Safeguarding Appendix: Junior Participation in Defensive Penalty Corners

1. Purpose

This appendix sets out the Club's safeguarding expectations for junior (16-18 year old) players participating in league level (including senior friendly / mixed games) defensive penalty corners (PCs). It supports England Hockey's Safeguarding and Safe Delivery of Hockey guidance and ensures junior involvement is safe, appropriate, and risk-assessed.

2. Understanding the Risks

Penalty corners involve high-speed shots and drag-flicks. While protective equipment significantly reduces risk, parents should be aware that:

- PC defence is one of the higher-risk elements of hockey.
- Confidence and technique matter as much as physical protection.

If you have concerns, your child is not comfortable defending penalty corners, you do not wish for them to be considered, or your child has injuries, medical conditions, or confidence issues that may affect participation, please speak to the team coach, captain or the Club Welfare Officer. Open communication will keep our juniors safe.

3. Club Requirements for Junior Participation

Before juniors are selected to defend penalty corners, they must have:

- been coached in defensive roles, running lines and safe technique.
- understand the risks posed by drag-flicks and powerful hits.
- demonstrate confidence and readiness in training.

Junior safety and wellbeing are paramount. Juniors may take on any defensive role but the Club will not assign inexperienced juniors to high-risk roles such as first runner unless they are sufficiently experienced, confident and physically capable as determined by the coaching team.

All juniors must wear a properly fitted face mask and mouthguard, with gloves, knee protection and groin or torso protection worn at the individual's discretion. Parents/Guardians should ensure their child has the necessary equipment and are responsible for its upkeep. For advice on suitable equipment, the coaching team can help.

4. Supporting Your Child

Parents can support safe participation by encouraging juniors to speak up if they feel unsure or unsafe, reinforcing that opting out is always acceptable, helping them understand how to use and care for protective equipment, and raising any concerns with coaches or captains at an early stage.

5. Roles & Responsibilities

Coaches	**Captains**
• Deliver safe, progressive coaching. • Assess junior readiness. • Allocate roles appropriately. • Ensure protective equipment is worn. • Support juniors who opt out.	• Communicate expectations to parents. • Report concerns to the Welfare Officer.
Parents	**Club Welfare Officer**
• Provide and maintain protective equipment. • Communicate concerns or preferences. • Support juniors in making safe decisions.	• Oversee safeguarding compliance. • Provide guidance to coaches and parents. • Review concerns and update policy annually.

6. Defensive Penalty Corners (Under 16s)

Players under the age of 16 will not be selected or required to participate in defensive penalty corner roles during adult hockey matches. However, as part of age-appropriate player development, junior training sessions, festivals and matches involving players of a similar age and ability may provide opportunities to learn, practise and experience defensive penalty corner positions. Such activities will be delivered in a controlled environment, with appropriate coaching, supervision, protective equipment and risk management measures in place, ensuring that players can develop the necessary skills and understanding in a safe and progressive manner.

7. Review

This appendix will be reviewed in line with England Hockey updates to its safeguarding guidance.