OLD LOUGHTONIANS HOCKEY CLUB LIMITED (the "**Club**")

Policy relating to Colts training and playing in adult teams

The Club is committed to developing players from whichever age they join the Club to whenever they decide to hang up their boots.

The Club has a thriving Mini section for players under 12, a strong Colt section for those under 18 and thriving men's and ladies sections.

The England Hockey rules provide that any player under the age of 13 (15 for the National League) cannot participate in adult hockey leagues until they reach their 13th birthday. The age limit was increased from 12 to 13 in 2007 and reviewed in 2011.

Any 12 year old (who is too old to play Mini hockey) who will play under 14 Colt age group hockey cannot therefore participate in an adult league team until his or her 13th birthday.

The club has several adult teams which include a good number of colts players including the Willows mens teams which contain parents coming into or "Back to Hockey" who would like to play with their sons. Ladies sides may also contain mothers and daughters. These sides are designed to develop younger players and prepare them for adult hockey. Many 13 year old girls and boys have represented the Club in adult leagues.

Any 12 year old cannot represent these sides in a league but there is dispensation for friendlies. The England Hockey guidance provides that:

…"this restriction is not intended to apply to the practice of mixing junior and adult players in formalised matches where these are specifically organised to ensure that the primary purpose is the development of the junior players. ….. However, due consideration should be given, on an individual basis, to the inclusion of junior players in such matches to ensure that it is appropriate to do so. Factors considered might include physical and psychological maturity, age, playing ability and social skills".

The Club wishes to give sufficiently mature Colts the opportunity to practice with adults in anticipation of playing in adult leagues and friendly matches designed specifically to develop those Colts will help prepare 12 and 13 year olds for participation when they eventually play adult hockey.

This policy sets out the basis on which the Club will allow anyone nearing their 13th birthday to participate in appropriate adult friendly training or friendly matches.

Any parent whose son or daughter would like to play in an adult league at 13 or in permissible matches aged 12 should as a first step speak to the age group (normally under 14) coach or manager to make sure playing at that level at this stage is the right thing for the child's development.

Parents should also watch some adult matches at the level that their child will play. Some of the opposition players in the lower leagues are not as skilled and controlled as those playing at a good level and games can be very physical.

It is essential that parents and Colts are aware of the different aspects of hockey to which players will be exposed when playing against bigger and stronger (but not necessarily better) players.

The Club Terms of Membership include this declaration regarding membership.

**"DECLARATION:**

I recognise that hockey can be a dangerous sport. Whilst the club has public liability and other insurances I acknowledge that I am primarily responsible for my own welfare and that of my children and guests and am aware of the risks of playing sport or of my children playing and watching sport. If there is any emergency (whether through accident, illness or otherwise) then I wish you to take all such reasonable steps as you think necessary or appropriate to deal with my (or my child's) illness or accident. I expressly give consent to the club's coach, physiotherapist, welfare officer, nurse, first aid officer or other club officer to take such action as they, in their objective opinion believe to be best at the time to protect, heal and save me or my child.

I acknowledge that it is my responsibility to ensure that I and my children are playing with the correct equipment and it is not the responsibility of the club to provide me or my children with any such equipment.

I have read the club's code of conduct and agree to follow it."

Any parent (which for these purposes includes a guardian) whose child wishes to play in a permissible match aged 12 will be asked to reaffirm that declaration by way of consent for the child to play in the following terms:.

"As you know, xxx will not be eligible to play in league matches until his/her thirteenth birthday.   However, I understand that England Hockey will permit participation in preparatory matches for adult league matches provided that a range of factors have been considered.   I have discussed these with xxxxxxxxxxxx and can now confirm that I believe that xxxxxx has the physical and psychological maturity, playing ability and social skills to be able to take part in the proposed preparatory match against xxxxxxxxxxxxx..  I confirm that I have reread the declaration on the Club's terms of membership and that I agree to it. I confirm that I will bring xxxxx to the match, remain throughout and take him/her home afterwards."

The parent must be at the match throughout and will be responsible for taking the child to and bringing the child home from the match.

The Club's safeguarding policy will apply (as always) generally in connection with all aspects of the player's involvement in hockey at the Club.

The England Hockey website is a good source of additional information about safeguarding and protecting young players.