

Dementia Active

Activity Risk Assessments: Physical Activity Group and Gardening Sessions

These assessments are written for dementia-friendly group sessions and should be used alongside venue procedures, individual support plans, first-aid arrangements and any separate policies already in place.

Risk rating key

Rating	Meaning
Low	Controlled with normal supervision and routine checks.
Medium	Additional care, monitoring or controls are required.
High	Activity should not continue until the risk is reduced.

General controls for both activities

Hazard	Who may be harmed	Risk	Control measures
Slips, trips, falls and poor room or outdoor layout	Participants, staff, volunteers and visitors	Medium	Check the area before the session. Keep walkways clear, remove trip hazards, manage wet or uneven surfaces, ensure good lighting and keep emergency exits accessible.
Confusion, distress or disorientation	Participants	Medium	Use a calm welcome, clear explanations, familiar staff or volunteers where possible, visible supervision and a quiet space for anyone who becomes overwhelmed.
Medical episode, fatigue or becoming unwell	Participants	Medium	Staff to monitor for pain, dizziness, breathlessness, tiredness, overheating, coldness or distress. Encourage rests and hydration. Follow first-aid and emergency procedures.
Manual handling or unsafe physical assistance	Participants, staff and volunteers	Medium	Staff and volunteers must not lift or physically move participants unless trained and authorised. Use safe prompting, mobility aids and individual support arrangements.

1. Physical activity group risk assessment

Activity context

The group may include gentle indoor or outdoor physical activity, such as seated exercise, walking, light games or supervised activity in a local park. Activities should be graded to the ability, confidence and wellbeing of the people attending.

Hazard	Who may be harmed	Risk	Control measures
Trips and falls while walking, moving between spaces or using uneven terrain	Participants, staff and volunteers	Medium	Assess the route and activity area before use. Avoid unsafe surfaces where possible. Keep pace slow, offer seated options, allow mobility aids, and provide close support for anyone unsteady or unsure.
Overexertion, breathlessness, overheating or fatigue	Participants	Medium	Keep activities gentle, optional and graded to ability. Use short activity periods, regular rest breaks and water breaks. Stop or adapt the activity if a participant appears breathless, dizzy, tired, in pain or distressed.
Muscle strain or injury from unfamiliar movement	Participants	Medium	Use simple low-impact movements and avoid sudden, forced or competitive exercises. Demonstrate clearly. Encourage participants to work within comfort and stop if anything hurts.
Dehydration or weather-related illness during outdoor activities	Participants	Medium	Provide and prompt fluids. Check weather conditions. Encourage suitable clothing, sun protection or warm layers. Avoid outdoor activity in unsuitable heat, cold, wind, ice or heavy rain.
Wandering, separation from group or disorientation in an unfamiliar environment	Participants	Medium	Maintain agreed supervision ratios. Keep the group together, use clear meeting points, count participants regularly and ensure staff can contact base if away from the usual venue.
Reduced accessibility for people with lower mobility or confidence	Participants	Medium	Offer alternative activities so nobody is excluded. Provide seated exercise and lower-energy choices. Adapt the activity to the person rather than expecting the person to fit the activity.
Collision with furniture, equipment, other participants or mobility aids	Participants, staff and volunteers	Low/Medium	Create enough space for safe movement. Keep bags, chairs and equipment clear of activity areas. Avoid overcrowding and fast group movement.
Injury during travel to or from off-site activity areas	Participants, staff and volunteers	Medium	Use known safe routes where possible. Staff to brief participants before moving, monitor road crossings and entrances, and avoid routes that are too long or unsuitable for the group.

Additional controls: Maintain appropriate staffing and supervision. Use a 2:1 staff-to-member ratio where required by individual need or activity demands. Staff should continue to monitor for fatigue, dehydration, heat exhaustion, cold exposure, pain, confusion or distress throughout the session.

Residual risk: Low/Medium when the activity is adapted to individual ability, suitable supervision is in place and weather or environmental risks are checked before starting.

Supervision required: Active supervision throughout, with closer support for participants who are unsteady, likely to wander, have low stamina or need help understanding instructions.

2. Gardening sessions risk assessment

Activity context

The purpose of gardening sessions is to support people with dementia to take part in practical, meaningful and enjoyable gardening activity in a safe, enclosed or well-supervised garden area.

Hazard	Who may be harmed	Risk	Control measures
Uneven, wet, muddy or slippery surfaces	Participants, staff and volunteers	Medium	Check the garden before use. Avoid areas that are slippery or unsafe. Use clear paths where possible, repair or report hazards, and provide close supervision for anyone unsteady.
Cuts, scratches or minor injuries from plants, pots, canes, supports or safe gardening tools	Participants, staff and volunteers	Low/Medium	Use suitable tools only and supervise use. Avoid sharp or damaged equipment. Store tools safely when not in use. Make participants aware of plant supports and avoid leaning over beds or containers unsafely.
Chemicals, fertilisers or sprays used in the garden	Participants, staff and volunteers	Low/Medium	Use an environmentally sensitive approach and avoid chemicals where possible. If chemicals are required, they must only be used by a competent person, stored safely, labelled clearly and kept away from participants during sessions.
Plants or plant material being touched, picked or placed in the mouth	Participants	Medium	Identify plants in the area and remove or avoid any known harmful plants. Remind participants not to eat plant material unless it is part of a planned supervised activity. Staff to monitor anyone likely to mouth objects.
Bees, wasps and other insects	Participants, staff and volunteers	Low/Medium	Be aware of participants with known insect-sting reactions where this information is available. Avoid disturbing nests or insect habitats. If someone is stung, follow first-aid procedures and seek help if symptoms suggest an allergic reaction.
Soil, compost, animal faeces, standing water or contaminated garden waste	Participants, staff and volunteers	Medium	Check and remove animal faeces, broken glass, litter and other contamination before the session. Cover cuts and abrasions. Provide gloves and encourage handwashing after gardening and before eating or drinking.
Weather exposure including sunburn, dehydration, cold, rain or wind	Participants, staff and volunteers	Medium	Check weather before the session. Encourage suitable clothing, shade, sun protection, warm layers and fluids. Bring the session indoors or shorten it if weather becomes unsuitable.
Manual handling of compost, pots, watering cans, soil bags or heavy garden items	Participants, staff and volunteers	Medium	Participants should not lift heavy items. Use smaller watering cans and lighter loads. Staff should use safe manual-handling techniques and ask for help with awkward or heavy objects.
Wandering, disorientation or leaving the safe garden area	Participants	Medium	Use an enclosed or clearly supervised garden area where possible. Keep gates closed if appropriate, maintain headcounts and ensure participants know where staff are.
Distress, frustration or loss of confidence if tasks are too difficult	Participants	Low/Medium	Offer simple, meaningful tasks such as watering, planting, sorting pots or sensory gardening. Give reassurance, allow people to stop, and focus on enjoyment rather than task completion.

Additional controls: Staff should prepare the garden before participants arrive, remove obvious hazards, choose suitable tasks and keep tools, compost, plants and water containers under supervision. Gloves should be available where needed.

Residual risk: Low/Medium when the garden is checked before use, suitable tasks are chosen and staff actively supervise participants throughout.

Supervision required: Active supervision, especially around wet surfaces, tools, plant material, soil, gates, raised beds and participants who may wander, become fatigued or put items in their mouth.

Review

Review trigger	Action
After an accident, incident or near miss	Update controls before running the activity again.
If venue, garden layout, route, participants or staffing changes	Reassess the activity and update this document.
If new equipment, tools, plants or outdoor locations are introduced	Check safety before use and add new controls where required.
Regular scheduled review	Review at least annually, or sooner if circumstances change.