

PRESS RELEASE

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CHURCHES GREATLY REASSURED BY GOVERNMENT'S NEW ISA/VBS ROADSHOWS, SAYS CCPAS

Government seizes opportunity to get feedback from churches

The Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service (CCPAS), one of the UK's leading experts in advising and training Christian and secular organisations in safeguarding children and vulnerable adults, said today that the Government's new roadshows, outlining the new Independent Safeguarding Authority Vetting and Barring Scheme (VBS), are already significantly reassuring churches about the scope of the new requirements. Many church ministers and children's workers, worried at some of the media coverage surrounding the introduction of the VBS, have positively welcomed the new procedures.

CCPAS spoke out after Home Office and Department of Children's Schools and Families staff this week started giving presentations about the VBS immediately after some of CCPAS's 'Facing the Unthinkable' child protection awareness training events. They are proving especially valuable to leaders of churches and organisations, who are also pleased to be able to offer feedback on the practical arrangements for VBS and on proposed government guidance for faith organisations relating to the scheme.

The roadshows are proving very popular. Presentations are being conducted at St Pauls Cathedral in London and local churches and halls across the country over the next eight months, from Plymouth to Cumbria, from Whitstable to Hull. The roadshows are expected to be rolled out across the rest of England, Wales and Northern Ireland soon after that.

The VBS has been established under the provisions in the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006, which in turn had its roots in the Richard Inquiry Report (2004) into the Soham murders of Holly Wells and Jessica Chapman in August 2002.

David Pearson, Chief Executive of CCPAS, who has 40 years' experience in child protection: said: "Like it or not, ISA is happening. Churches need to understand that these new legal requirements will, from this October, affect every organisation in the country that works with children and vulnerable adults or has responsibility for them".

Welcoming the introduction of the first phase of the Government's new ISA Vetting and Barring Scheme (VBS) David Pearson said: "We are convinced this new scheme represents a major step forward in the protection of children and vulnerable adults, for three key reasons:

1. "Many churches and voluntary organisations have been pressing us for some time for the ability to request criminal record checks on individuals working with vulnerable adults as has been possible for many years in relation to children's workers. Until now, only health and social services were able to make such checks. This creates a level playing field, which will help ensure the safe recruitment of those working as paid or volunteer workers with this group.
2. "In our view it is essential that *detailed* consideration should be given by an independent body to those potential and existing workers who are considered to pose a possible risk to children and vulnerable adults. The new central barred list will help significantly and we think it is entirely appropriate that, from now on, it will be mandatory for people raising safeguarding concerns in employment to be reported to the ISA – even if they do not have a formal conviction or caution. This body has the potential to provide the support needed by employing organisations in reaching measured decisions in appointments which safeguard the vulnerable but do not unfairly discriminate against people who may have offended.
3. "We are also pleased that 'standard' CRB checks will no longer be permitted in respect of those working with the vulnerable and a full 'enhanced' disclosure will be the order of the day. The key benefit of this type of disclosure is that it relies not only on 'hard' information in relation to cautions and convictions but

allows for other 'soft' police information to be considered. CCPAS are aware of the importance of this from the 30,000 checks we process annually for churches and other faith and non-faith organisations. As a result of enhanced checks we are aware of many people who have been declined work with children because of serious concerns raised which would not have been evident through a 'standard' CRB check. We have long campaigned for this ban on 'standard' checks and, as far as we are concerned, the 12th October has not come soon enough.

David Pearson concluded: "I am delighted there is such massive demand for these roadshows, as it shows that churches are taking their responsibilities in this key area seriously. It also demonstrates that they are determined to keep abreast of the legal changes that are essential if the children in our care are to be kept as safe as possible. In fact, the response has been so overwhelming that we have had to draft in additional staff to cope with all the bookings!"

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VBS roadshows, in conjunction with CCPAS, have been arranged for:

3 October	Whitstable
10 October	Bracknell
13 October	St Paul's Cathedral – Full
24 October	Towcester
17 November	St Paul's Cathedral – Full
21 November	Great Barton, Suffolk
28 November	Poole
5 December	St Paul's Cathedral
12 December	ditto
27 February	Ashingdon, Essex
13 March	Swanley, Kent
20 March	Hull
24 March	Bradford
8 May	Plymouth
15 May	Newcastle/Sunderland area
22 May	Southampton
19 June	Beeston, Nottingham
26 June	Carlisle, Cumbria

The charge for the ISA roadshow is £6 per person and tickets must be booked in advance. For more information or to make a booking, call CCPAS on 0845 120 4550 or visit: www.ccpas.co.uk/TrainingISA

NOTES TO EDITORS:

CCPAS is an independent Christian charity providing professional child protection advice and support across church denominations and organisations throughout the UK.

CCPAS was established in 1977. It assists churches, organisations, social services and other child care agencies as well as individual children and families by:

- helping churches and other organisations adopt safe practice in order to protect children from abuse – and youth workers from the possibility of false allegations
- advising on individual cases, giving ongoing help to leaders and others.
- training across the UK and providing “in-house” training and other resources
- acting as external consultants to denominational/organisational child protection advisors
- counselling individual adults or children about past or present abuse.

For more information, please see www.ccpas.co.uk