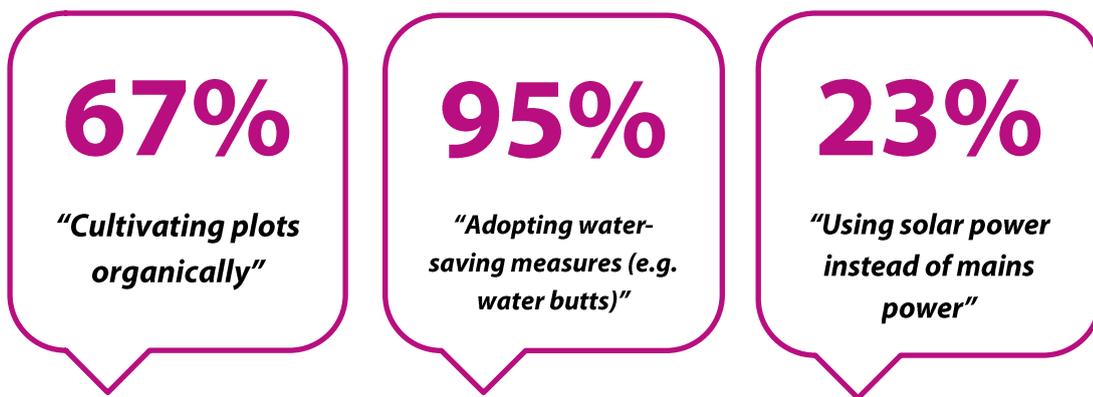
¹⁴ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/biodiversity-duty-reporting-templates/>

¹⁵ <https://www.gov.wales/introduction-environment-principles-governance-and-biodiversity-targets-wales-bill>

¹⁶ <https://www.agendani.com/environment-minister-andrew-muir-mla-towards-a-strong-green-economy/>

The 2025 survey reveals that authorities continue to accelerate their biodiversity promotional activities among plot-holders. The steepest increase is in the promotion of planting pollinator-friendly species, which has risen by 15% since 2023 – an encouraging trend given the ongoing decline in UK pollinator habitats. There have also been notable increases in the number of authorities promoting native crops and establishing areas set aside for wildlife, further underscoring the sector’s growing commitment to ecological stewardship.

How is environmental sustainability promoted with regards to site management?



Environmental stewardship remains a core feature of allotment management. The overwhelming majority of authorities (95%) promote water-saving measures such as water butts, while 67% report encouraging organic cultivation. The use of solar power on sites – while still modest at 23% – has increased as councils explore low-carbon options.

Taken together, these actions underline allotments’ role as important urban green infrastructure delivering biodiversity, climate adaptation and community resilience benefits.

Glasgow City Council have led the way in raising awareness of how allotments can support wildlife in urban areas. More information about how the Council is influencing the behaviour and practices of plot-holders can be found [here](https://www.apse.org.uk/index.cfm/apse/news/articles/2020/biodiversity-and-allotments-gardening-in-harmony-with-nature/).¹⁷

¹⁷ <https://www.apse.org.uk/index.cfm/apse/news/articles/2020/biodiversity-and-allotments-gardening-in-harmony-with-nature/>

15 Conclusion

Nourishing the allotment service: A positive response to plot size adjustments amid acute demand for allotments

Allotments and community growing initiatives have a long-standing tradition in the United Kingdom, tracing back to the 19th century when they were first established to provide urban workers with access to green spaces and fresh produce. Today, their importance has transcended mere horticultural interests, encompassing environmental sustainability, social cohesion, physical and mental health, food security, education, and economic advantages. Evidence of allotments achieving greater prominence in the national debate can be found in the headlines it has generated in recent years across the print and broadcast media (see [1](#) for references).

In 2025, this visibility extended to a round of “Angela Rayner’s war on allotments” headlines – a story that attracted considerable attention despite being disconnected from the realities faced by most sites.¹⁸ Thankfully, allotment sales are protected by S.32 of the Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908¹⁹ with money raised having to go into new or improved allotments, with approved sales remaining low at 5-8 sites per annum against the overall numbers of sites remaining. Whilst the Allotment Act has historic regulatory powers they are nonetheless enduring in the protection of Allotments. However, vigilance and compliance must always be assured.

It is worth noting, as referenced above, the new National Planning Policy Framework (in England) provides opportunities for local authorities to consider allotments as part of their approach and similar measures apply in the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) for Northern Ireland, Planning Policy Wales (PPW) and Scottish Planning Policy (SSP). Rather than just maintaining existing sites, APSE would encourage all local authorities to consider the viability of new sites, particularly when looking at opportunities for new homes developments to support the Government’s ambitions to deliver 1.5 Million new homes.

APSE has long acknowledged and advocated for allotments to be considered vital components of a sustainable and resilient environment. One can now see this consideration reflected in the environmental programmes of all four UK administrations. We have also consistently highlighted their important role in supporting health and wellbeing, which is the theme of this year’s APSE Allotments Webinar.²⁰ The question is whether these commitments at a governmental level are translating into meaningful support and results on the ground; a question this survey is designed to answer.

¹⁸ <https://www.hortweek.com/no-evidence-angela-rayner-allotments-sell-off/parks-and-gardens/article/1927790>

¹⁹ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Edw7/8/36>

²⁰ <https://www.apse.org.uk/index.cfm/apse/members-area/apse-networks/parks-horticulture-grounds-maintenance/upcoming-seminars/gloves-peas-and-harmony-local-authority-allotments-webinar-free-for-members/>

This survey has found the following:

1. Continued focus on plot size adjustments

Three-quarters of councils have downsized plots, making them more manageable for modern lifestyles and helping reduce waiting lists. Reductions in size are generally met with approval, both by new and existing holders. Smaller plots also create opportunities for a more diverse mix of tenants, including younger families and novice gardeners. Despite challenges with land scarcity, particularly in urban areas, this adaptability is likely essential for maintaining allotment interest across diverse demographic groups and changing urban landscapes.

2. Waiting times may be starting to plateau

While still high, the proportion of councils reporting waits over 18 months has fallen slightly, possibly reflecting the impact of smaller plot sizes and targeted new provision. This suggests that recent changes in how councils manage sites are beginning to ease pressure, though most waiting lists remain lengthy by historical standards. Continued monitoring will be essential to ensure these trends persist and to identify further opportunities to reduce waiting times.

3. Cost pressures are shifting services towards cost neutrality

Rising costs for allotment plots stem from higher maintenance and infrastructure expenses – such as water supply, fencing, pathways, and waste management – combined with local authority budget constraints. Many of these costs have risen above inflation, with councils forced to pass on increases to plot-holders through higher rents. While around two-thirds of services remain subsidised, more councils are attempting to move towards cost neutrality, covering funding gaps by adjusting rental charges. Even so, local authority plot rents generally remain much lower than private alternatives, offering very good value for money.

4. Biodiversity actions are becoming embedded

APSE's latest poll with Survation found a plurality of people think their local council is best placed to implement practical steps to combat the effects of climate change in the local area.²¹ One of the foremost contributions of allotments and community gardens is their positive impact on the environment. This survey has found authorities are actively promoting pollinator-friendly planting, water conservation, and organic cultivation as standard practice. These measures not only support local ecosystems but also help position allotments as a key tool in meeting wider climate and nature recovery targets, including a reduction in food miles. Growing awareness and community engagement around these initiatives could enhance the environmental impact and social value of allotments.

²¹ <https://apse.org.uk/sites/apse/assets/File/Summary%20of%20APSE%20Survation%20poll.pdf>

5. Progress towards accessibility and inclusivity

A majority of authorities (57%) now provide provisions for people with disabilities, such as raised beds, accessible pathways and tailored plot allocations. Additionally, 60% of councils continue to offer concessionary pricing for vulnerable groups, including pensioners, people with disabilities, and those on income support. These efforts highlight councils' dedication to ensuring that allotments remain a resource for all community members, regardless of age, ability, or financial circumstances. This focus on inclusivity not only broadens participation but also reinforces the social value of allotments as spaces for health, wellbeing, and community cohesion.

Looking ahead, the challenge will be to sustain the environmental and social gains delivered by allotments while balancing financial sustainability and land pressures. Allotments play a vital role in promoting health and wellbeing, providing people with valuable opportunities for physical activity, stress relief, and social connection. This focus on wellbeing is especially timely, as it forms the theme of this year's National Allotments Week.²² Continued advocacy will be essential to ensure allotments remain protected and resourced as part of the UK's green infrastructure.

²² <https://thenas.org.uk/national-allotments-week>

How can APSE help?

All APSE members can sign up to APSE's Parks, Horticulture and Grounds Maintenance Advisory Group 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](#).

14.1 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 on the course [here](#).

14.2 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 advisory groups, 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 advisory groups are an excellent forum for sharing ideas and discussing topical service issues with colleagues from other councils throughout the UK.

Advisory groups 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 advisory group meetings and would like to be added to our list of contacts for your service area please email enquiries@apse.org.uk.

Our national advisory groups 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, Refuse Collection and Street Cleansing

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



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