

## **PRESS RELEASE**

15 September 2011

### **SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN IN BLACK MAJORITY CHURCHES: CCPAS TO HONOUR MEMBERS OF COMMUNITIES, POLICE, SOCIAL SERVICES and CHARITIES**

The Churches Child Protection Advisory Service (CCPAS) today unveiled the first-ever Community Champion Awards. The awards recognise and honour the huge strides made by many African and Caribbean churches over the past few years to enhance child safeguarding in their communities.

The awards will be made in four key categories –

- Community Champion Award - For community champions who are honorary members of CCPAS
- Community Ambassador - For supporting CCPAS to host and arrange child safeguarding training in the community
- Community Service - For members of statutory services such as police and social services who have supported CCPAS in this initiative
- Community Partnership - For individuals in charities that work alongside CCPAS to safeguard children

The award ceremony will take place at the Resource Centre, Holloway Road, London N7 on Saturday 15 October, starting at 10am.

It is supported by Trust for London, which has funded CCPAS, AFRUCA (Africans United against Child Abuse) Victoria Climbié Foundation and the Congolese Family Centre in a major preventative project helping them to tackle child abuse.

A report about this project, *Safeguarding Children's Rights: Exploring Issues of Witchcraft and Spirit Possession in London's African Communities*, was published recently. This is the most extensive preventative project to date helping tackle child abuse linked to beliefs in spirit possession and witchcraft.

For the full report, see:

<http://www.trustforlondon.org.uk/media-centre/news/launch-of-safeguarding-childrens-rights-report.html>

One of the key findings of the *Safeguarding Children's Rights* report is that, although beliefs in witchcraft and spirit possession are widespread in African (and other) communities, the incidence of abuse appears to be low.

The report also states

*"CCPAS developed and expanded its child protection support and training for African majority churches in London. It trained over 3,000 church leaders, children's workers and carers in UK law and best practice on child development and safeguarding. Evidence from participants suggests that this contributed to target faith groups adopting and implementing child protection policies, good practice guidelines and demonstrating an increased awareness of child development issues".*

As many as 500 African majority churches have now received child safeguarding training in the UK from CCPAS.

Next year, CCPAS hopes to build upon the success of the Community Champion awards by launching an annual set of safeguarding awards, as part of 'Safeguarding Sunday'. This will provide resources for churches to promote and champion of children and other vulnerable people.

Bob Pull of CCPAS commented: "Church organisations have a critical role in many African and African Caribbean communities, and their leaders and workers have a pivotal role in developing children's rights within them. Just like churches from the wider white community, the majority offer valuable help and support. Sadly, however, some have let their congregations and communities down by failing to provide adequate safeguards in

respect of children and vulnerable adults. This has sometimes resulted in children being harmed.

“Together with key members of the Black Christian Communities, frontline workers from children services, police and partner charities, we have risen to this challenge by placing safeguarding centre stage in churches and provided a comprehensive training and long term support programme for literally thousands of people. Given the significant progress in this area, it is a privilege to honour those individuals and groups who are contributing so much in this essential area.”

Simon Bass, CEO of CCPAS commented: “We are delighted that so many African churches have so enthusiastically embraced the need for proper safeguarding. However, complacency is the deadly enemy of effective child protection. We will not rest, therefore, until we are confident that children from every background and culture are as safe as they possibly can be in every church and place of worship throughout the country”.

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#### 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](http://www.ccpas.co.uk)