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This allotment handbook provides you with information about some of the key terms and conditions of your tenancy agreement. We hope that it also contains lots of other useful information as well as important safety advice. Whilst parts of this handbook are aimed at new allotment tenants, there is still plenty of important and useful information for those who have held an allotment tenancy for some time. We therefore ask all tenants, new and old, to make use of this handbook.

It is very important that you read this handbook carefully and that you keep hold of it for future reference.

Allotments can provide a wide range of benefits to tenants, communities, the environment and to wildlife.

These benefits can include providing tenants with an opportunity to produce their own inexpensive food, take physical exercise, learn new skills, develop a sense of well-being and to make new friends, to name just a few. We are committed to improving the quality of life of all the people of Wakefield through the services we provide, including the Allotment Service. Our aim is to continue to build on good practices and positive improvements in our Allotment Service by working in partnership with tenant groups, individuals and other agencies. We hope that you will find this handbook useful and that you will be able to refer to it throughout your tenancy. We would like to wish you every success with your allotment tenancy.
To get off to a good start with your allotment a planned approach and a little determination is all that’s needed. Before you start work on your plot draw up a plan of what you would like to grow and where you think it should go; don’t worry if this changes over time as you develop more experience.

### Drawing up your plan

When drawing up your plan you need to consider:

- Situation and light levels
- Ease of access for maintenance and watering
- Soil condition and drainage
- The space needed for plants to grow and flourish
- Permanent planting areas
- Permanent features such as paths, utilities, buildings, etc.

There are plenty of books and internet resources to help you with planning your plot and guidance on the best conditions for different plants to flourish. You could also talk to other allotment tenants or your allotment association. Planning should help you to organise your growing to make the best use of the space available to you throughout the year.

- Take time to plan the layout of your plot for ease of use
- Develop a yearly plan of what you will grow
- Think about shade, ease of access, growing space, watering, etc.
- Create narrow planting beds to allow easy access to the soil
- Use crop rotation to keep your soil healthy
- Manure your plot regularly to maintain soil fertility
- Always use gloves and wash your hands after handling manure
- Ensure you have good paths and keep paths clear of hazards
- Don’t do too much in one go but maintain steady and regular progress
Allowable Uses

When planning the layout of your allotment please be aware of the following:

- At least 60% of the total area of your plot must be used to cultivate fruit and vegetables
- Lawns, sheds, compost heaps, recreational areas and livestock, when added together, must not take up more than 40% of the total area of your plot
- Greenhouses count as space used for cultivation (provided they are in use)

Paths and Access

Paths should be kept clear of vegetation and potential hazards such as tools or discarded rubbish. Maintaining good paths can also help make it more difficult for some weeds to spread from one planting area to another. Paths should be wide enough for a wheelbarrow with plot holders contributing 25cm each side of a plot (9” width) and be as level and even as possible to avoid trip hazards. To manage weeds on your paths you may want to put down a weed barrier, such as weed matting, and cover with a durable surface such as wood chip. If your plot doesn’t have a gate, it is up to you if you wish to install one. You must display the number of your plot at the entrance or in another visible location.

Planting Areas

Planting beds can be any shape or size. You may need to consider access by means of paths to ensure you can easily reach into the middle of the planting area. A maximum recommended width is 120cm (4 feet) to enable you to reach the middle from both sides; remove weeds entirely from your planting area and dig over the soil. The prongs of your fork should eventually go easily into the bed to turn the soil, don’t forget to remove larger stones or other debris that could impede your plant growth. If you mark the edges of your planting area with wood or other materials from your plot, this will help to prevent accidental walking on the area and compaction of the soil. A useful tip is to work off a plank to spread your weight.
**Raised Beds**

You may also need to consider the height of the planting area. For people with disabilities or back pain, raised beds can be more accessible. Raised beds are also useful if you have poor drainage or if you want to grow something that does not do well in the soil type you have and you need to bring in a different one.

**Crop Rotation**

Crop rotation involves dividing your crops into three groups based on their preferred growing conditions. Each group is planted in a separate bed and each year the groups are moved to a different bed. In this way no crop should return to the same piece of ground for three years. We recommend that tenants use the crop rotation method to avoid the build-up of pests and diseases and to keep your soil in good condition. More detailed information about how to do this can be found on the internet or in any good ‘grow your own’ or other gardening books.

**Cultivation of plot**

A minimum of 60% of the plot area must be cultivated for growing produce - namely vegetables, herbs, fruit, other edible crops and flowers. A maximum of 40% of the plot area may be put to other uses such as grassed lawn, or space for livestock or structures - which are compliant with Policy Statements 15 & 21. It is not permitted to keep an allotment plot or a portion of it, which in the opinion of Wakefield Council is in an untidy, overgrown, unkempt or seemingly abandoned state. Weeds must be controlled to prevent seeds spreading to other plots. Pernicious plants must be eradicated. No new trees are allowed to be planted on an allotment plot or any other part of the site. Children’s play equipment such as swings and paddling pools are not permitted. Business or trade use of an allotments plot is forbidden.

**Policy statement 10**
Tools & Equipment
To start with you might only need a few basic tools but you will quickly find that a wide variety are available, many for specific tasks. Essentials include a spade, fork, hoe, rake, hand trowel/fork and gloves. You may also want to invest in secateurs, a pruning saw, shears or loppers, dibber, watering can and wheelbarrow… the list is endless! To save money you could buy good quality secondhand tools or share with friends. Some allotment associations have tools available for hire.

Power Tools
Only use power tools if you are confident in their use. Read, understand and follow the manufacturer’s instructions carefully and if necessary make sure you have had appropriate training. For security reasons do not store power tools in sheds.

Power Tool Safety
Always wear appropriate personal protective clothing, including safety goggles. We also recommend sturdy footwear, if possible with steel toe caps and soles. It is usually a good idea to have a means of emergency contact, such as a mobile phone, close by in case of accident.

Safety, using and storing your tools
• Store all tools safely in a lockable unit and out of the reach of children
• Do not store any power tools or fuel on your plot
• Keep tools clean, sharp and well maintained for ease of use
• Make sure you know how to use tools effectively to avoid injury or strain
• Always wear appropriate personal protective clothing
• Follow instructions for use and/or seek appropriate training for using power tools
• We advise you to security mark tools to make them easier to identify.
Access to water

Water is essential for plants to grow. It is particularly important that seedlings get sufficient water until they become established and roots can find some of their own moisture deeper in the ground. All tenants will need to collect and store water on their plot as direct watering from hosepipes is not an environmentally acceptable method. If you are recycling an old container to collect water ensure you know where it has come from and that it did not previously contain any harmful substances. Wakefield Council does not encourage the use of sprinklers or other water spraying devices.

Efficient water use

Attach guttering to garden sheds and greenhouses to collect rain water but remember to keep water butts covered and ensure that they are located on stable ground. Organic matter can be dug into the ground and a thick layer of mulch placed around established plants to help retain moisture in the soil. Water your allotment in the morning or evening to reduce risk of evaporation or scorching. Give plants a thorough soaking to encourage deep rooting. Also, remember that over-watering can be just as unproductive as under-watering!

Water charges

A standing water charge is payable annually for each plot where a mains water supply is available on site. No concessions are available on this charge. Wakefield Council reserves the right to amend water charges to any plot holder found to be misusing or abusing the supply. There will be two levels of standing charges for water. A higher charge will apply to plots larger than 125sqm, and a lower one will apply to plots equal in size or smaller than 125sqm.

Policy statement 26
What Can I Grow?
It is a requirement of your tenancy agreement that you keep your plot in a good state of cultivation. This means that you must use your plot to grow mostly vegetables and fruit on an annual basis. Please see the section on ‘Getting Started’ for allowable uses and information on what you can grow.

Where to Begin
If you have not grown fruit and vegetables before then you will probably need to learn as you go along. There is lots of advice available from books and websites. If you are struggling, try attending a vegetable growing course or getting in touch with other tenants or your allotment association for advice. To start with you could grow easy vegetables that you know your family will like such as early potatoes, peas, runner beans and French beans, salads, onion sets, beetroot, courgettes and squashes.

Inspection Process
Allotment sites are inspected at least once a year and if your plot is not well maintained you will be given warnings and may be asked to give up your tenancy. It is therefore important that you develop a regular cultivation routine. You are required to maintain visibility into your plot or allow access for inspections to occur. Although you are given time to cultivate a new plot Wakefield Council will want to see continual progress towards full cultivation. Otherwise you will receive a letter for non cultivation.

Site inspections
All allotment sites managed by Wakefield Council will be inspected once a year. More frequent inspections will be made where it is deemed appropriate. Inspections will usually be carried out in the growing season. No advance warning will be required or given.

Policy statement 2
After 3 months we would expect to see parts of the plot cleared and dug over. After 6 months we would expect to see some crops in place (depending on the time of year) and the plot substantially dug, or uncultivated areas covered with weed fabric. By the end of the first year of your tenancy we would expect to see the plot in a good state of cultivation. If you have difficulty achieving this please make contact with us.

**Non Cultivation**

If you are given a letter for non-cultivation you will be allowed 14 days to make significant improvements. If you fail to do so you will be sent a further letter. Following a second warning, if there is no progress we will ask you to give up your tenancy. If you receive two letters for non-cultivation within two years you may be asked to reduce the size of your plot to a more manageable half size plot. Alternatively a tenant may request that their plot be divided to form another plot that can be offered to the waiting list.

**Termination of tenancy**

Enforcement proceedings will be initiated, which may result in the termination of tenancy, if the terms of the Tenancy Agreement have been broken in the opinion of Wakefield Council. Wakefield Council will not refund any rent or water charges accrued, which will contribute towards the cost of terminating the tenancy, and will pursue any unpaid debt.

**Policy statement 11**

Wakefield Council will not refund any rent or water charges accrued, which will contribute towards the cost of terminating the tenancy, and will pursue any unpaid debt.
Why Compost?
Compost is a natural, nutrient-rich, soil-like medium of decayed organic matter. It is a product of the natural breakdown of dead plants and other organic matter such as fruit and vegetable peelings. With time and a little bit of care and attention, this organic matter decomposes with the assistance of micro-organisms and earthworms to produce a valuable source of compost. This can improve and enrich the soil, helping to feed your plants and to encourage them to grow strong and healthy.

Making Compost
Making compost is not hard. The easiest method is to purchase a compost bin specially designed for the purpose. If you prefer the DIY approach, you can build your own compost bin. To do this you may want to contain the heap using reclaimed timber and four wooden posts to make a bottomless box; covering will also help to retain moisture. Alternatively, just heap all your organic matter into a big pile in a corner of your plot. However this method looks less attractive, can suffer from a lack of firmness and can lose the heat generated internally unless covered. Digging or ‘turning’ your compost occasionally will help to speed up the process.

✔ Compost will help you save money, improve your soil, help you grow healthy, strong plants and look after the environment
✔ Try to compost as much green waste as you can
✔ Creating your own leaf mulch will improve soil texture
❗ If composting perennial weeds, make sure the roots/plants have been destroyed and seed heads removed first
❗ Do not compost any animal products or cooked food
❗ Always use gloves and wash your hands after handling compost

Composting
Leaf Mulch

Creating leaf mulch (leafmould) is completely free and can help to improve your soil texture, suppress weeds and reduce the need for watering. To create leaf mulch gather up autumn leaves (not evergreens and not from roads where they may contain contaminants or under hedges where wildlife may be hibernating) and place them in a big heap. By using four posts and some chicken wire you can create an area that will contain the leaves but still allow air to circulate around them. It will take about two years for most leaves to breakdown fully but digging over occasionally with a fork will help to speed up the process. To use the mulch spread a thick layer on top of the soil around your plants to suppress weeds (allowing worms to eventually pull it down into the soil) or dig it directly into the soil (with your compost) to improve your soil texture.

Safe Composting

Always use gloves when handling compost or manure and wash your hands afterwards. Don’t compost cooked food or animal products as these can attract vermin and possibly contain harmful bacteria or disease.
Organic and non-organic

✔ Organic methods can benefit your plot, the environment and wildlife
✔ You should focus on improving and maintaining soil fertility
✔ Companion planting can repel pests and encourage beneficial insects
✔ Seek expert advice from your local library or internet
✔ Minimise the use of pesticides, herbicides or fertilisers

! When using pesticides, herbicides or fertilisers follow the advice given in this handbook

Growing Organically

Many people are moving towards a more organic approach to gardening. For some people this simply means not using slug pellets or other pesticides. Other people feel more strongly and will use only natural products and materials, buy only organic seed, and the whole idea becomes part of a wider lifestyle choice to live in harmony with nature. Wherever you fall within the organic spectrum we advise all allotment holders to try to minimise their use of synthetic fertilisers and pesticides. We encourage you to consider more organic approaches for the benefit of local wildlife and the wider environment.

Expert Advice

There is plenty of expert advice readily available in books and on internet sites and you could also visit your local library to find out more. The Wakefield Council Allotment webpage has links to useful websites - here are two to get you started:

Royal Horticultural Society: www.rhs.org.uk/growyourown
Garden Organic: www.gardenorganic.co.uk
Pesticides, Herbicides and Inorganic Fertilisers

Pesticides, herbicides and inorganic fertilisers can be helpful when clearing and cultivating an allotment, however they can also be hazardous and have environmental implications. We recommend trying to minimise the use of pesticides, herbicides and inorganic fertilisers, or reduce the levels of use over time. If you do use them, remember they are not a quick fix and should only be used in specific situations - try to keep use to a minimum and always be mindful of the following important safety advice:

Safety When Using Commercial Products

- Always keep products in their original containers
- Follow the instructions for use carefully
- Do not estimate amounts - measure them carefully
- Use personal protective clothing and gloves
- Wash hands after use and wash off any splashes immediately
- Store out of the reach of children and locked away securely
- Ensure you are not contaminating your neighbours’ plots or local watercourses
- Consider the potential harm to wildlife, pets and children before use
- Check old products to ensure they have not been banned
- Contact your local waste management and recycling centre for disposal advice.

Organic and non-organic
Hedges and trees

✅ Contact us for permission and advice before planting new hedging
✅ Before cutting your hedges please read the safety tips overleaf regarding use of power tools
✖ Do not remove existing hedging or create new entrances to your plot

Hedges

Maintenance of hedges is the responsibility of tenants. External hedges (at the edge of a site or facing out from your plot onto a path if your site is open to the public) can be up to a maximum of 180cm (6ft) in height. Shared hedges should be maintained jointly by the tenants on either side. It is an offence to disturb nesting birds so please check your hedges before cutting. Please note that you cannot create any additional access points to your plot or remove existing hedging without written permission.
Maintenance & Safety

- Don’t tackle more than you can manage in one go
- Special care should be taken if working above head height
- Use appropriate, sharp and well-maintained tools to avoid injury or strain
- Make sure you know how to use tools effectively to avoid injury or strain
- Always wear gloves, sturdy footwear and appropriate protective clothing
- Follow instructions for use or seek appropriate training if using power tools
- Tree removal must only be carried out by qualified professionals
Removing Weeds
When taking on a new plot there are likely to be plenty of weeds. Be prepared for lots of hard work to clear the plot properly, but remember it is a job worth doing. Careful weed removal and preparation of the soil at this stage will reap future benefits!

Regular Weeding
To keep on top of weeds you need to make frequent visits to your plot, especially during the main growing season, and make weeding a regular task. Digging over the ground and removing roots is the only really effective organic way to remove weeds but other methods can help.

Weedkillers (Herbicides)
These generally fall into two types: contact and systemic. Contact herbicides can be useful for large areas of annual weeds and usually work on contact with foliage. They have minimal impact on perennial weeds, such as nettles or brambles, and are best avoided on allotments, save your money and use a hoe instead! Systemic weedkillers, such as glyphosate, destroy plants from within, including their roots, usually following a spray application to the foliage. They are therefore useful for controlling perennial weeds such as bindweed, couch grass, ground elder and bramble. We advise restricting their use to the initial clearance of plots, after which any regrowth can be tackled by hand weeding.

It is important that you check any old products you may have stored in your shed. Many commonly used products have now been withdrawn from sale due to their adverse impact on the environment and their use is now banned. If you continue to use such products you will be breaking the law.
Weeds

**Weed Matting (woven porous polythene or geotextile)**
Weed matting is relatively inexpensive and can be really useful under paths and as a temporary cover to suppress weeds until an area can be worked. It is also possible to grow some crops (e.g. courgettes) through holes in the matting. Carpet is best avoided as some types can leach chemicals into the soil and they are difficult to dispose of once past their useful life on a plot.

**Mulches**
Examples of mulches are compost and leaf mould, all of which need to be applied in a layer 50 - 75mm (2-3 inches) thick. Placed on top of the soil, surrounding your plants or over weed matting, these will act as an effective weed suppressor.

**Disposing Of Weeds**
You can compost annual weeds (avoid seed heads) but roots of perennial weeds will grow again if they are composted before they are killed. Use the internet or a good gardening book to help you identify common annual and perennial weeds. Only burn vegetation (at the appropriate times) if absolutely necessary and read the section on ‘Bonfires’ first.

**How to Weed Safely**
- Don’t tackle more than you can manage in one go
- Use appropriate, sharp and well-maintained tools
- Be aware of plant species that cause irritation or are poisonous
- Wear suitable clothing, including gloves and long sleeves
- Don’t use old carpet to suppress weeds - it is difficult to remove and can potentially leach hazardous chemicals into the soil
- Remember that vegetation which has grown out of control can hide hazards such as potholes, bricks, rubbish, glass, etc.
- If you are strimming, check for and remove any hazards hidden in the vegetation
- Use weedkillers only when needed and always sparingly
If using herbicides or weed killers please follow the additional safety advice:

- Always keep products in their original containers
- Use only for the specific purpose indicated on the product label and follow instructions carefully
- Measure amounts carefully for maximum effectiveness and use only the amount required for that application
- Use personal protective clothing and gloves
- Wash hands after use and wash off any splashes immediately
- Store locked away securely, out of the reach of children
- Ensure you are not contaminating your neighbours’ plots or local watercourses via airborne drift or improper disposal
- Contact your waste management and recycling centre for disposal advice
- Check old products to see if they have been banned

Invasive Species

Please inform us immediately if you have any invasive species on your plot as you may need specialist advice to remove them. A complete list can be found in the Health and Advice section on the following website https://www.gov.uk/guidance/prevent-the-spread-of-harmful-invasive-and-non-native-plants. Ones to watch out for on allotments include: Japanese Knotweed, Himalayan Balsam and Giant Hogweed.
Storing Materials on Your Plot

Allotments must not be used for storing materials. Having excessive quantities of materials on plots reduces the area available for cultivation and can pose a hazard to yourself and others. Please only bring materials onto your plot if you intend to use them immediately and, if necessary, store them safely and tidily.

**Excessive Amounts of Material**

We will write to tenants who are storing excessive amounts of materials on their plot. By law we can recover the cost of removing excessive waste materials from a plot either during or at the end of a tenancy. Remember you must not bring rubbish on site.

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| ✔ Keep stored materials on your plot to a minimum |
| ✔ Take care when handling rubbish - wear gloves and appropriate protective clothing |
| ✔ Dispose of rubbish thoughtfully and recycle materials where possible |
| ✗ Do not leave rubbish in communal areas |
| ✗ Please do not bring tyres and carpets onto plots as they are difficult to dispose of |

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**Inflammable Substances**

Inflammable substances include inflammable oil-based liquids such as petrol and creosote, and all varieties of bottled gas.

Inflammable substances can only be brought onto allotment sites if they are required for a legitimate purpose related to tending an allotment plot. Inflammable substances are not allowed to be stored on an allotments plot. Where such substances are temporarily brought onto site, they must be handled and used strictly in line with manufacturers’ guidelines, transported in containers specifically designed for this purpose, and then removed from site immediately after use.

**Policy statement 17**
Waste Disposal
When you take on a plot you may find rubbish and other debris, which we ask you to remove and dispose of carefully. Many materials can easily be transported off-site for recycling or safe disposal at one of the Council’s waste recycling facilities. Materials such as wood or bricks can be reused on the plot, saving the need to send materials to landfill. If you come across material on your plot that is difficult to dispose of, we ask you to try to remove as much as possible safely before contacting us for further assistance.

Safety
- Please take extra care with certain materials, such as wood with protruding nails or broken glass
- Please read the sections on ‘Asbestos’ and ‘Assessing Risks’ before you start clearing your plot
- Wear gloves, sturdy footwear and protective clothing when removing waste
- Excessive materials stored on site can pose a hazard to yourself and others
- Materials on your plot must be stored safely.

Waste Management
Plot holders are wholly responsible for correct handling and proper disposal of waste from their allotment plot. It is strictly forbidden to bring waste or other harmful material onto an allotment site. Fly tipping, dumping of waste or adding to dumped waste on any part of an allotment site is strictly forbidden and will result in immediate termination. The use of old carpets as a weed suppressant is not permitted.

Policy statement 23
Asbestos

Asbestos was once a common building material and has found its way onto most allotments. The overwhelming majority of asbestos found on allotments is in the form of asbestos cement sheeting used for sheds/buildings and their roofs. This has a minimal asbestos content, usually of around 1% but sometimes up to 15% depending on the type.

Structures Containing Asbestos

Provided the structures are of sound construction and in good condition, there is no need to remove them and you can continue to use them safely. As a precaution do not hammer or drill into the structures as this could cause the release of asbestos fibres. It is the inhalation of these minute fibres, and not the material in solid form, which is harmful to health.

Removing Asbestos

On no account should you seek to remove structures without guidance from an approved asbestos removal contractor. In all cases, if you have any concerns about asbestos, please contact Wakefield Council. It is vital that the material is correctly identified prior to its removal and disposal.

✔ Clearly identify the material you believe may contain asbestos - if in doubt, seek advice
✔ Follow the guidelines for safe disposal carefully
✔ Contact Wakefield Council if you need further guidance or assistance
✖ Do not bring asbestos onto the allotment
❗ Wear the necessary protective clothing when handling asbestos
❗ Dispose of all asbestos properly at a Council waste recycling facility ensuring you follow all Health and Safety instructions.

Asbestos

- Asbestos was once a common building material and has found its way onto most allotments.
- The overwhelming majority of asbestos found on allotments is in the form of asbestos cement sheeting used for sheds/buildings and their roofs.
- This has a minimal asbestos content, usually of around 1% but sometimes up to 15% depending on the type.

Structures Containing Asbestos

- Provided the structures are of sound construction and in good condition, there is no need to remove them.
- As a precaution, do not hammer or drill into the structures, as this could cause the release of asbestos fibres.
- Inhalation of these minute fibres is harmful to health.

Removing Asbestos

- On no account should structures be removed without guidance from an approved asbestos removal contractor.
- In all cases, contact Wakefield Council if you have any concerns about asbestos.
- Material must be correctly identified prior to removal and disposal.
Occasionally you might find small amounts of asbestos-containing loose on the plot. Where you come across undamaged pieces of asbestos, such as corrugated sheeting or pipes, the following guidelines will help you deal with them safely and effectively:

- Identify whether the materials contain asbestos
- Handle only solid and unbroken pieces of asbestos - **do not break or damage when handling**
- Dampen the asbestos with water to reduce the risk of fibres being released if damaged
- For personal safety wear protective gloves and a dust mask
- Double bag the asbestos using fully sealed plastic bags and tape shut

If you follow the above guidelines you should have no problems removing asbestos cement products safely from your plot. If you are in any doubt, have concerns about an unidentified material on your plot, or if you require help with the safe removal of asbestos, please contact Wakefield Council for further guidance and assistance.

For further detailed guidance on handling and disposing of asbestos: [www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/](http://www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/)
Assessing Risk

Health and safety on allotments is everyone’s responsibility and as a tenant you need to make sure that your plot is as safe as possible for everyone. Tenants have a duty of care to anyone on their plot, regardless of whether they have given permission for them to be there. We may also enforce action to remove health and safety concerns. When thinking about hazards you need to look at the potential risks to: yourself, your family, co-workers, visitors to your plot, intruders (including children), wildlife.

Hazards

To assess dangers on your plot you first need to identify hazards that have the potential to cause harm. We have listed some common hazards here but you may also have others on your plot. Common allotment hazards include: buildings, fire, hazardous materials (asbestos, fuel, combustibles, refuse, scrap metal, glass, chemicals, manure, compost, etc.), trees, vegetation (overgrown, irritant or poisonous), tools, ponds, water, fences and vermin.

Reducing Risk

Once you have a list of hazards you need to look at potential risks. Risk is the likelihood that the harm from a hazard will happen (e.g. a sharp blade concealed in overgrown grass is more likely to cause harm than one stored away in a locked shed).

Levels of Risk

You need to identify risks as potentially being ‘high’, ‘medium’ or ‘low’. High risks must be removed immediately before removing or minimising any medium risks. If you have a high risk hazard on your plot that you feel unable to deal with please contact Wakefield Council as soon as possible.
Personal Health

- **Tetanus** - Tetanus is an illness caused by bacteria present in soil and manure, which can enter the body through the tiniest abrasion, scratch, thorn, puncture or cut. Your GP may be able to offer a vaccination.

- **First Aid** - A first aid kit is always a wise addition to the tools kept in the garden shed. A small selection of adhesive plasters, antiseptic wipes to clean wounds, sting cream, a pair of tweezers for removing thorns and splinters and a gauze or lint pad to use as a compress to stop bleeding if you are badly cut are useful contents.

- **Exercise** - Having an allotment can be hard work so please be mindful of your own capabilities and physical limitations and build up slowly, particularly if you are not used to it! If you have a known medical condition you may want to seek medical advice before starting work on your plot. Thrive is an organisation to help people who have ill health or a disability to garden and more tips and advice can be found on their website at: www.thrive.org.uk

- **Wash Hands and Use Gloves** - There is a risk of illness from bacteria (such as E.coli) which can be present in animal manure and even home made compost. Please wash your hands regularly and always wear protective gloves when handling potentially harmful substances.

- **Sun Protection** - If you are spending long periods on your plot then please ensure you have adequate sun protection and limit your exposure to strong sunshine. Also, keep yourself hydrated by regularly drinking water or other soft drinks and avoid physical exertion during the hottest part of the day.
Children
The health and safety of children on an allotment plot must be considered carefully as allotments can pose particular risks to children. Remember you must never leave children unsupervised on an allotment site.

Hazards for Children
Before allowing children onto your plot remove/reduce any hazards. As well as those highlighted previously, particular hazards for children include:

- Glass or other debris lying around your plot
- Garden canes which could cause an eye injury
- Hazardous chemicals and sharp tools stored incorrectly
- Glass structures such as greenhouses
- Ponds and uncovered water containers
- Vegetation that can cause harm or irritation
- Sun exposure

Young children may also eat soil or plants so please ensure that they are watched closely until they are old enough to know what to eat and what to avoid. It is particularly important that young children wash their hands regularly, especially those prone to putting their hands in their mouths. Please ensure your children do not cause a nuisance to other plot holders.
Security on Allotments

Many of us find that time on allotments is both tranquil and enjoyable. Plot holders spend a considerable amount of time on their plots and put in a lot of effort, keeping their plot well maintained and productive. It can therefore be very distressing if your site suffers from incidents of vandalism or anti-social behaviour. The tips on the following page are aimed at increasing plot security and reducing vandalism and anti-social behaviour.

Respect

As an allotment holder you are expected to be courteous and respectful to other users of the site and neighbouring properties (this is a condition of your tenancy). Everyone is entitled to enjoy their plot. If you own a dog then out of respect for others we request that the dog is kept on a lead and you must clean up after your dog.

Nuisance

A plot holder must not cause or permit any nuisance to any other plot holder or to the owners or occupiers of any adjoining or neighbouring property. Grass strimmers create a noise nuisance and should not be used at weekends out of consideration for neighbours and other plot holders.

A plot holder must not obstruct or encroach onto any path or roadway used or set out by Wakefield Council or used by the owners or occupiers of any adjoining or neighbouring property. Wakefield Council will not tolerate any threatening, violent or intimidating behaviour by plot holders under any circumstances.

Any plot holder found guilty in a court of law of offences involving an allotment plot or other plot holders will be given immediate notice to terminate.

Policy statement 13
Security and respect

Security Checklist

- **Keep your plot well maintained.**
  A well tended plot is a lot less likely to attract vandals than one that looks uncared for.

- **Don’t leave any valuables on site.**
  If possible take all tools with you when you leave. Any tools left on your plot should be security marked.

- **Don’t use or keep combustible or dangerous materials on your plot.**

- **Dispose of rubbish appropriately.**
  A site that is well presented and looks used and cared for can help to reduce anti-social behaviour such as fly-tipping.

- **Keep your site and your plot secure.**
  If your site has fencing keep the gates locked at all times.

- **Razor wire or similar are not allowed under any circumstances.**

- **Be a good neighbour.**
  Looking out for one another will help make your site feel safer. Don’t cause a nuisance to your neighbours and don’t visit other plots without permission.

- **Be aware of personal safety when working on your own.**
  Always let someone know where you are and, if possible, have a means of contact such as a mobile phone.

- **Join your allotment association.**
  Allotment associations need your support and many are working in partnership with us to improve safety on allotments.

- **Report all incidents.**
  The police target resources at areas where crime is most often reported. Please report all incidents using the 101 number (or 999 if someone is at risk or it is an emergency). Please let Wakefield Council know of any incidents but please note we are not able to report them to the police on your behalf.

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**Dogs**

Dogs must be kept on a short lead at all times and must never be left unattended. Dogs must not cause a nuisance, by barking for example. Dog fouling must be cleared up by the dog owner and disposed of responsibly off site. Dogs must not be kept on an allotment site.

**Policy statement 16**
When to Have A Bonfire

Burning must be kept to a minimum and composting should be used wherever possible. Although bonfires can be a good way of disposing of some materials, such as diseased prunings, they can cause major problems for you, your family and friends and also for neighbours. Smoke nuisance from bonfires generates a number of complaints to Wakefield Council each year and the Office reserves the right to ban fires on sites where there is a persistent problem. If a bonfire is necessary, we encourage tenants to burn as close to November 5th as possible, to minimise burning during the summer months and especially at weekends and bank holidays.

Alternatives

Green waste should be composted where possible. Non-green waste, such as carpet or plastic, should never be burned, disposal should be through your nearest Household Waste Recycling Centre. Recycle materials whenever practical.

If You Need To Have A Bonfire

Think first before burning. If you do need to have a bonfire, you must follow the precautions and guidance below. Under no circumstances should material be brought onto a site to be burned - this is a breach of your tenancy.

✔ Only have a bonfire if absolutely necessary
✔ Composting is a much better alternative for disposing of organic waste
✔ Be considerate to your neighbours
✔ Never leave a fire unattended
✔ Do not bring any materials on site to burn
✔ Do not burn anything that could produce toxic or noxious fumes
❗ Always follow the essential precautions and guidance below
Precautions and Guidance

- Keep the fire small and under control at all times
- Never use an accelerant to light or encourage the fire
- Never dispose of garden chemicals on a fire
- Never burn anything that could produce noxious fumes, including: household rubbish, rubber, plastic, paint, foam, carpets, aerosols, china, batteries, etc.
- Do not burn green or damp materials - they will produce excessive smoke

- Consider weather conditions/wind direction - do not light a fire if conditions are unsuitable
- Only burn if the wind is blowing smoke away from nearby houses and roads - it is an offence for smoke to obstruct a highway
- Never leave a fire unattended
- Always site the fire as far away as possible from hedges, fences and other structures.

Fires

The use of fires to dispose of waste is strongly discouraged as smoke creates a nuisance to other plot holders and neighbours. Fires are therefore only permitted at allotments sites on weekdays - (Monday to Friday) - and are not permitted any earlier than one hour before dusk. Fires are strictly forbidden at weekends. It is strictly forbidden to bring waste onto an allotment site for burning. Compostable material must not be burned. Recyclable material must not be burned. Bonfires must be built on the same day as they are lit to prevent harm to small mammals which use unlit bonfires as habitat. The amount of material burned must be kept to a minimum. Where possible, use alternative methods of disposal such as a household waste recycling centre. The duration of any fire should be minimised. Bonfires must be of a manageable size, and never left unattended. Bonfires must be fully extinguished before the plot holder leaves the site. In order to reduce the nuisance of smoke:

- Keep smoke to a minimum by only burning dry waste
- Consider wind direction in order that smoke does not cause a nuisance to residents of nearby properties
- Never burn items that produce noxious smoke such as plastics, vinyl, rubber, carcasses etc.

Policy statement 14
Sheds, Greenhouses & Polytunnels

You may wish to think about putting a shed, greenhouse or polytunnel on your plot. Greenhouses and polytunnels extend your growing season and increase the range of crops you can grow. Sheds can be used for shelter and storage. No permission is required for the first structure. No permanent foundations or structures are allowed.

Sheds

Sheds must not exceed 240cm (8ft) length x 210cm (7ft) height x 180cm (6ft) width and must be well maintained. Wakefield Council can give you advice on council approved designs. If you choose to construct your own it must not differ too greatly from the standard designs. Sheds must be stained brown or painted green. If you intend to store tools in your shed please ensure you have secure, lockable storage areas and do not store power tools or flammables. We recommend that you do not store anything of value in sheds on allotments.

Greenhouses & Polytunnels

Greenhouses and polytunnels must not exceed 360cm (12ft) length x 210cm (7ft) height x 240cm (8ft) width. Wakefield Council can advise you of approved greenhouse designs if required. If you construct your own, the design must not differ too greatly from the standard types and it must be well-maintained.
Sheds, greenhouse and polytunnels

Safety
- Do not store glass on your plot and be aware of any broken glass
- Ensure safe construction and regularly check and maintain all structures
- Do not store dangerous tools, combustibles or chemicals on site, even in a locked shed
- If you have an issue with a derelict or dangerous structure on your plot, please contact us

Buildings, fencing and structures
Any buildings, fencing or other structures that are considered to be unsafe in the opinion of Wakefield Council will be removed by the plot holder or by Wakefield Council and charged to the plot holder. Existing buildings, fencing and other structures must be of an appropriate design, fit for purpose and in a good state of repair. Buildings, fencing and other structures which are not acceptable in the opinion of Wakefield Council will be removed by the plot holder or by Wakefield Council and charged to the plot holder. Any new buildings, fencing or other structures should be commercially produced and must not make use of cement or other bonding materials in their construction, including bases. Asbestos materials are strictly forbidden. No buildings shall exceed the maximum dimensions given in the terms of the Tenancy Agreement. Requests for communal buildings exceeding these dimensions should be made to Wakefield Council. Fencing used on allotment plots should be no higher than 1.6m and should not prevent an unhindered inspection of the whole plot. Barbed wire is not permitted for any fencing that adjoins any pathways or that may cause harm to other plot holders. It is forbidden to stay overnight or live on an allotment plot.

Policy statement 21
Housing and Welfare

When inspecting plots with livestock or pigeons on them we will also be considering the suitability of housing and the welfare of the animals/birds. When you write to us for permission to keep livestock or pigeons.

Chickens and Rabbits

Provided that 60% of your plot is used for growing vegetables and fruit you are usually allowed to keep up to 8 chickens (hens, no cockerels) and/or 8 rabbits per plot holder. There may be some local restrictions on keeping livestock on certain sites - contact Wakefield Council for further information.

Pigeons

Pigeons may be kept at some allotment sites with the written permission of Wakefield Council.

Keeping Livestock and Pigeons

Keeping livestock or pigeons on your plot can be costly and you are responsible for the care, welfare, nuisance, health risks or damage caused. If you wish to keep chickens, rabbits or pigeons, you must have:

- Knowledge, training or experience concerning physical/behavioural needs, appropriate diet, recognising injury/disease and when vet assistance is needed, handling animals safely, carrying out daily hygiene tasks, etc.

- The ability, time and money to ensure welfare and care needs are met.

Animals and livestock

Only eight hens and eight rabbits are allowed per plot holder regardless of the number of plots held by the plot holder. Cockerels are strictly forbidden. Pigeons may be kept at some allotment sites with the written permission of Wakefield Council. No other animals or bees are allowed to be kept on allotment plots. Plot holders must comply fully with the Animal Welfare Act 2006.
• Approved and secure housing providing the right type of living environment
• Storage for food away from the plot or in a metal bin, to avoid attracting rats
• A good understanding of personal safety and hygiene
• Availability as a 24 hour emergency contact
• Suitable insurance
• Support from your neighbours
• Awareness of, and willingness to comply with, animal welfare regulations

Please be aware that legislation and policies with regards to livestock and pigeons are subject to change. You must comply with all current legislation and regulations. If you decide that you would like to keep livestock or pigeons please contact us at an early stage to discuss current policy and any local restrictions that may apply. Remember that you always need written permission.
Wildlife and pests

Beneficial Wildlife
Allotments provide a range of habitats for birds, small mammals, amphibians and insects, to name but a few. Many animals are beneficial to gardeners as they prey on pests such as aphids, slugs and snails. As far as possible, tenants should look to share their allotments with local wildlife. Birds can be encouraged with nest boxes and feeders placed in trees. Remember to check for nesting birds before cutting your hedges.

Unwelcome Wildlife
Rats are attracted by uncultivated areas, spaces under sheds, piles of debris and open compost heaps as well as available food, such as unharvested crops and excess livestock feed. Keeping your plot tidy and well cultivated helps deter them. If further action is required, products for dealing with rats are available from DIY stores but only use in accordance with the manufacturer’s instructions.

Wakefield Council will only take action if there is a severe infestation which cannot be contained by the above measures and which impacts on the wider community.

Pigeons can be a problem, particularly on sites located close to woodland or agricultural land. The only way to ensure protection for crops is to cover them with netting. Please be mindful to secure

✔ Wildlife is often beneficial and should be encouraged
✔ Good cultivation and keeping your plot tidy can avoid problems with unwelcome wildlife
✔ Only use commercial products (poisons, slug pellets, etc.) as a last resort
✔ Always follow instructions for use when using commercial products
✔ Use netting to avoid pigeon damage
nets properly so that birds do not become trapped in loose netting. It is advisable to check netting after heavy snowfall or strong winds which may cause it to collapse.

**Foxes** generally do not cause too many problems and the main issue is unwanted digging, particularly if animal-based fertilisers such as blood, fish and bone are used. The best way to avoid this is to minimise the use of such products and to cover areas of freshly-dug soil. If you keep rabbits, chickens or pigeons on your plot, make sure their housing is sturdy enough to withstand potential attacks by foxes.

**Safety around Wildlife**
- Contact with animal faeces can be harmful - always wear gloves and wash your hands regularly.
- If using commercial products to control wildlife follow the safety advice given.

**Pest Control**
Pest control on allotment sites is the responsibility of plot holders not Wakefield Council. Wakefield Council will take action against plot holders who fail to adopt good husbandry practices in order to deter rodent infestation. Wakefield Council will pass on remediation costs to plot holders at fault.

**Policy statement 20**
Allotment Tenancy Agreement

Allotment use is subject to legislation. It is therefore important that you read your tenancy agreement carefully and follow the rules set out in it. To help you we have included some basic dos and don’ts throughout this booklet. Remember that your tenancy agreement is a legally binding document and if you do not adhere to the rules you may lose your tenancy. This document must be signed and returned or again you may lose your tenancy.

Your tenancy agreement outlines specific rules, please read it and be aware of the full rules within Wakefield Council allotment policy

Invoices are issued near to the beginning of the financial year and rent must be paid by 31st December of that year

If you have a co-worker inform Wakefield Council so this can be recorded

Please notify us if any of your details change (e.g. your address)

At the end of your tenancy you must remove any locks

Please notify us if you intend to give up your tenancy so your details can be removed from our database

Council Officers must be allowed access to your plot

All problems should be reported to Wakefield Council

✔ You cannot sub-let your plot

✖ You cannot use your plot for any trade or business

Policy statement 8

The Tenancy Agreement

The applicant will be the main user of the allotment plot, or the representative of a group, charity or organisation, and will be the named plot holder on the Tenancy Agreement.

All plot holders will be required to sign up to the latest Tenancy Agreement, which will include the terms of this policy. This is a condition of tenancy. Wakefield Council will initiate enforcement proceedings if a plot holder, or person for whom the plot holder is responsible, fails to comply with the terms of the Tenancy Agreement, or if a plot holder is constantly in arrears of any agreed payment plan.

Policy statement 5

Passing Over

The applicant at the top of the waiting list will be passed over by other applicants if they are either not permanently resident in the district or already hold an allotment tenancy.
Rent
Allotment rents must be paid by the end of December each year. An invoice will be sent out to all plot holders after the beginning of the financial year and plot holders are encouraged to make payment as early as possible. Instructions of how to pay are included on the rear of the invoice.

Sharing and Co-working
You may wish to be assisted on your plot by someone else. If you would like the person you are assisted by to have rights with regards to the tenancy agreement then you must register them with Wakefield Council as a helper. You cannot sub-let your plot (charge others a rent for using it) and any tenant found to be doing this will have their tenancy terminated.

Policy statement 25

Concessions
A concession of 50% on rent is available to plot holders who are able to evidence that they are:
• of state pension age, or
• in receipt of benefits related to disability
It is the responsibility of the plot holder to inform Wakefield Council if they are entitled to a concession and provide evidence of eligibility. If there are any changes in circumstances that would mean the plot holder was no longer eligible to receive a concession it is the responsibility of the plot holder to inform Wakefield Council. Falsely claiming a concession will result in termination and payment becoming due to Wakefield Council for any falsely claimed concession or subsidy. Where a plot holder realises that a concession has not been claimed to which he or she was entitled, Wakefield Council will not pay back the unclaimed amount.

Policy statement 9

Sub-letting of Plots
The plot holder shall not enter into an agreement, verbal or written, to sub let or reassign an allotment plot or any part of it to any party under any circumstances.

Policy statement 24

Allotment Charges
The cost of providing allotments will be covered by the charges levied to plot holders. Rent collected will cover management and maintenance costs, and water charges will cover the water bill. Invoices will be settled by the end of the third financial quarter. Non-payment after 40 days will be taken as an indication of cessation of tenancy. Unpaid monies will be pursued. Full rent and water charges will be payable for plots taken up before the end of June in each year. For plots taken up after June, charges will be pro rata for the number of full months remaining to run up to 31st March. No charges will apply for plots taken up after 30th November for that financial year.

Policy statement 24
Transfers
Transferring to another plot may be possible provided you are leaving your current plot in a re-lettable condition. Transfer of tenancy between immediate family members is allowed. You will only be allowed to transfer your tenancy to someone outside your immediate family if:

- they are at the top of the waiting list for that site; or
- they have been registered as a helper on your plot for as long as the person at the top of the list has been waiting.

If in doubt, please contact Wakefield Council.

Changing Your Details
If any of your personal details change please notify us in writing (including email) as soon as possible.

Keys
Keys to allotment sites can only be obtained through Wakefield Council and a small charge may be made. If you choose to lock your individual plot you must make keys available to the Allotment Office on request and remove locks at the end of your tenancy. Remember that access to your plot must be allowed for Council Officers when required.

Trading
You cannot use your plot to sell produce for any trade or business. Trade or business can include events/activities on an allotment. If in doubt please contact Wakefield Council. Allotment association may be able to sell trade goods and surplus produce provided the proceeds are reinvested into the site and for no other purpose.

Motor vehicles
Motor vehicles are not allowed onto an allotment site other than to access a car park. Storage of motor vehicles, trailers and caravans on an allotment plot is forbidden. Removal of the wheels does not make storage of a vehicle permissible. Tyres must not be brought onto an allotment site for any purposes.

Leaving a plot
When a plot holder leaves a plot, it should be in good condition and free of any buildings, fencing or other structures. Wakefield Council will clear plots that are not in an acceptable condition and will recharge the departing plot holder. Wakefield Council will not be held responsible for any losses in produce or materials arising from this action.
Giving up your plot
You must contact us in writing or by email with a completed termination form as soon as possible if you wish to end your tenancy. Please remove any of your property at the end of your tenancy and any plants you wish to keep. Anything left on your plot after the end date will become the property of the Council. Should the Council need to clear the plot for the next tenant then the cost incurred will be recharged.

Problems
Any problems that arise on your plot or allotment site during your tenancy should be reported to the Site Secretary in the first instance. Where a Site Secretary is not in post please contact Wakefield Council.

Contact Us
You can contact Wakefield Council using one of the following methods: by email streetsceneestates@wakefield.gov.uk or by telephone on 01924 307332 or 0845 8 506 506 or on the allotments page of the Council website.

Passing on
A plot can be passed on from one close family member to another in the event of illness, disability or death. Only one plot can be passed on, and this is restricted to a son, daughter, spouse or long-term partner, who does not already hold an allotment plot.
Where the plot holder has been representing a group, charity or organisation, the tenancy may only be passed on to another representative of the same group, charity or organisation.
An applicant must submit a request in writing to Wakefield Council in order to take over tenancy of the plot within eight weeks of the plot holder becoming ill, disabled or deceased.
If Wakefield Council has decided to sub-divide the plot in line with Policy Statement 4, the applicant will have first choice of sub-divided plots.
Plots cannot be passed on to anyone else such as helpers or co-workers. Tenants are advised that no human or animal ashes are permitted to be scattered at allotment sites, and no memorial features are permitted.

Policy statement 6
Policy Statement 1 - Self-Managed Allotments
Applications from Allotment Committees to self-manage their site should be made to Wakefield Council. A Lease Agreement would be prepared for successful applications, which would allocate management responsibilities to the Allotment Committee and Wakefield Council.

Any amendments to the terms of the Allotments Policy would require approval by Wakefield Council.

Policy Statement 2; Site Inspections - See page 2

Policy Statement 3 - Waiting List Management
It is forbidden for an applicant to apply for a plot if he or she is not intending to be the main user, except where the applicant is representing a group, charity or organisation.

The waiting list is sorted on a strictly “first come, first served” basis. New applicants will be added to the bottom of a waiting list. No priority will be given to applicants representing a group, charity or organisation.

When a plot becomes vacant, an offer will be made in writing to the applicant who is at the top of the waiting list for that site, having first given precedence to Policy Statements 4, 5, 6 and 7, applied in this order of priority.

Evicted plot holders may not reapply for an allotment plot.

Policy Statement 4 - Sub-dividing Plots
When a plot becomes vacant it will be assessed for re-sizing by Wakefield Council and may be split into two or more smaller plots to accommodate more applicants.

Policy Statement 5: Passing Over - See page 34

Policy Statement 6 - Passing On - See page 37

Policy Statement 7 - Changing Plots - See page 36

Policy Statement 8 - The Tenancy Agreement - See page 34

Policy Statement 9 - Sub-letting of Plots - See page 35

Policy Statement 10; Cultivation of a Plot - See page 6

Policy Statement 11; Termination of Tenancy - See page 7

Policy Statement 12; Leaving a Plot - See page 6

Policy Statement 13 - Nuisance - See page 24

Policy Statement 14; Fires - See page 27

Policy Statement 15; Animals and Livestock - See page 30

Policy Statement 16; Dogs - See page 31

Policy Statement 17 - Inflammable Substances - See page 17

Policy Statement 19; Asbestos - See page 20

Policy Statement 20; Pest Control - See page 33

Policy Statement 21; Buildings, Fencing and Structures - See page 29

Policy Statement 22 - Vehicles - See page 18

Policy Statement 23; Waste Management - See page 19

Policy Statement 24; Allotment Charges - See page 34

Policy Statement 25; Concessions - See page 35

Policy Statement 26; Water Charges - See page 5

Wakefield Council Allotment Policy
Full policy details are available on Wakefield Council’s website - Allotments