



Benson Community Shed

Health & Safety Handbook

Policy Document

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Policy Framework

Benson Community Shed operates a simple policy framework intended to keep policies clear, proportionate, and practical.

The policy suite consists of four core documents:

- Roles & Responsibilities Framework
- Health & Safety Handbook
- Code of Conduct
- Safeguarding Adults Policy

These documents are designed to work together and reference one another where appropriate. The Roles & Responsibilities Framework is the single authoritative source for role definitions used across the policy set. Other documents should refer back to it rather than redefining roles.

The Shed is a member-led, volunteer-run organisation. These policies are intended to support safe participation and a welcoming community environment without creating unnecessary bureaucracy or implying that the Shed is a care provider or a professionally supervised workshop.

Roles & Responsibilities Framework	Defines the roles used in the Shed and acts as the authoritative source for role definitions.
Health & Safety Handbook	Sets out practical safety expectations and day-to-day health and safety guidance.
Code of Conduct	Sets out behavioural standards, disciplinary arrangements, and appeals.
Safeguarding Adults Policy	Explains how safeguarding concerns relating to adults should be raised and handled.
Other supporting records	Forms, risk assessments, induction records, and notices may support these policies but do not replace them.

Purpose and Scope

This handbook explains how health and safety is approached within Benson Community Shed.

Benson Community Shed is a volunteer-led organisation. Members participate in activities together in a community environment and are responsible for their own actions while supporting the safety of others around them.

The purpose of this handbook is to provide clear guidance on how activities can be carried out safely and responsibly within the Shed. It is intended to be practical, understandable, and proportionate. It does not remove risk, certify competence, or replace individual judgement.

If you are unsure about anything, stop and consider your own safety and the safety of those around you.

Safety Principles

Safety within the Shed is based on a number of simple principles:

Members

- remain responsible for their own actions and should work within their own abilities and experience.
- should take reasonable care to avoid actions that may place others at risk.
- should feel comfortable pausing work if they are unsure how to proceed safely.
- should remain aware of others working nearby and take reasonable care not to interfere with or distract people operating equipment.

Safety concerns should be raised openly so that issues can be addressed early.

By working together and supporting one another, members contribute to maintaining a safe and welcoming environment for everyone using the Shed.

Roles in Supporting Safety

Role definitions are set out in the Roles & Responsibilities Framework and should be read alongside this handbook.

Members play the most important role in maintaining safety within the Shed. Each member remains responsible for their own actions and for carrying out activities in a safe and responsible manner.

Supervisors act as the point of contact during a Shed session. They may provide guidance on safe working practices, respond to concerns, and pause activities where there is uncertainty about safety. Supervisors support safe working practices within the Shed but do not assume responsibility for the actions of other members.

Other members may also hold roles that support safety, including Health & Safety Officer, Fire Marshal, and First Aider.

Access to the Shed and Workshop

The Shed includes a lobby, social area, kitchen, toilets, office, craft room, tool store, wood store, workshop, outside frontage and parking area, rear smoking area, and garden.

General areas of the Shed may be used by members and visitors in accordance with Shed rules. The workshop is a higher-risk environment and is subject to additional controls.

Workshop tools and machinery may only be used by Workshop Users. A Workshop User is a member who has completed the Shed's workshop induction.

Workshop induction introduces members to the layout of the workshop, the location of safety equipment, the expectations for safe behaviour, and the basic arrangements for using tools and machinery. Induction provides guidance and orientation, but it does not certify competence or guarantee suitability for any particular activity.

Anyone who is not a Workshop User should not operate machinery. Visitors may only enter workshop areas when accompanied by a Supervisor and must remain clear of machinery in use.

Workshop activities involving tools or machinery should only take place when at least two people are present in the Shed. This helps ensure that assistance can be provided if an accident or emergency occurs.

Safe Working Practices

Members should

- assess risks before starting work and ensure that they are comfortable undertaking the activity.
- work within their abilities and avoid attempting tasks for which they do not feel confident.
- avoid distracting individuals who are operating machinery or equipment.
- remain aware of other people working nearby and ensure that activities do not interfere with others.

Where uncertainty exists, work should pause until the situation can be considered properly.

Where advice or assistance is needed, members should seek help before continuing.

Equipment and Tool Safety

Equipment should only be used for its intended purpose.

Members should take a moment to ensure that tools and equipment appear safe to use before starting work and should ensure that safety features such as guards are in place where applicable.

Damaged or unsafe equipment should not be used. If equipment appears faulty or unsafe, the issue should be reported so that it can be addressed.

Members should ensure that tools are used in a manner that does not create unnecessary risk to themselves or others.

Extension leads should be used carefully and routed so that they do not create trip hazards or obstruct walkways.

Mains-powered personal tools, including battery chargers, must not be brought into the Shed due to testing and safety control requirements.

Battery Charging and Storage

Rechargeable batteries used with power tools should only be charged while someone is present in the Shed. Batteries should not be left charging overnight or when the building is unattended.

Battery charging should take place in the designated charging area where possible.

Chargers should be placed on a stable, non-flammable surface and kept clear of sawdust, wood shavings, and other combustible materials.

Batteries should only be charged using the charger designed for that battery system.

Batteries that appear damaged, swollen, or unusually hot should not be charged and should be reported to a Supervisor.

When not in use, batteries should be stored in the designated storage area where they are protected from damage and excessive heat.

Loose batteries should not be stored where the terminals may come into contact with metal objects such as screws, tools, or other batteries.

Personal Tools

Members who bring personal tools into the Shed should inform the Supervisor for that session.

Where practical, the Supervisor may record the tools present, which may include taking a photograph, to help confirm ownership and avoid confusion with Shed equipment.

Personal tools must be safe and in good working condition.

Personal tools should be clearly marked with the owner's name where possible and should be kept separate from Shed tools.

Personal tools remain the responsibility of the owner and should be taken home at the end of the session.

The Shed does not accept responsibility for loss or damage to personal tools.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Personal Protective Equipment may be appropriate for certain activities within the Shed.

PPE is intended to reduce the risk of injury when hazards cannot be fully eliminated through safe working practices or other controls.

Members remain responsible for deciding when PPE is appropriate for the activity they are undertaking.

Members should consider PPE before starting work and take reasonable steps to protect both themselves and others who may be affected.

Examples of PPE that may be appropriate include eye protection when operating machinery or using tools that may generate flying debris, hearing protection when using noisy equipment, respiratory protection when working with materials or processes that generate fine dust, and protective gloves where appropriate for handling certain materials or tasks.

Where PPE is used, it should be suitable for the task and worn correctly.

Members may choose to bring and use their own PPE.

The Shed may maintain a small stock of PPE that members may borrow where required, but members should not assume that PPE will always be available.

Consideration for Others

Activities carried out by one member may affect other people working nearby.

Members should consider whether their activity could expose others to hazards such as flying debris, noise, dust, sparks, or fragments.

Where this may occur, members should take reasonable steps to reduce risk to others. This may include ensuring people nearby are aware that work is about to begin, allowing others to move to a safe distance, pausing work if someone is in an unsafe position, or waiting until others have completed their tasks and moved away before beginning work.

Members should not expect others to stop what they are doing or move away simply so that they can proceed with their own activity.

Members working nearby should also consider their own safety and take appropriate precautions where necessary.

Dust, Ventilation and Air Quality

Woodworking activities can generate wood shavings and dust, which may present both slip hazards and respiratory health risks.

Fine wood dust in particular can pose a risk when inhaled over time. Members should take reasonable steps to minimise dust exposure for themselves and others working nearby.

Where equipment capable of generating dust is used, appropriate control measures should be used where available. These may include dust extraction connected to the tool or workstation, workshop air cleaning equipment, and good ventilation within the workshop.

Members should use extraction systems where they are provided and suitable for the activity being undertaken.

Dust extraction systems are intended to capture dust at the source and help reduce airborne particles within the workshop.

Members should ensure that extraction equipment is operating before starting dust-generating activities where this equipment is available.

Members should not carry out significant dust-generating activities unless appropriate extraction or other control measures are in place.

Where appropriate, natural ventilation may also be used to improve air quality. Opening external doors or windows may assist in reducing airborne dust levels during periods of heavy dust-generating activity.

Internal doors should normally remain closed in order to prevent dust from spreading to other areas of the building.

Dust and shavings can create slip hazards as well as air quality issues. Members should take reasonable steps to keep work areas clean and minimise the accumulation of dust and debris. This includes clearing dust and offcuts from work surfaces, using vacuum systems where available rather than sweeping fine dust, and ensuring dust collection containers are not overfilled.

Maintaining a clean workspace helps reduce both slip risks and airborne dust levels.

Dust extraction and ventilation reduce airborne dust but do not eliminate exposure completely. Members performing dust-generating activities should use of respiratory protection where appropriate. Suitable masks may include FFP2 or FFP3 rated masks, particularly when performing activities that generate significant amounts of fine dust. Members working nearby should also consider their own protection where dust-generating activities are taking place.

Dust extraction systems are intended to reduce exposure but do not replace the need for appropriate PPE where required.

COSHH and Hazardous Substances

Hazardous substances must be handled carefully and stored safely.

Substances must remain in their original labelled containers.

Materials should be stored in the designated storage area for hazardous materials.

Relevant safety information or data sheets should be available where appropriate.

New hazardous substances should only be introduced with Supervisor agreement.

Where required, suitable ventilation or personal protective equipment should be used.

Risk Management

Members are expected to assess risks dynamically when undertaking activities.

Before beginning work, members should consider the task they are undertaking, the equipment being used, the surrounding environment, and the presence of other people nearby.

If there is uncertainty about whether something can be carried out safely, work should pause until the situation is understood.

Hazards or unsafe conditions should be reported so that they can be addressed.

Benson Community Shed may maintain written risk assessments for key equipment or activities where this is considered useful.

Where written risk assessments exist, they are intended to support safe operation and provide reference information.

Where written risk assessments exist, they will be included as an appendix to this handbook.

These documents provide guidance and do not replace individual judgement.

Accidents, Incidents and Near Misses

All accidents and near misses should be recorded. A near miss is an event that could have resulted in injury or damage but did not do so on that occasion.

Recording incidents allows the Shed to learn from experience and identify potential hazards before they lead to more serious incidents.

An accident book is kept with the first aid kit. Members should record accidents and near misses so that potential hazards can be identified and addressed.

Serious incidents may be reviewed by the Health & Safety Officer and reported to trustees where further action is required.

First Aid

A first aid kit is located in the kitchen.

Some members may be trained first aiders and may be able to assist where first aid is required.

Information about trained first aiders may be displayed within the premises.

Where necessary, emergency services should be contacted.

Wallingford Community Hospital – Minor Injuries Unit

John Radcliffe Hospital – Accident and Emergency

Royal Berkshire Hospital – Accident and Emergency

Townlands Hospital (Henley) – Minor Injuries Unit

Abingdon Community Hospital – Minor Injuries Unit

Fire Safety and Evacuation

If a fire is discovered, shout “Fire! Fire!” immediately.

Do not assume someone else has raised the alarm.

Evacuate the building immediately using the nearest safe exit.

Fire extinguishers are provided for very small fires only and should only be used if it is safe to do so. Members are not expected to fight fires.

Water must not be used on electrical fires or flammable liquid fires.

Fire exits, escape routes, and access to fire safety equipment must always be kept clear.

Where a Fire Marshal is present they may assist in guiding evacuation.

Assembly point: grassy area near the roundabout with Littleworth Road.

what3words: ///widely.precluded.album

Remain at the assembly point so that everyone can be accounted for and do not leave the assembly area unless you notify the Fire Marshal or a Supervisor.

Do not re-enter the building until it is confirmed safe to do so.

Shed location:

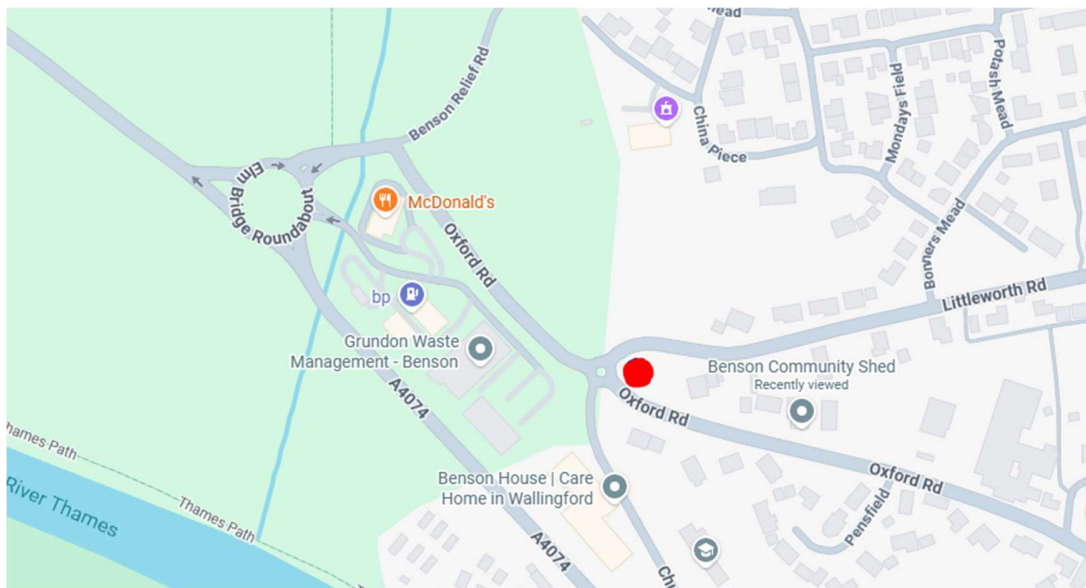
Benson Community Shed

18 Oxford Road

Benson

OX10 6LX

what3words: ///glow.peach.udder



Fire assembly point map

Identification and Visibility

Badges are used to support social interaction and to help recognise who is legitimately present in the Shed.

Badges display a first name and may include a spanner icon to indicate Workshop User status.

Badges are an indicative identifier only. They do not indicate competence, qualification, or suitability for any particular activity.

Badges must be worn visibly while in the Shed.

Lanyards are prohibited at all times due to entanglement risk.

Badges do not replace judgement or individual responsibility.

Housekeeping

Maintaining a tidy workspace is an important part of safe working.

Clutter and obstructions can contribute to accidents. In particular, Members should always keep walkways clear.

Members should take reasonable steps to keep the working environment safe and organised.

Members should aim to leave the workshop in a clean and safe condition when finishing work. This includes returning tools to storage locations, removing offcuts and debris, and ensuring that work areas are left tidy for the next users.

Good housekeeping helps reduce the risk of trips, falls, and other avoidable accidents.

Attendance Register

Where a sign-in system is in use, members and visitors should record their arrival and departure.

This helps ensure that everyone can be accounted for in the event of an emergency evacuation.

Hot Work

Activities involving open flame, sparks, or high heat require agreement from a Supervisor and can only be carried out outside, in the garden area.

Examples include welding, brazing, and blowtorch use.

Children

The Shed is an adult environment and children are not permitted in the workshop.

Children may attend Shed-organised family events when accompanied by a responsible adult.

Smoking and Vaping

Smoking and vaping are permitted only in the designated smoking area at the rear of the building, accessed via the path on the left.

Alcohol and Impairment

Illegal drugs are prohibited on Shed premises.

Alcohol may only be consumed during organised Shed events.

Members must not attend the Shed if impaired by drugs or alcohol.

Appendix A – Risk Assessments

BAND SAW – RISK ASSESSMENT V1 May 2026

Activity: Cutting wood on band saw

Persons at risk: Members, volunteers, visitors

Main hazards:

- Contact with moving blade → serious cuts/amputation
- Kickback or ejection of workpiece
- Entanglement (loose clothing, hair)
- Noise, dust inhalation
- Electrical faults

Controls in place:

- Blade guard set just above workpiece; interlocked where fitted
- Only trained/authorised users operate machine
- Pre-use checks: blade condition, tension, tracking, guards secure
- Use push sticks/jigs for small work
- Keep hands clear of blade line at all times
- Tight clothing, hair tied back; no gloves near moving blade
- Dust extraction running; wear suitable PPE if needed
- Safety glasses and hearing protection available
- Emergency stop accessible and tested
- Routine inspection and PAT testing

Further actions required:

- Maintain training log and refresher sessions
- Replace worn blades promptly

Risk rating after controls: Low–Medium

Responsible person: Workshop supervisor / H&S officer

Review date: Annually or after incident

PILLAR DRILL – RISK ASSESSMENT V1 May 2026

Activity: Drilling timber on pillar drill

Persons at risk: Members, volunteers

Main hazards:

- Entanglement with rotating chuck/bit
- Workpiece spinning or ejection
- Flying chips/swarf
- Noise, dust
- Electrical hazards

Controls in place:

- Guards fitted over chuck/belt drive
- Work securely clamped in vice or to table (no hand holding)
- Remove chuck key before starting
- Correct speed selected for material
- Eye protection worn; avoid loose clothing/jewellery
- Long hair tied back; no gloves
- Dust extraction or mask if required
- Emergency stop accessible
- Regular maintenance and inspection

Further actions required:

- Reinforce rule: always clamp workpieces

Risk rating after controls: Low

Responsible person: Workshop supervisor

Review date: Annually or after incident

CROSS CUT COMPOUND MITRE SAW – RISK ASSESSMENT V1 2026

Activity: Cross-cutting timber

Persons at risk: Members, volunteers

Main hazards:

- Contact with rotating blade
- Kickback or thrown material
- Flying debris
- Noise/dust
- Electrical hazards

Controls in place:

- Blade guard functioning correctly (self-returning)
- Hands kept clear; use clamps for small pieces
- Allow blade to reach full speed before cutting
- Lower blade smoothly; do not force cut
- Wait for blade to stop before lifting
- Secure workpiece against fence
- Eye and hearing protection used
- Dust extraction in use
- Trained users only; clear workspace
- Emergency stop available

Further actions required:

- Mark safe hand zones on table/fence

Risk rating after controls: Low–Medium

Responsible person: Workshop supervisor

Review date: Annually or after incident

WOOD TURNING LATHE – RISK ASSESSMENT V1 May 2026

Activity: Turning wood on lathe

Persons at risk: Members, volunteers

Main hazards:

- Contact with rotating workpiece
- Workpiece ejection
- Tool catches/kickback
- Entanglement (clothing, hair)
- Dust inhalation

Controls in place:

- Workpiece securely mounted and checked before start
- Tool rest correctly positioned and adjusted
- Start at low speed; stand clear on start-up
- Only sharp, appropriate tools used
- Face shield/eye protection worn
- No loose clothing; hair tied back; no gloves
- Dust extraction or PPE used
- Training required before use
- Emergency stop accessible

Further actions required:

- Regular inspection of chucks and faceplates

Risk rating after controls: Medium

Responsible person: Workshop supervisor

Review date: Annually or after incident

TABLE SAW – RISK ASSESSMENT V1 May 2026

Activity: Cutting timber on table saw

Persons at risk: Members, volunteers

Main hazards:

- Contact with exposed blade → severe injury
- Kickback (major hazard)
- Flying debris
- Noise/dust
- Electrical hazards

Controls in place:

- Riving knife and crown guard fitted and adjusted
- Mitre gauge to be used when cross cutting, **not the fence**
- Use push sticks and push blocks for narrow cuts
- Fence aligned correctly; no freehand cutting
- Stand to side of blade (avoid kickback line)
- Do not cut warped timber
- Keep hands well clear; use jigs where needed
- Eye and hearing protection worn
- Dust extraction system in use
- Only trained/authorised users
- Emergency stop easily accessible

Further actions required:

- Display kickback awareness signage

Risk rating after controls: Medium

Responsible person: Workshop supervisor

Review date: Annually or after incident

DISC SANDER – RISK ASSESSMENT V1 2026

Activity: Sanding wood using disc sander

Persons at risk: Members, volunteers

Main hazards:

- Abrasion/contact with rotating disc
- Entanglement
- Dust inhalation
- Ejection of workpiece
- Noise

Controls in place:

- Work rest adjusted close to disc
- Sand on downward-moving side only
- Firm grip on workpiece; use jigs for small items
- No loose clothing/jewellery; hair tied back
- Dust extraction operating; PPE if needed
- Eye protection worn
- Do not use excessive force
- Emergency stop accessible
- Machine maintained and inspected

Further actions required:

- Replace worn sanding discs regularly

Risk rating after controls: Low

Responsible person: Workshop supervisor

Review date: Annually or after incident