



ALTERNATIVE ACRES

Health, Safety and Farm Site Safety Policy

Academic Year 2026/27

Policy owner	Head of Provision
Head of Provision	Gemma Robertson
DSL	Daun Beresford
Deputy DSL	Gemma Robertson
Placement model	1:1, 1:2 and 1:4
Reviewed	01/09/2026
Next review	01/09/2027 or sooner following significant incident, site/equipment change or guidance change

Alternative Acres will manage foreseeable risks so far as reasonably practicable while preserving the positive educational value of a working farm and outdoor environment.



1. Purpose

This policy sets out Alternative Acres' arrangements for protecting the health, safety and welfare of learners, staff, visitors, volunteers, contractors and others who may be affected by its activities.

It reflects the particular hazards of a farm-based alternative provision, including animals, vehicles, tools, uneven ground, woodland, lakes, weather, buildings and practical activities.

2. Legal and guidance framework

Alternative Acres will comply with applicable health and safety law, including the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and relevant regulations. Health and Safety Executive guidance is used to inform risk management in agriculture and work involving children and young people.

HSE describes risk assessment as identifying what could cause harm, deciding whether existing precautions are sufficient and taking further reasonably practicable action where needed. Risk assessment must lead to practical controls rather than exist only as paperwork.

DfE alternative provision guidance applies to independent providers delivering AP, and the voluntary national standards for non-school AP include health, safety and wellbeing expectations. Alternative Acres uses these alongside applicable legal duties and commissioner requirements.

3. Responsibilities

Gemma Robertson, Head of Provision, has overall responsibility for health-and-safety arrangements, resources, site controls and ensuring significant risks are addressed.

All staff must follow risk assessments and safe systems of work, use equipment correctly, report hazards and defects, supervise learners appropriately and stop or adapt activities where conditions become unsafe.

Learners are supported to understand safety expectations in a way appropriate to age, SEND, communication and experience.

4. Risk assessment

Alternative Acres uses site, activity, learner and task-specific risk assessment as appropriate. Assessments should identify hazards, who may be harmed, existing controls, additional actions and review arrangements.

Risk assessments are completed/reviewed through Alternative Acres' arrangements led by Daun Beresford and stored on CPOMS where this is the provision's agreed repository. Staff must have access to the information relevant to their work.



Dynamic risk assessment is expected. Weather, animal behaviour, learner presentation, staffing, equipment condition or site circumstances can change rapidly and may require an activity to stop or change.

- Identify the hazards.
- Identify who may be harmed and how.
- Evaluate the risks and existing controls.
- Put further controls into practice where required.
- Communicate relevant controls to staff/learners.
- Record significant findings as required.
- Review after change, incident or evidence that controls are ineffective.

5. Young people and vulnerability

Children and young people may have less experience, maturity or awareness of workplace hazards. Alternative Acres must consider this when planning farm activities and supervision.

SEND, anxiety, impulsivity, sensory needs, communication differences, medication, mobility and previous experience can alter how a learner perceives or responds to risk. Controls should therefore be individualised rather than based only on chronological age.

6. Supervision and staffing

Alternative Acres provides commissioned 1:1, 1:2 and 1:4 placements. The commissioned ratio is a baseline and does not mean every activity is safe at that ratio.

Staffing must be increased, grouping changed or an activity postponed where the learner, animal, environment or task requires more supervision. Visitors and volunteers do not automatically count as supervision staffing.

7. Site boundaries and access

Learners must be supported to understand site boundaries, restricted areas and how to move safely between learning, animal and outdoor areas.

Access to higher-risk areas should be controlled. Gates, fences, doors, signs and staff supervision should be used where appropriate, but physical barriers do not replace active supervision.



8. Animals

Animal contact is a core part of Alternative Acres but carries risks including kicks, bites, crushing, scratches, zoonotic infection, unpredictable movement and manual-handling hazards.

Animal temperament, learner confidence/competence, weather, feeding, veterinary issues and environmental conditions should be considered before activity. Staff must intervene or stop an activity where animal or learner behaviour makes it unsafe.

- Use competent staff supervision.
- Match activity to learner ability and risk.
- Maintain safe escape space and avoid trapping people between animals/barriers.
- Use suitable footwear/PPE where required.
- Control feeding and access to animal areas.
- Maintain hygiene and handwashing.
- Separate learners from animals where behaviour or circumstances create unacceptable risk.

9. Hygiene and zoonotic infection

Handwashing is required after animal contact and before eating or drinking. Learners should be taught not to eat or drink in animal areas and to avoid putting hands or objects in their mouths after contact.

Cuts/grazes should be appropriately covered before animal activity where practicable. Contaminated clothing/footwear and animal waste should be managed hygienically under the infection-control arrangements.

10. Woodland, fields and uneven ground

Outdoor areas may contain mud, roots, branches, holes, slopes, waterlogged ground, insects, plants and changing weather hazards.

Activities should take account of footwear, clothing, visibility, route, learner mobility, communication and emergency access. Areas may be made temporarily unavailable where conditions are unsafe.

11. Lakes and water

The lakes are a significant site hazard and require specific risk controls. Learners must not have unsupervised access to water areas.



Planned activity near water must reflect the learner's risk assessment, staff competence, environmental conditions and emergency arrangements. Staff must not place themselves at unreasonable risk by attempting an unsafe water rescue.

12. Tools and equipment

Tools must be suitable for the task and learner, maintained in safe condition and used under the level of supervision required by risk assessment.

Learners must receive clear instruction and demonstration before use. Access to tools should be controlled, particularly where a learner is dysregulated or where an item could be used to cause harm.

13. Machinery and vehicles

Agricultural machinery and moving vehicles present potentially fatal risks. Learners must be kept away from operating machinery and vehicle movements unless a specifically risk-assessed educational activity makes access appropriate and lawful.

Alternative Acres will observe legal restrictions applying to children and agricultural machinery and will not permit unsafe rides, driving or operation. Vehicle routes, reversing and parking should be managed to reduce pedestrian conflict.

14. Manual handling

Staff should avoid hazardous lifting and use safer methods/equipment where reasonably practicable. Learners should not be asked to lift or carry loads that are unsuitable for their age, ability, size or medical needs.

Manual-handling risks include feed, hay, equipment, gates and animal-related tasks and should be considered within relevant activity assessments.

15. Personal protective equipment and clothing

Suitable clothing and footwear are important in a farm environment. Activity-specific PPE must be used where risk assessment identifies it as necessary.

PPE must be suitable, correctly fitted and maintained. PPE is a control measure and should not be used as a substitute for removing or reducing a hazard where that is reasonably practicable.



16. Weather and temperature

Weather conditions are monitored because heat, cold, rain, ice, wind, thunderstorms and poor visibility can alter site and animal risks.

Activities, duration, clothing, access to shelter and hydration should be adjusted as required. Extreme conditions may require outdoor activities to be suspended.

17. Buildings and teaching spaces

Teaching and welfare spaces should be maintained so far as reasonably practicable in a safe condition, with appropriate access, heating/ventilation, lighting and emergency arrangements for their use.

New or altered facilities, including the converted shipping-container classroom, must be incorporated into fire, electrical, access and general site risk assessments before routine use.

18. Electricity and generator arrangements

Electrical systems, portable equipment and any generator arrangements must be used and maintained safely. Only competent persons should undertake electrical installation or repair work.

Cables, fuel, ventilation, exhaust, fire and carbon-monoxide risks must be controlled where generators are used. Changes to mains/electrical arrangements must trigger review of relevant risk assessments.

19. Fire safety

Alternative Acres maintains separate fire-safety arrangements covering prevention, alarm/raising the alarm, evacuation, assembly, firefighting equipment and emergency access.

Site changes, new cabins/containers, heaters, electrical equipment, fuel storage or changes in occupancy must be reflected promptly in the fire risk assessment.

20. First aid and medical emergencies

First-aid arrangements must reflect the activities and environment. Staff should know how to summon emergency services and provide first aid within their competence.

Relevant learner medical information and emergency medication must be available to staff who need it. The First Aid, Medical Conditions and Medicines Policy applies. Alternative Acres does not provide routine personal care or toileting assistance.



21. Food and drinking water

Food preparation and consumption must follow appropriate hygiene arrangements. Drinking water provided for consumption must be suitable for drinking.

Animal water supplies or other non-designated sources must not be used as drinking water. Handwashing facilities should be available and used appropriately.

22. Toilets and welfare

Suitable toilet and handwashing arrangements must be available for those attending the provision. Learners are expected to manage toileting independently.

Alternative Acres does not provide personal care or toileting assistance. Any identified routine personal-care need must be discussed with the commissioner before or during placement review.

23. Lone and isolated working

Lone and isolated work is managed under the Lone and Isolated Working Policy. Staff must have suitable communication and emergency arrangements and must not undertake tasks alone where the risk requires another competent person.

1:1 learner support is normal Alternative Acres practice but requires professional transparency, risk awareness and access to support, particularly in remote parts of the site.

24. Violence, aggression and dysregulation

Risk assessments should consider known aggression, self-harm, unsafe leaving and dysregulation alongside environmental hazards.

Staff use de-escalation and should move away from animals, tools, water, vehicles or other hazards where a learner becomes dysregulated. Alternative Acres does not use planned restraint as a behaviour-management strategy.

25. Off-site activities and transport

Off-site activities and transport require appropriate planning and risk assessment under the relevant policies. Staff should consider travel, handover, medical needs, supervision, communication and emergency arrangements.



Alternative Acres' farm-site controls do not automatically apply at another venue; the hazards and responsibilities of the destination must also be understood.

26. Contractors, visitors and volunteers

Contractors and visitors must receive proportionate information about relevant site hazards and safeguarding arrangements. Work areas should be separated from learners where necessary.

Contractors must not create uncontrolled risks through vehicles, tools, substances, excavations, electrical work or other activities. Volunteers must only undertake tasks within their competence and agreed role.

27. Hazardous substances

Cleaning products, fuels, veterinary products and other hazardous substances must be stored, handled and used safely and kept inaccessible to learners unless a specifically controlled activity requires otherwise.

Relevant safety information and COSHH assessment should be available where applicable. Substances must not be transferred into misleading food/drink containers.

28. Accident, incident and near-miss reporting

Accidents, injuries, dangerous occurrences and near misses should be recorded through Alternative Acres' appropriate health-and-safety process and reviewed for learning.

Where an incident also involves a safeguarding concern, staff must notify the DSL/Deputy DSL and record safeguarding information on CPOMS. RIDDOR reporting must be considered under the separate RIDDOR arrangements where the legal reporting criteria are met.

29. Emergency arrangements

Staff must know how to call 999, provide the site/location information needed by emergency services and obtain internal support.

Emergency planning should consider fire, serious injury/illness, missing learner, water incident, animal incident, severe weather, utility failure and other foreseeable site emergencies.

30. Training and competence

Staff must receive information, instruction and training appropriate to their role and the activities they supervise. Staff should not undertake specialist or safety-critical tasks for which they are not competent.



Induction must include key site hazards and emergency arrangements. Training needs should be reviewed when new activities, animals, equipment or facilities are introduced.

31. Consultation and reporting hazards

Staff are encouraged to report hazards, defects, near misses and practical concerns. Those doing the work may identify risks or workable controls that are not apparent from written assessments.

No staff member should be criticised for stopping an activity in good faith because they reasonably believe conditions have become unsafe.

32. Monitoring and review

Health and safety is monitored through risk-assessment review, site checks, incident/near-miss analysis, staff feedback, commissioner quality assurance and review following material changes.

Significant hazards should be addressed according to risk, with the most serious risks prioritised. Repeated incidents or near misses should trigger review rather than being treated as isolated events.

33. Related policies

Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy 2026/27; Lone and Isolated Working Policy 2026/27; Supervision of Learners Policy 2026/27; Safe Working Practice and Professional Boundaries Policy 2026/27; Physical Contact, Restrictive Intervention and Emergency Safety Policy 2026/27; First Aid, Medical Conditions and Medicines Policy 2026/27; Fire Safety Policy; Infection Control Policy; RIDDOR Policy; Off-Site Visits Policy; Travel/Transport Policy; Visitors, Volunteers, Contractors and External Speakers Policy 2026/27; Needs and Risk Assessment procedures.

34. Review

This policy will be reviewed annually and sooner following a serious incident, significant near miss, material site/building change, new high-risk activity/equipment/animal, or change in relevant legislation or HSE guidance.

35. Immediate staff safety guide

Hazard/defect identified	Make safe if you can do so without risk; restrict access and report promptly.
Weather/site conditions deteriorate	Adapt, relocate or stop the activity.



Animal becomes unpredictable	Create distance, secure/separate where safe and end learner interaction.
Learner dysregulates near a hazard	Move away from animals/tools/water/vehicles where possible and summon support.
Serious injury/illness	Call 999 where required, provide first aid within competence and direct emergency services to the location.
Near miss	Report it even if nobody was injured; review whether controls need changing.
Safeguarding element	Tell DSL/Deputy DSL and record on CPOMS in addition to the appropriate H&S record.
Unsure whether activity is safe	Do not press ahead. Seek guidance or increase controls/staffing.