

25 January 2007

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **ROOTING OUT CHILD ABUSE NEEDS THE SUPPORT OF LOCAL AND FAITH COMMUNITIES, SAYS CCPAS**

**:"Engaging with the community essential in gathering evidence for prosecutions"**

Rooting out child abuse needs the support of local and faith communities if it is to be successful. That is the keynote message of the Churches' Child Protection Advisory Services (CCPAS) today, when it was learned that a pastor being investigated for child abuse will not face charges due to lack of evidence.

David Pearson, Executive Director of CCPAS commented: "The sensationalist publicity surrounding this case is unfortunately going to have precisely the opposite effect of what it intends. The vast majority of African churches are successfully addressing child protection issues. But media coverage, which tells only part of the story and which appears to make all African churches guilty by association, will if we are not careful lead to still further alienation.

"Having said that, beliefs which are harmful to children need to be challenged, and where children are being abused emotionally or in any other way, action needs to be taken – including prosecution if there is sufficient evidence against an individual. But evidence will be far easier to obtain if there is better engagement between the community and the statutory authorities.

"Any action which alienates those churches or groups will only serve to drive abuse underground, making it all the more likely that the perpetrators will avoid prosecution and punishment."

Former Metropolitan Police Detective Inspector Bob Pull, who was operational lead on Project Violet, and who is now Communities Consultant for CCPAS, commented: “It is extremely difficult to detect, gather intelligence and obtain successful prosecutions if communities do not engage with statutory authorities.

“With the help of communities, atrocities such as the ‘Child B’ case can and will be prevented. This makes costly and sometimes ineffective investigations unnecessary and ultimately reduces the abuse of children in a faith-based context. Members of the newly-formed Congolese Pastorship, whose members actively encourage child safeguarding policies and procedures, are doing just that already. It is a shining example of how a faith community can take the initiative to help church leaders and workers create an environment of proper accountability”.

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#### NOTES TO EDITORS:

The Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service (CCPAS) is an independent Christian charity providing professional child protection advice, support and training to churches, faith and other organisations throughout the UK and beyond.

Every week it is involved with:

- 30 churches/faith organisations helped in developing child protection policies
- 830 children’s workers and leaders trained
- 500 contact helpline (24 hours) or email for advice
- 300 criminal records checks carried out for churches and faith groups

For more information, please see [www.ccpas.co.uk](http://www.ccpas.co.uk)