Hill Ascents Ltd

Adult Safeguarding Policy

Date: 15/11/2026

Review Date: 15/11/2027

1. Policy Statement

Hill Ascents Ltd is committed to ensuring the safety, dignity, and well-being of all adults who participate in our activities. We believe that everyone has the right to live free from abuse, harm, and neglect. This policy outlines our commitment to preventing abuse, responding effectively to any concerns, and promoting a culture of respect and empowerment in accordance with the Care Act 2014, the Mental Capacity Act 2005, and the Data Protection Act 2018 (UK GDPR).

2. Scope

This policy applies to all staff, instructors, volunteers, contractors, directors, and trustees of Hill Ascents Ltd. It covers all our activities, both on-site and off-site, including climbing sessions, high ropes courses, outdoor instruction, training sessions, events, and administrative duties.

3. Definitions

- **Adult at Risk:** Under Section 42 of the Care Act 2014, an adult at risk is anyone aged 18 or over who has needs for care and support (whether or not the local authority is meeting any of those needs), is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse or neglect, and as a result of those care and support needs is unable to protect themselves from either the risk of or the experience of abuse or neglect.
- **Mental Capacity:** Under the Mental Capacity Act 2005, we assume every adult has the capacity to make their own decisions unless it is established otherwise. Where an adult lacks capacity to make a specific decision, any action taken on their behalf must be in their best interests.
- **Abuse and Neglect:** This includes a wide range of harm, such as:
    - **Physical abuse:** e.g., hitting, slapping, pushing, rough handling, or inappropriate restraint.
    - **Domestic abuse:** e.g., controlling, coercive, or threatening behaviour, psychological, physical, sexual, financial, or emotional violence or abuse between intimate partners or family members (including honour-based abuse).

- **Sexual abuse:** e.g., sexual assault, rape, inappropriate touching, sexual harassment, or non-consensual sexual acts.
- **Psychological/Emotional abuse:** e.g., intimidation, threats, humiliation, verbal abuse, cyberbullying, isolation, or harassment.
- **Financial or material abuse:** e.g., theft, fraud, coercion in relation to financial affairs, exploitation, or misuse of a person's money, possessions, or property.
- **Modern slavery:** e.g., human trafficking, forced labour, domestic servitude, and criminal exploitation.
- **Discriminatory abuse:** e.g., unequal treatment, harassment, or slurs based on age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage/civil partnership, pregnancy/maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.
- **Organisational abuse:** e.g., neglect and poor care practice within an institution or specific care setting, or in relation to care provided in one's own home.
- **Neglect and acts of omission:** e.g., ignoring medical, emotional, or physical care needs, or failing to provide access to appropriate health, care, or support services.
- **Self-neglect:** e.g., an individual neglecting to care for their personal hygiene, health, or surroundings, including hoarding.

4. Guiding Principles

This policy is based on the six statutory principles of adult safeguarding as outlined in the Care Act 2014, alongside Making Safeguarding Personal (MSP):

- **Empowerment:** People are supported and encouraged to make their own decisions and give informed consent.
- **Prevention:** Proactive measures are taken to prevent harm before it occurs.
- **Proportionality:** The least intrusive response is used, proportionate to the risk presented.
- **Protection:** Support and representation are provided to those in greatest need.
- **Partnership:** Local solutions are created through services and communities working together.
- **Accountability:** Everyone involved in safeguarding is transparent and accountable.

5. Safer Recruitment and Vetting

Hill Ascents Ltd is committed to safer recruitment to prevent unsuitable individuals from working with adults at risk. All staff, instructors, and volunteers in relevant roles undergo:

- A formal application, identity check, and right-to-work verification.
- At least two satisfactory references and verification of relevant outdoor/climbing qualifications.
- An appropriate Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check (including an Enhanced DBS check with Adult Barred List check where eligible for regulated activity).

6. Roles and Responsibilities

- **Directors / Trustees:** The Directors / Board of Trustees hold ultimate governance responsibility for ensuring the implementation, resourcing, and effectiveness of this policy.
- **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL):** Graeme Hill — hillascents@hotmail.co.uk | 07939502991. The DSL is responsible for:
    - Acting as the first point of contact for all adult safeguarding concerns and disclosures.
    - Providing advice, guidance, and support to staff, instructors, and volunteers.
    - Liaising with external statutory agencies, including the Local Authority Adult Social Care Safeguarding Team, the Police, and the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) where required.
    - Keeping secure, confidential, and accurate records of all concerns, decisions, and actions taken.
    - Ensuring this policy is reviewed annually and updated in line with current legislation.
- **All Staff, Instructors, and Volunteers:** Everyone working with Hill Ascents Ltd has a duty to:
    - Read, understand, and adhere to this policy and our Code of Conduct.
    - Be alert to the signs and indicators of abuse, exploitation, and neglect.
    - Report any safeguarding concerns or allegations promptly to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.
    - Attend mandatory safeguarding induction and refresher training.

7. Procedures for Reporting a Concern

If you have a concern that an adult may be at risk of abuse or neglect, you must:

1. **In an emergency situation:** Where an adult is in immediate danger or requires urgent medical attention, call the emergency services on 999 immediately before notifying the DSL.
2. **Do not delay:** Report the concern to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) on the same day, in person or by phone.
3. **Do not investigate:** Do not investigate the concern yourself or confront an alleged perpetrator. Your role is to listen, record, and report.
4. **Listen carefully:** Allow the person to speak at their own pace without interruption, if they wish to disclose.
5. **Do not make promises of confidentiality:** Explain clearly that you cannot keep the information a secret, and that it will only be shared with the DSL and relevant professionals who need to know to keep them safe.
6. **Do not ask leading questions:** Use open-ended, non-leading questions such as, "Can you tell me more about what happened?"
7. **Respect wishes and consent:** Where safe and appropriate, seek the adult's views and consent regarding how they wish to be supported, noting that consent may be overridden if others are at risk, a serious crime has occurred, or the adult lacks mental capacity.

8. **Record the information:** Complete a Safeguarding Incident Report Form (available from the DSL or in the Hill Ascents Ltd Operations Folder) within 24 hours. Include:
    - The date, time, and location of the incident or disclosure.
    - A factual account of what was observed or said, using the adult's exact words where possible.
    - The names and contact details of all people involved and any witnesses.
    - Your name, role, signature, and the date/time the record was made.
9. **The DSL will take action:** Based on the information provided, the DSL will assess the risk and make an urgent referral to the relevant Local Authority Adult Social Care Safeguarding Team and/or the Police where appropriate.

8. Allegations Against Staff or Volunteers

Any concern or allegation that a member of staff, instructor, or volunteer has abused, neglected, or acted inappropriately towards an adult at risk must be reported immediately to the DSL (or directly to a fellow Director/Trustee and the Local Authority Adult Safeguarding Team if the allegation concerns the DSL). Hill Ascents Ltd will cooperate fully with any statutory investigation and make a statutory referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) if an individual is removed from regulated activity due to harm or risk of harm.

9. Confidentiality, Record Keeping, and Information Sharing

All safeguarding records will be stored securely (password-protected/locked) with access restricted strictly to the DSL, in compliance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR. Information regarding a safeguarding concern will only be shared on a strict "need-to-know" basis. The safety and well-being of the adult at risk is our primary concern, and UK GDPR does not prevent the sharing of personal information where necessary to protect an adult from abuse or neglect.

10. Whistleblowing

Hill Ascents Ltd encourages an open culture where everyone feels safe to raise concerns about poor practice, unsafe behaviour, or potential abuse. Staff and volunteers may report concerns directly to the DSL, a Director/Trustee, or externally to the Local Authority Adult Social Care Team, the Police, or the NSPCC / Protect whistleblowing advice line without fear of victimisation.

11. Training

All staff, instructors, and volunteers must complete mandatory adult safeguarding training upon joining Hill Ascents Ltd and undertake formal refresher training at least every two years (with annual policy updates).

12. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the DSL and Directors / Board of Trustees, or sooner if there are changes in UK legislation, statutory guidance, or organisational operations.

Signed:

Graeme Hill (Designated Safeguarding Lead) — 15/11/2026