


Activity Risk Assessment

Activity	Abseiling				
Address of premises	Hesley Wood Activity Centre, White Lane, Chapelton, S35 2YH				
Author of this risk assessment	Megan Hughes				
Issue Date	29/01/2024				
Review	This document is reviewed annually. We can review it sooner if needed.				
Reviewed by	Alyssa Jordan	Date	05/11/2024	Changes?	Yes, see review page
Reviewed by	Alyssa Jordan / Luke Joseph	Date	23/10/2025	Changes?	Yes, see review page
Checked by Operations Director	 Andy Moore	Date	03/11/2025		

Explanation of Risk Rating:
Risk Rating = Probability x Severity

		Probability			
		Unlikely 1	Likely 2	Certain 3	
Severity	1	Minor injury or damage	1	2	3
	2	Major injury or damage	2	4	6
	3	Severe injury or damage, Serious illness or death.	3	6	9

Rating	Actions resulting from Risk Rating
1-3	Low Risk: Carry on, ensuring controls are in place. No further controls required.
4-6	Medium Risk: Implement extra controls if practical to reduce risk to low. Monitor risk level to ensure no increase.
7-9	High Risk: Stop activity immediately. Implement further controls to reduce risk if possible. Find alternative method.

The Hesley Management Team will monitor and review the controls to reduce risk in accordance with South Yorkshire Scouts Health & Safety Policy.

The information contained within this Risk Assessment should be taken as the minimum requirement and is not to be considered exhaustive.

What is the hazard? How might people be harmed?	Risk Level (with existing control measures)			Who is at risk?	What are the control measures?
	Probability	Severity	Rating		
Normal hazards associated with climbing and abseiling (i.e. falls from height, impact with something solid).	2	2	4	All involved	<p>All abseiling sessions follow guidelines set by the Technical Advisor (TA), certified under Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and Mountain Training standards. Sessions use techniques aligned with Climbing Wall Instructor (CWI) standards or higher certifications. Instructors must complete the Hesley Wood in-house training and be assessed by an approved external assessor.</p> <p>External instructors with national climbing qualifications must present relevant documentation before leading sessions. Copies will be securely stored at Hesley Wood in compliance with GDPR.</p> <p>Helmets must be worn by all in the climbing compound whilst session are running. (exceptions may be made for turbans)</p>
Structural failure.	2	2	4	All involved	The climbing tower structure undergoes an annual inspection by a certified professional to ensure compliance with national regulatory standards. In addition, Hesley Wood staff perform pre-use safety checks before each session to verify the integrity and safety of the structure.
Equipment failure.	2	2	4	Participants	Only Hesley Wood equipment is permitted for use during sessions at Hesley Wood. All equipment undergoes regular inspections and is documented in accordance with Hesley Wood/Industry standard current inspection policy to ensure safety and compliance.
Hazards arising from the actions of 'non qualified assistants.	2	2	4	Participants	Staff responsible for leading the sessions need to delegate responsibility appropriately to competent persons whilst still overseeing general safety.

Unauthorised Climbing/abseiling – usual risks associated with climbing/abseiling.	1	2	2	Intruders	Climbing tower area is fenced off. Gate to be locked when tower is not in use. “No unauthorised entry” signs in place.
Weather: Thunderstorms, high wind, heavy rain.	1	2	2	All involved	Sessions may have to be cancelled or delayed due to thunderstorms, high winds or heavy rain, etc. where operation can become dangerous. See weather policy for more details.
Hazards arising from the actions of group members i.e. Disorderly behaviour and overcrowding causing distractions.	2	2	4	All involved	To prevent overcrowding and ensure safe supervision, maintain a maximum group size of 12 participants with 2 observers for sessions lasting up to one hour. For sessions extending to 90 minutes, group size may increase to 15 participants, provided additional observers are available to maintain effective oversight and participant safety throughout. The Group Leader needs to be present during sessions. If a group members behaviour becomes dangerous follow the Emergency Action Plan (EAP) for Disorderly Behaviour.

What is the hazard? How might people be harmed?	Risk Level (with existing control measures)			Who is at risk?	What are the control measures?
	Probability	Severity	Rating		
Leader bolts i.e. Participants grabbing hold of bolts and becoming entangled.	1	2	2	Participants	Participant to hold onto rope whilst descending. Participants told to remove fingers/let go of bolts as necessary.
Hazards on climbing Ladder.	1	2	2	All involved	Ladder to be secured to the wall by assessed instructors only. participants are belayed up the ladder. Instructor to climb ladder first and ensure participants are confident with climbing the ladder. Offer reassurance to nervous participants and prompt to next step as necessary. In cases where abseil instructor is already at top of tower, ground instructor to ensure participants are confident in climbing the ladder. If necessary, do climbing demo on ground with imaginary ladder. If instructor is working alone and participant gets stuck on ladder, another instructor must be called to assist. Instructor should assist participant as needed either by talking them through the process or by removal off the ladder as trained. Phone emergency services in cases where Hesley staff interference would cause or increase any injury.
Items falling off the tower.	1	2	2	All Involved	All items of equipment to be secured to wall fixings when not being handled by instructor.

Falling from height i.e. top of the climbing tower.	1	2	2	Participants	<p>Instructors must use the cows tails provided when working on the platform and be mindful of 'double unclipping' when moving around the platform itself. Participants must always be clipped into safety ropes if their feet leave the floor i.e. clip on safety rope for climbing then attached to cow tails at the top of the tower before removing safety rope for climbing.</p> <p>Instructors must ensure participants do not unclip themselves whilst on the top of tower without a safety rope attached.</p>
People under abseil line whilst in use.	2	2	4	All Involved	<p>Instructors to ensure clear "landing" area before abseiler descends the tower.</p> <p>Participant at risk told to move out of "landing" area. If necessary, make designated waiting area i.e. please wait behind these rocks or wait by the fence.</p> <p>Helmets to be worn.</p>
Entanglement i.e. of ropes or with Participants.	2	3	6	Participants	<p>Rope to be kept out the way to avoid entanglement i.e. abseil dead rope to be routed at high level out of way and stored in such a way that it will not tangle when released. Safety line to flaked out of the way of participant and instructor. Ropes should be flaked into separate piles.</p> <p>Entanglement with rope whilst descending, instructor to ensure ropes are not tangled before participant is clipped in and ensure rope tension is sufficient to eliminate risk of becoming ropes tangled.</p>
Entrapment / entanglement of hair or clothes.	2	2	4	Participants	<p>Ensure hair is tied back and out of the way.</p> <p>Ensure loose clothing is tucked in or where possible removed.</p> <p>Rings, Hoop earrings dangly jewellery should be removed prior to session.</p> <p>Abseil rope to be releasable.</p>

Additional hazards associated with rescues.	2	2	4	All Involved	The prescribed rescue procedures have been designed by an independent external assessor, and all climbing instructors have been assessed as competent on rescue procedures.
Normal hazards associated with climbing and abseiling (i.e. falls from height, impact with something solid) when abseiling is run by one instructor.	2	2	4	All Involved	<p>Session when abseiling is run solo: climbing instructor to be present on the ground in the climbing compound (can be running their own session).</p> <p>Sessions to be run in accordance with the guidelines set down by the technical advisor.</p> <p>Instructors have passed the Hesley Wood in-house training and then been assessed by an approved external assessor.</p> <p>Those with national climbing qualifications will need to show the relevant paperwork prior to booking or leading a session. Copies of this will then be held by the Centre in accordance with GDPR.</p> <p>Helmets to be worn by all in the climbing compound whilst sessions are running</p>

Related Risk Documents

Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for Abseil, Ropes Rescue Plans, Inspection and Replacement Policy, EAP for Overcrowding, EAP for Disorderly Behaviour, Review Log – Archery and EAP for Structural Failure.

Review Log

Reviewed by	Date of review	Reason for review	Changes made	Actions required	If actions have been completed insert date completed
Alyssa Jordan	5/11/2024	Standardise and quality control	Page numbers added to improve document navigation. Common risks that apply across roped activities are now highlighted under green heading. Session-specific risks are placed under blue heading. Language throughout document simplified for accessibility.	Re- issue RA to all instructors that are involved with abseiling	20/12/2024
Dan Mckinlay	20/12/24	Tec assessment	Re-worded some sections for clarity	Administrative only	20/12/2024
Luke Joseph / Alyssa Jordan	23/10/25	Annual review	Removal of jewellery before taking part.	Staff to be reminded.	09/11/2025

See Review Log - Abseil for previous reviews and changes

Version 2 publication date: 23/10/2025