


RISK ASSESSMENT

LOCATION/ACTIVITY/ISSUE BEING ASSESSED:	Indoor Climbing Auto Belay Sessions - Dinton Activity Centre		
SERVICE/TEAM:	Countryside Service		
NAME OF ASSESSOR(s):	Richard Ashwell		
DATE OF ASSESSMENT:	27 November 2025		
DATE FOR REVIEW:	February 2027		
APPROVED BY:	Signature:	Date: 27/02/2026	
			
	Name: Gemma Wilford		

SUMMARY (* delete as appropriate)	
Risk level without additional controls:	HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW
Additional control measures required:	YES / NO
Risk level with additional controls:	HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

What are the significant hazards?	What could go wrong? Who could be harmed and how?	What is being done to control the risks?	Amendment notes
Product Specific Risks with Book & Play Style Sessions	<p>Staff could lose concentration or not be as focussed due to the nature of the “busy” and somewhat “self-serve” style of session. Customers could be harmed by not clipping in properly or other hazards in the climbing area.</p> <p>Participants and parents of young climbers trying to connect/disconnect themselves from belay mates incorrectly.</p>	<p>Staff reminded of importance of vigilance and safety within the climbing area.</p> <p>1 wall per instructor.</p> <p>Belay mate connection system prevents release from the floor if not correctly connected to the harness.</p> <p>Participants taught to check connection and auto belay with three pull and releases.</p> <p>Instructors patrol the Activity Hall and observe to maintain safe practice of participants. Any participant</p>	

	<p>Participant encouraged to climb beyond their ability by their peer or guardian and then face emotional entrapment on the wall.</p>	<p>that is deemed unsafe to have correct technique demonstrated again. If still unsafe they will be asked to leave the Climbing Wall.</p> <p>Group management, participant briefings, management of guardianship and use of belay mates should all prevent a rescue from being required. The key element is to ensure that participants are not encouraged to climb beyond their ability and comfort zone – challenge by choice. Instructors made aware that parents and peers are the greatest risk in people climbing too high and getting stuck out of fear.</p> <p>Falling practise encouraged before ascending. – included in briefing.</p>	
<p>Product Specific Risks with Instructor Lead Sessions</p>	<p>Participants given levels of responsibility greater than their level of competence or maturity.</p> <p>Participants fail to connect/disconnect from the belay mates successfully.</p> <p>Access of non-participants into the hall causing a safeguarding issue or distraction to the group.</p>	<p>Participants will only be given additional levels of trust if they adhere to the rules and briefings. The level of trust will increase as the instructors get to know the students and learning outcomes are achieved.</p> <p>Participants will be connected and disconnected from the belay mates by the supervisors in the first instance until trust can be gained in the participants. When participants start self-connecting, instructors must be aware and cross check the climber before they leave the ground.</p> <p>Buddy check system introduced to help participants connect and self-check.</p>	

	<p>Participants caught on holds by their harness during warm up games or traversing</p> <p>Slipping off whilst traversing the wall or playing games/warmup</p> <p>Participant using a tracer line as a belay</p> <p>Participant climbing the wall up or higher than explained when traversing</p>	<p>Non-participants will not be permitted into the activity hall during times when sessions are active, unless with prior permission for a particular agreed purpose.</p> <p>Harnesses not to be worn when not needed i.e traversing activity or games on the ground.</p> <p>Instructors to explain and demonstrate maximum height for feet during traversing to participants. If lone instructor, then one side of the wall to be used at a time to maintain vigilance and line of sight. Both wall faces can be used in a structured game to 'get off' the ground.</p> <p>Additional holds added to the lower section of the wall to make the food holds for traversing easier.</p> <p>Participants not to be used for fall protection.</p> <p>Tracer lines to be tied back out of the way at the side of each wall when the wall is set up for traversing.</p> <p>Tracer lines to be removed, and auto belay connected to the belay mates and triangular wall covers when the hall is unsupervised. Use climbing key set to lock the hall if needed.</p> <p>Ensure the participants understand to not climb higher than black tapes that hold mats up.</p> <p>Participants to climb sideways not up.</p>	
<p>Staff</p>	<p>Some staff may lack experience due to the in house sign off and not following NGB qualifications.</p>	<p>NGB qualified staff must demonstrate an auto belay rescue and be inducted by a senior staff member who is signed off or qualified to already use the facility. The induction follows a set template and is signed by both the inductor and inductee upon completion. The Inductee will complete a series of</p>	

	<p>Skill fade might happen if the staff member has not run many sessions or had a significant gap in there.</p>	<p>shadow sessions and observations working alongside an existing climbing lead instructor prior to being permitted to work independently or with an assistant under them.</p> <p>Any non-NGB qualified staff will be trained and assessed for competency by a technical advisor and signed off as either an Auto Belay Supervisor or Auto Belay Supervisor and Rescuer. These assessments will be renewed annually.</p> <p>In-house signed off Belay Supervisors must only work with a Belay Supervisor and Rescuer (in-house) or NGB who has demonstrated a rescue and completed their induction and shadow process.</p> <p>Decisions around suitability of deployment of staff members will be managed by the senior team, by means of re-inducting, or providing additional shadowing or support from other stronger / higher qualified instructors as necessary.</p> <p>Session observations will be carried out by senior staff members throughout the year to assess standards of delivery.</p> <p>In-house competency assessments will be renewed annually.</p>	
<p>Participants</p>	<p>Due to the additional freedoms given to participant compared to an instructed session participants are more likely to be out of place or not adhering to rules within the climbing area.</p>	<p>Participants to be given an in depth and clear briefing before being allowed near any equipment.</p> <p>Instructors should pause safety briefings, demonstrations, and any coaching if there is an uncontrollable external factor causing a potential distraction from the messages they are trying to deliver.</p>	<p>Ideas for future enhancements:</p> <p>Pre-briefing videos created and sent out in advance to help reinforce key messages.</p> <p>Briefing video created for participants to watch</p>

	<p>The style of session may leave some user bored and therefore more prone to misbehaviour.</p> <p>This could harm participants, instructors and supervising parents.</p>	<p>Good behaviour, including listening and being receptive to the instructor is included in the briefing.</p> <p>Any noncompliance will be dealt with by the instructor. Participants given warnings then asked to sit out of the activity if it is deemed unsafe or unsuitable for them to continue.</p> <p>Belay mates reduce risk of participants not being clipped in when climbing.</p> <p>Supervising parents reminded of their responsibility for participants behaviour and safety.</p> <p>Guardianship of under 14's must be no greater than a 1:2 ratio. Supervision from within the climbing hall.</p> <p>14- to 16-year-olds must have a Guardian in the building.</p> <p>One staff member must always remain in the activity hall whilst book and play sessions are taking place and have ultimate responsibility for participant safety. In this scenario only one wall can be used at a time and an auto belay supervisor/rescuer must be nearby and within immediate contact by radio.</p> <p>Anyone not climbing must wait off the mats.</p>	<p>so staff do not deviate from the set brief.</p>
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<p>Generic equipment failure</p>	<p>Failure of structure or equipment. Incorrect use of equipment.</p> <p>Participants Staff Members of Public</p>	<p>LOLER regulations have been considered in terms of equipment inspections for items lifting or suspending people at height.</p> <p>Additional training will be completed by those inspecting the equipment to ensure knowledge and competency around inspection of PPE. This training will be delivered by a climbing technical advisor or external provider such as LION or Helix.</p> <p>PUWER regulations have been considered in terms of conducting equipment inspections. All climbing equipment will be checked bi-annually to align with our AALA requirements across the centre.</p> <p>Annual equipment services will be conducted by contracted third parties in relation to checking the structural integrity of the wall (including anchor / individual protection points), and the mechanical operation of the auto belays.</p> <p>Annual service, inspection report and certification of Tru-Blue auto belays are carried out by Enterprise.</p> <p>Equipment pre-use checks will be conducted by the instructors at a lower level, prior to each use. These checks will continue throughout the session in the form of visual cross checks.</p> <p>Any faults are logged and actioned or taken out of service accordingly.</p> <p>Only centre metal work should be used, no instructor personal kit.</p>	
<p>Harnesses</p>	<p>Not fitting correctly, coming loose or undone by participants, wear and tear.</p>	<p>Physical checks and constant visual cross checks.</p>	

	<p>Participants Staff Members of Public</p>	<p>Range of harness styles and fits available including full body harnesses for both children and adults.</p> <p>Only centre harnesses to be used for participant and auto belay supervisors</p> <p>Only harnesses with Entre-Prises Belay Mate attachment to be used to connect to auto belays</p> <p>All harnesses to be checked by someone with additional training every six months to meet LOLER regulations.</p>	
<p>Auto belay</p>	<p>Participant not attached.</p>	<p>All auto belays to be equipped with a belay mate system preventing the safety cover from being removed from any climbing route without a belay mate attachment being used (fixed on all indoor climbing harnesses).</p> <p>Participants given a full safety briefing, explaining not to climb unless attached.</p> <p>Participants will be connected and disconnected from the belay mates by the supervisors until trust is gained.</p> <p>The climbing wall assistants primary focus is ensuring all climbers are attached.</p> <p>Belay mate attachment systems provide blue triangular screens to hide the lower holds when the mats are down and to remind people not to climb. These can only be opened with an Entre-Prise Belay Mate device.</p> <p>Holds removed from the far end of the 'lake' wall where the triangular screens don't fully cover the</p>	

	<p>Emotional entrapment</p> <p>Participants Staff Members of Public</p>	<p>Hoodies tucked in or removed when using auto belays.</p> <p>Participants to remove or securely tape jewellery. Rings must be removed on children and adults will be strongly advised to remove their wedding and other rings. Risks clearly outlined including de-gloving or indeed losing a finger. Tape can be provided, but participants must be advised that this will not stop such an injury but merely reduce the potential for it to happen.</p> <p>Hair tied back; hair-ties available in from Activity Hall Cupboard.</p> <p>In the case of culturally sensitive clothing participants briefed to take extra caution and any loose clothing e.g., headscarves or hoodie ties tucked in to clothing where possible.</p> <p>Participants told from not to touch the auto belays or Y hangs at the top if they reach out for them.</p>	
<p>Falling</p>	<p>Participants failing to clip into auto belay and climbing unattached</p>	<p>Safety briefing to include the importance of being attached to the belay mates before climbing.</p> <p>Where possible Staff to visually cross check all participants throughout the session.</p> <p>Non-climbers are not permitted on the mats.</p> <p>All participants briefed not to walking under another climber.</p> <p>Staff to ensure the mats are kept clear of non-climbers and to be aware of descending climbers and alert anyone underneath as appropriate.</p> <p>Climbing wall and auto belays serviced annually by the manufacturer.</p>	

	<p>Participants / Staff / Guardians on the mats get struck by a descending participant.</p> <p>Rock wall failure, holds spinning, incorrect use of equipment, auto-belay controlled fall.</p> <p>Instructor falling when free climbing to assist a participant.</p>	<p>Allen key kept available in Activity Hall for tightening spinning hold as necessary before, during or after sessions by the instructors.</p> <p>Holds pinned with screws where appropriate.</p> <p>Daily visual checks of wall by qualified instructor before each session. Quarterly check by trained member of staff, annual by the manufacturers.</p> <p>Staff ratios, training and qualifications according to NGB guidance.</p> <p>Reduce distractions and limit the number of people who have access to the working area beneath the wall.</p> <p>Instructors' feet must not go higher than the first panel.</p>	
<p>Rescues</p>	<p>Can't get to participant.</p> <p>Participant scared to descend,</p>	<p>All routes must have another auto belay route next door to facilitate rescue procedure.</p> <p>All participants briefed to climb ¼ and descend, then ½ and descend on their first climbing before going to the top.</p> <p>All participants briefed to only climb as high as they feel comfortable to go - challenge by choice.</p> <p>Instructors to progressively increase the level of climbing activity and challenge at the pace suitable to the group.</p> <p>Encourage, talk, climb up, eye contact, walk down techniques all applied and if all else fails the participant will get tired and gravity take over.</p>	

	<p>Participant physically stuck and unable to descend.</p> <p>Participants Staff Members of Public</p>	<p>Participants advised to tie hair back, and remove loose clothing, jewellery where appropriate to prevent entrapment.</p> <p>Helmets must not to be worn due to decent risk using auto belays.</p> <p>Rescue rope rigged with captive eye carabiner and Gri-Gri, checked pre session and ready in case emergency ascent needed.</p> <p>Rescue equipment pack checked pre-session - release key, lanyard and carabiner for rescue rope.</p> <p>Rescue procedure covered in the training and assessment of instructors by the technical advisor.</p> <p>Only rescue assessed auto belay supervisors will take control of rescue situations.</p>	
<p>Impact caused by Collision</p>	<p>Participants descending the wall impacting other users.</p>	<p>Participants and guardians briefed on where to stand whilst not climbing/supervising to avoid collision from above when climbers descending.</p> <p>Participants briefed to not climb directly below another climber, and which climbs you cannot use if someone is climbing next to them.</p> <p>Climbing mats should be kept clear and only used by those climbing and the instructors. Spectators must stay off the mats, unless assisting a child to connect/disconnect from an auto belay.</p> <p>Instructors patrolling the Activity Hall to monitor participants and guardians and prevent situations occurring.</p>	

	<p>Falling objects from the Climbing Wall</p> <p>Participants Staff Guardians Other Activity Hall Users</p>	<p>Climbing holds checked regularly and tightened up as necessary to prevent holds slipping.</p> <p>Holds pinned with screws where possible.</p> <p>Routes set to go up and down and not cross over</p> <p>Participants briefed to remove all objects from their pockets before climbing.</p> <p>Instructors to have all equipment connected to harness loops via carabiners or lanyards.</p>	
<p>Slips, trips, cuts and grazes</p>	<p>Tripping over safety matting: similar colour to the flooring.</p> <p>Grazes caused whilst climbing or descending the wall.</p> <p>Participants Staff Guardians Other Activity Hall Users</p>	<p>Mats to be lowered and fastened correctly, with infill mat section removed and out of the way during a climbing session to ensure it is one flush surface.</p> <p>Participants briefed on how to walk over the safety matting and asked to be vigilant when walking around the matted area.</p> <p>Hall is fitted with spongey sports flooring for impact cushioning purposes.</p> <p>Mats prevent a layer of impact resistance for slips and trips at low level. Mats to be clipped back to wall when not in use to keep the hall floor area clear.</p> <p>No running in the climbing wall area, outside of supervise warmups.</p> <p>Participants briefed on how to descend with hands away from the wall</p>	

		Specify height limit for traverse sessions as black tapes that hold mats up.	

REVIEWS AND REVISIONS					
Review date	Name of Assessor	Is assessment still valid?	If not, list adjustments with details of who will action and by when	Approved by Manager	Date of next review
March 2023	Isabel R.S.	Yes	Corrected the reference to COP's and amend spelling mistakes. Update 1 st section on connection systems.	Richard Ashwell	March 2024
Dec 2023	Mike Bennett	Yes	Removed: Easy holds not used at the top of the wall, to make it more difficult for participants to 'hang on' up there. Updated inspection logging of checks. Updated wall setup – routes up and down not crossing over. Routes set in pairs so auto belay access is available on the neighbouring route to enable rescues to be performed. Updated staff members in the hall to match COPS.	Richard Ashwell	March 2025
Dec 2024	Mike Bennett	Yes	No Significant Changes	Mike Bennett	Dec 2025
Nov 2025	Richard Ashwell	Yes	Changed "daily pre-use" checks to pre-use checks as the wall isn't in use daily.	Richard Ashwell	Feb 2026