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PRESS RELEASE

CCPAS URGES CHURCHES ACROSS UK TO TAKE PART IN *THINKUKNOW* – NEW EUROPEAN CAMPAIGN TO PROMOTE CHILD SAFETY ON THE INTERNET

Leading child protection agency welcomes report but raises serious questions on
implementation

The Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service (CCPAS) today urged churches, youth groups, ministers, youth workers and parents across the UK to promote Safer Internet Day through taking part in *ThinkuKnow* on 6 February.

The *Thinkuknow* education programme has been developed by the Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) Centre, which is affiliated to the government's Serious Organised Crime Agency (SOCA). The interactive presentation shows young people how to stay in control and how to report any concerns they may have about someone they are talking to online.

As part of Safer Internet Week, the presentation will be delivered in secondary schools throughout the UK by staff from the CEOP Centre, trained teachers and police schools liaison officers.

The new initiative comes at a time when the computer industry is under growing pressure from its consumers to improve safety as children spend an increasing amount of their spare time online. Speaking last week at the world's largest hi-tech conference, the Consumer Electronics Show, Bill Gates told delegates: "connected experiences" were now the most important part of new technologies. "Young people spend more time with their Windows PC than watching TV."

CCPAS has produced a guide for parents about internet safety. Entitled *Help. I Want my Child to Stay Safe on the Net*. Specifically covering children and young people, it contains important Internet safety do's and don'ts, including the importance of not divulging personal information, chat rooms, conduct on the Internet and what to do if someone writes anything that is threatening or worrying. Schools, youth clubs and a police force are already using these guides in quantity. They have also produced pocket guides for young people 'stay safe on the net'.

CCPAS spokesperson on Internet Safety Simon Bass commented: "We welcome this new initiative. Internet based child abuse is a serious and growing problem, and children from church backgrounds are by no means immune from this type of exploitation. That is why we are giving *ThinkuKnow* our wholehearted backing.

"We therefore urge every church and faith group – especially parents and those responsible for any kind of childrens' ministry – to sign up so the children in their care are protected when they go online."

Top tips for staying safe are highlighted at www.thinkuknow.co.uk. They include the following:

- Don't give out personal details online. This includes Messenger id, email addresses, mobile numbers and pictures.
- It's better to keep online mates online. Never meet up with strangers without taking a trusted adult.
- Remember that any pictures or videos published online can be changed or shared
- Some people lie online – not everyone is who they say they are
- It's never too late to tell someone if something makes you feel uncomfortable.
- There are people who can help. Report online child sex abuse at www.thinkuknow.co.uk

Ends

Useful facts and figures:

- 75% of children and young people aged between 9-19 years have internet access at home
- According to the OfCom Communications Market Report 2006, 70% of young people aged between 16 and 24 are using new online social networking sites to make friends, share information and have fun

