



GREEN SHELTER SOCIETY UK

Health and Safety Policy

Document control

Field	Details
Organisation	Green Shelter Society UK
Charity registration number	1192803
Policy owner	Board of Trustees
Operational lead	Health and Safety Lead or nominated trustee
Version	1.0
Approval status	Broad approved
Effective date	4 th September 2026
Next review	12 months from approval, and after a serious incident, material change or new significant risk
Applies to	Trustees, staff, workers, volunteers, contractors, partners, participants, visitors and members of the public affected by our work

Approval requirement The Board of Trustees must approve this policy, appoint the responsible lead and complete the approval record before it is presented as an approved policy.

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1 Policy statement

Green Shelter Society UK is committed to protecting the health, safety and welfare of everyone involved in, or affected by, our work. We will take reasonably practicable steps to prevent injury and work-related ill health, identify and control significant risks, provide suitable information and supervision, and learn from incidents and concerns.

Our approach will be proportionate to the activity. Safety arrangements should enable people to participate confidently while controlling real risks. Anyone who reasonably believes an activity has become unsafe may stop it and report the concern. Work must not resume until the responsible lead is satisfied that the risk is adequately controlled.

2 Purpose and scope

This policy explains who is responsible for health and safety and the arrangements that apply to community gardening, seed banks, seed and plant swaps, garden open days, school and place-of-worship projects, workshops, food-related activities, public events, home visits, nature trips, transport, storage, offices and online planning.

It applies at GSSUK-controlled premises, public spaces, private gardens, hired venues and partner sites in England and Wales. It covers trustees, employees, workers, volunteers, contractors, participants, visitors and members of the public to the extent that GSSUK activities may affect them.

This framework does not replace activity-, venue- or task-specific risk assessments, manufacturer instructions, emergency plans or competent specialist advice.

3 Responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
Board of Trustees	Has overall oversight; approves the policy; provides proportionate resources; reviews significant risks, incidents and overdue actions; and obtains competent advice where needed.
Health and Safety Lead	Coordinates implementation, risk-assessment arrangements, incident review, records, training and reporting to trustees.
Project and event leads	Complete local assessments, check venues and equipment, confirm first aid and emergency arrangements, brief people, supervise activity and stop unsafe work.
Trustees staff volunteers and workers	Take reasonable care, follow instructions and assessments, use equipment correctly, work within competence and report hazards, defects, incidents and near misses.
Participants and visitors	Follow reasonable safety instructions, stay within designated areas, use equipment only when authorised and report hazards or injuries.
Contractors and partners	Cooperate, exchange risk information, provide relevant assessments and competence evidence, and manage the risks for which they are responsible.

Where GSSUK employs anyone, it will appoint one or more competent people to assist with its legal health and safety duties and consult employees as required. Trustees retain oversight even when tasks are delegated.

4 Risk assessment and safe systems of work

A suitable and proportionate assessment must be completed before a new or materially changed activity, venue, task or piece of higher-risk equipment is used. The assessment must identify hazards, who may be harmed and how, existing controls, additional actions, the responsible person and a review date.

- Consider staff, volunteers, contractors, participants, visitors and members of the public, including people who may be more affected by a particular hazard.
- Use the hierarchy of control: avoid the hazard where reasonably practicable, then reduce, isolate or control exposure before relying on personal protective equipment.
- Record significant findings and communicate relevant controls in a form people can understand.
- Use a dynamic check on the day for weather, site conditions, staffing, participant needs, equipment and unexpected hazards.
- Review the assessment after an accident or near miss, when methods or equipment change, when a new site is used or when the controls may no longer be effective.

Volunteers must be included in assessments. Where they perform similar activities and face similar risks, GSSUK aims to provide them with protection comparable to that provided to employees.

5 Safe gardening and outdoor activities

- Keep paths and work areas reasonably clear; identify uneven, wet, icy or unstable ground and use barriers or route changes where appropriate.
- Check for buried services, glass, needles, contaminated waste, unstable structures, unsafe branches, water hazards and public traffic before work starts.
- Use age- and ability-appropriate tasks, adequate working space and suitable supervision.
- Store sharp tools securely and carry them with blades or points controlled.
- Do not undertake tree surgery, excavation near services or other specialist work without competent assessment and authorisation.
- Control access to ponds, open excavations, machinery, chemicals and active work areas.
- Consider poisonous or irritant plants, thorns, bites, stings, ticks, allergies, animal waste and contaminated soil.
- Provide hand-cleaning arrangements and prohibit eating, drinking or smoking with contaminated hands.

6 Tools equipment machinery and electricity

Equipment must be suitable for its task, environment and user, maintained in safe condition and used according to the manufacturer's instructions and the risk assessment.

- Inspect tools before use and remove defective equipment from service until repaired or disposed of safely.
- Permit powered tools and machinery only for trained, competent and authorised users with appropriate supervision.
- Do not remove, defeat or bypass guards, interlocks or other safety devices.
- Manage outdoor electricity, moisture, extension leads, residual-current protection, cable routes and charging safely.
- Keep an inventory and proportionate inspection or maintenance record for higher-risk equipment.
- Check hired or partner-provided equipment before use and agree who is responsible for maintenance and defects.
- Prevent unauthorised access to tools, machinery, fuel, batteries and electrical equipment.

7 Manual handling and work at height

Manual handling

Avoid unnecessary lifting and carrying. Assess significant handling tasks involving compost, soil, water, furniture, plant containers, gazebos, cabinet drawers or equipment. Use smaller loads, trolleys, team handling or delivery close to the work area where practicable. No person should lift beyond their capability.

Work at height

Avoid work at height where possible. Ladders and steps may be used only where suitable for the task, inspected, placed on stable ground and used by a competent person. Volunteers and participants must not climb trees, roofs, unstable structures or improvised platforms. Specialist work must be given to a competent contractor.

8 Hazardous substances biological hazards and hygiene

Risks from cleaning products, fuels, fertilisers, pesticides, solvents, dusts, mould, compost, soil, stagnant water, animal waste and contaminated material must be assessed and controlled. Safer alternatives should be used where reasonably practicable.

- Keep products in their original or correctly labelled containers and retain relevant safety information.
- Store substances securely, separate incompatible materials and prevent access by children or unauthorised people.
- Do not mix chemicals unless the manufacturer expressly permits it.
- Pesticides must not be used by volunteers unless a specific assessment confirms lawful use, competence, storage and protective measures.
- Use hygiene controls, ventilation and suitable protective equipment identified by the assessment.
- Cover cuts, wash hands before eating and seek prompt advice after a needlestick, contaminated sharp or significant exposure.
- Obtain competent advice before work involving asbestos, serious contamination, hazardous waste or another unfamiliar substance.

9 Weather and environmental conditions

- Heat and sun: provide drinking water, shade or rest opportunities, suitable scheduling and advice on protective clothing and sun protection.
- Cold and rain: consider suitable clothing, warm-up breaks, wet surfaces and the risk of reduced dexterity or visibility.
- Wind and storms: consider gazebos, falling branches, flying objects and lightning; dismantle or cancel where controls are insufficient.
- Air quality and pollution: modify or postpone strenuous activity where official advice or local conditions indicate material risk.
- The activity lead may shorten, relocate, postpone or cancel an activity when conditions cannot be adequately controlled.

10 Seed banks storage and community venues

Seed-bank cabinets, drawers, shelves and displays in libraries and other community venues must be installed, positioned and maintained so that they do not create avoidable risks.

- Agree in writing who controls the premises, cabinet, inspections, repairs, emergency response and incident reporting.
- Secure tall or potentially unstable cabinets appropriately and keep them away from escape routes, doors, heaters and congested walkways.
- Do not overload drawers or shelves; keep heavier items low and ensure drawers cannot create a tipping or collision hazard.
- Store seeds dry and clean in labelled packaging; do not accept leaking chemicals, unlabelled treatments, food, medicines or visibly contaminated material.
- Provide a safe method for reporting damage, spills, pests, mould, sharp objects or suspicious donations and isolate unsafe items.
- Use accessible placement and instructions while preserving clear circulation space and venue fire arrangements.
- Review each location periodically and after relocation, damage, a complaint or an incident.

11 Events public activities and crowd safety

Each seed swap, plant swap, workshop, garden open day, school activity, seminar or public event must have arrangements proportionate to its size, site, audience and activities.

- Confirm capacity, access, emergency exits, assembly points, first aid, toilets, welfare and emergency-service access.

- Keep entrances, exits and fire routes clear and manage queues, vehicles, deliveries and loading areas.
- Secure tables, planters, displays, gazebos, signs and cables and consider wind loading and trip hazards.
- Control access to tools, machinery, chemicals, water features and work areas.
- Provide clear safety information and identify responsible event personnel.
- Plan safeguarding, supervision and lost-child arrangements where children attend.
- Record who may cancel or stop the event and how participants will be informed.

12 First aid emergencies and fire safety

First aid

GSSUK will complete a proportionate first-aid needs assessment for its work and organised activities. Suitable kits must be accessible, checked and replenished. A trained first aider or appointed person must be identified where the assessment requires one, and participants must know how to obtain help. The assessment should consider physical and mental health needs, remoteness, travel time, participant numbers and activity hazards.

Emergency arrangements

Activity leads must know the site address or precise location, emergency access, communication arrangements and assembly point. For serious injury, illness, fire or immediate danger, call 999. Provide assistance only within the responder's competence, protect people from further harm, meet emergency services where possible and account for participants when safe to do so.

Fire safety

Where GSSUK controls premises, it will maintain a suitable fire risk assessment and arrangements. At partner or hired venues, the event lead must understand and communicate the venue procedures. Escape routes and emergency access must remain clear, and ignition sources, batteries, electrical equipment, cooking and combustible materials must be controlled.

13 Accidents incidents near misses and RIDDOR

All injuries, work-related ill health, dangerous occurrences, near misses and significant hazards must be reported promptly. Immediate priorities are first aid, emergency assistance and preventing further harm.

- Record the date, time, location, people involved, injury or event, first aid, immediate action, witnesses and what happened afterwards.
- Store personal incident information securely and restrict access to those who need it.
- Investigate proportionately to identify immediate and underlying causes, assign corrective actions and confirm completion.
- Notify insurers, a venue or partner where required by the relevant arrangements.
- The responsible person must assess whether the incident is reportable under RIDDOR using current HSE guidance; not every accident or hospital visit is reportable.
- Trustees must separately consider safeguarding action and whether a serious incident report to the Charity Commission is required.

14 Personal protective equipment

Personal protective equipment will be used where risk cannot be adequately controlled by other measures. Requirements must come from the assessment and may include suitable gloves, eye or hearing protection, footwear, high-visibility clothing and weather protection.

- Equipment must be suitable for the task and wearer, compatible with other equipment and maintained hygienically.
- Users must receive instructions on fit, use, limitations, storage and defect reporting.
- Where the law requires GSSUK as an employer to provide PPE, it will be provided without charge.
- PPE does not replace elimination, safer methods, guards, barriers, training or supervision.

15 Lone working home visits and personal safety

Lone work and visits to private homes or gardens require prior consideration of the task, location, people involved, travel, communication and emergency assistance. Higher-risk activities should not normally be undertaken alone.

- Use agreed check-in and check-out arrangements and provide the visit location, contact details and expected finish time to an authorised person.
- Ensure the visitor has a charged telephone or another effective communication method.
- Do not carry out hazardous machinery work, work at height, significant excavation or high-risk chemical work alone.
- Do not make a lone home visit to a child. Visits involving an adult at risk must follow the Safeguarding Policy and a recorded assessment.
- Do not enter or remain where there is violence, threatening behaviour, uncontrolled animals, substance misuse or another serious concern; withdraw and report.
- Protect private addresses, health information and visit records under the privacy arrangements.

16 Transport and nature trips

Where GSSUK arranges transport or a nature-based trip, the lead must assess the journey, destination, participants, accessibility, supervision, weather, communication, first aid and emergency arrangements.

- Use appropriately licensed and authorised drivers, roadworthy vehicles and suitable insurance.
- Record essential journey details, passenger information and emergency contacts while protecting personal data.
- Plan safe boarding, seating, seat belts, mobility equipment, rest stops and passenger supervision.
- Confirm accessible routes, toilets, shelter, medication arrangements and any destination-specific hazards.
- Use consent and safeguarding arrangements where required for children or adults needing support.
- Maintain a plan for delay, breakdown, separation, severe weather and medical emergency.
- Where a travel company is used, check suitable competence, insurance and agreed responsibilities.

17 Food hygiene and allergens

Where food or drink is prepared, handled or served, the activity lead must identify who is responsible and ensure arrangements match the type and scale of provision. Food supplied by an outside provider does not remove the need to agree responsibilities.

- Use clean hands, utensils, surfaces and suitable storage; separate raw and ready-to-eat food where relevant.
- Keep food at safe temperatures and follow use-by dates and manufacturer instructions.
- Provide accurate allergen information and prevent avoidable cross-contact. Do not guess when information is unknown.
- Ensure people undertaking food handling have instruction or training proportionate to their duties.

- Keep animals, garden chemicals, soil, compost and contaminated equipment away from food areas.
- Check whether food-business registration or additional legal requirements apply to regular or higher-scale provision and obtain competent advice where needed.

18 Children disabled people and people needing support

Safety planning must consider age, experience, mobility, sensory or communication needs, health conditions and other relevant individual circumstances without relying on stereotypes or unfairly excluding people.

- Use age-appropriate tasks, tools and supervision for children and follow the Safeguarding Policy.
- Invite people to share relevant access or support needs and make reasonable adjustments where required.
- Adapt tasks, instructions, timings, rest arrangements, equipment or routes where this can be done safely.
- Handle health and support information confidentially and share it only where necessary for agreed support or safety.
- Prepare an individual arrangement where a disclosed need requires specific emergency, medication or communication planning.
- Base restrictions on an individual and evidence-based assessment, record significant decisions and consider a safe alternative.

19 Contractors partners and insurance

Contractors and partners

Before work begins, GSSUK and the relevant library, school, place of worship, council, business, charity, venue or contractor must agree who controls the premises and the relevant risks. They should exchange suitable information about hazards, risk assessments, competence, safeguarding, first aid, fire, emergencies and incident reporting.

Contractors must be selected according to the risk and competence required and provide appropriate method statements, qualifications or insurance evidence where relevant. GSSUK may stop contracted or partner activity that creates an uncontrolled risk.

Insurance

Trustees will arrange and periodically review insurance appropriate to the charity's people and activities. This may include public liability, employers' liability where legally required, cover for volunteers, events, equipment, vehicles or hired transport, and any specialist activity. Policy conditions, exclusions, notification duties and territorial limits must be checked before new activities begin.

20 Welfare mental health and work related stress

- Provide suitable access to drinking water, toilets, washing or hand-cleaning facilities, rest breaks and weather protection.
- Plan workload, event duration, travel and manual work realistically and consider fatigue.
- Encourage early reporting of stress, conflict, bullying, threatening behaviour or other factors affecting safe participation.
- Respond sensitively and consider suitable changes, support or professional advice where needed.
- Treat violence, aggression and harassment as safety concerns as well as conduct or safeguarding matters.

21 Training consultation monitoring and review

- Provide induction and activity briefings before people undertake relevant work.
- Give task-specific instruction and supervision for tools, equipment, manual handling, substances, food handling, first aid and other higher-risk work.
- Use competent internal or external assistance where specialist knowledge or certification is required.
- Consult employees where required and encourage volunteers to contribute to assessments and improvements.
- Monitor through inspections, assessments, equipment records, incident trends, feedback, training and trustee oversight.
- Review this policy at least annually and sooner after a serious incident, material change, new significant activity or relevant change in law or guidance.

22 Policy compliance and related documents

A deliberate or serious breach may result in removal from an activity, volunteer or employment action, termination of a contract or partnership, or referral to another authority. The response will be fair and proportionate. Reporting a genuine safety concern in good faith must not result in retaliation.

This policy must be read with the Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct, Equality Diversity and Inclusion Policy, Volunteer Policy, Complaints and Whistleblowing Procedure, Privacy and Records Retention arrangements, fire and emergency arrangements, and all relevant activity risk assessments.

23 Health and safety contacts

Health and Safety Lead or nominated trustee	Name: Muddassir Syed
Email	info@greenshelter.org.uk
Telephone	+44 7799 662830
Alternative contact	Name and role: Nehlin Sayed admin@greenshelter.org.uk +44 7412 153708

24 Trustee approval

The Board of Trustees confirms that it has reviewed this policy, assigned responsibility for implementation and agreed the reporting, resources and review arrangements.

Approval record	Details
Approved by	Board of Trustees
Date approved	04 th September 2026
Chair name and signature	MS Rahman, MS RAHMAN
Effective date	04 th September 2026
Next review date	04 th September 2027

Appendix A Activity safety checklist

- What is the activity, where will it happen and who is responsible?
- What could cause harm, who might be harmed and are any people at greater risk?
- Can hazards be avoided, reduced or isolated before using supervision or PPE?
- Are the venue, routes, exits, toilets, lighting, weather and emergency access suitable?
- Are tools, equipment, substances, food and temporary structures safe and controlled?
- Are first aid, fire, communication, safeguarding and emergency arrangements confirmed?
- Do leaders, volunteers, partners and participants understand the controls and reporting route?
- Are access needs, transport, supervision, welfare and weather arrangements addressed?
- Who can stop or cancel the activity, and how will changes be communicated?
- When will the assessment be reviewed and who will complete outstanding actions?

Appendix B Incident and near miss record

Field	Information to record
Reference number	_____
Date time and location	_____
Person affected and contact details	_____
What happened	Facts, activity, equipment and conditions: _____ _____
Injury or potential harm	_____
First aid and immediate action	_____
Witnesses	_____
Notifications	Lead / venue / insurer / safeguarding / HSE / other: _____
Investigation and causes	_____
Corrective actions owner and due date	_____
Review and closure	Name, date and outcome: _____

Appendix C Key legislation and guidance

- Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974;
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999;
- Health and Safety First Aid Regulations 1981;
- Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998;
- Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002;
- Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992;
- Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations 1992 and 2022 amendment;
- Work at Height Regulations 2005;
- Reporting of Injuries Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013;
- Electricity at Work Regulations 1989;
- Regulatory Reform Fire Safety Order 2005 where applicable in England and Wales;
- Health and Safety Executive guidance for voluntary organisations and volunteers;
- Food Standards Agency guidance where food is prepared or supplied; and
- Charity Commission guidance on risk management safeguarding insurance and serious incident reporting.

Trustees and activity leads must check that legislation and official guidance are current when the policy is reviewed or when a significant or unfamiliar risk arises. Competent professional advice should be obtained where the charity does not have the necessary knowledge in-house.