

PRESS RELEASE

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**CCPAS URGES CHURCHES TO COMPLETE SIMPLE INTERNET SAFETY
AUDIT AS PART OF SAFER INTERNET DAY 2012**

CCPAS (the Churches Child Protection Advisory Service), one of the UK's leading experts in advising and training Christian and secular organisations in child protection practices, today called upon churches across the UK to complete a simple Internet safety audit as part of *Safer Internet Day* on 7 February 2012.

The simple audit comprises three key questions and aims to encourage churches to take internet safety more seriously:

- Does your church have a policy about workers communicating with children via social media, emails and texts?
- Does your anti-bullying policy (if you have one) include cyber bullying?
- Is e-safety covered in your child protection policy?

Simon Bass, CEO of CCPAS said: "Every day we get calls to our helpline expressing concerns about the safeguarding threats posed to our children by the Internet. It is a growing trend, too – we have seen a significant rise over the past couple of years. That is why this audit is so important. And if the answer to any of the three questions is no, we urge churches to address these issues immediately".

The theme of this year's Safer Internet Day is *Connecting Generations*, and CCPAS is inviting churches throughout the UK to get involved by hosting their own local parents (or grandparents) event, where the generations can share their expertise and learn from each other how best to stay safe on the web.

Simon Bass added: “Most churches now have child protection policies but do they address e-safety? If not, we hope these three questions will act as the catalyst that will spur them on to do so immediately. Children today live their lives online and much of their communication takes place through social media. It is clear therefore that churches cannot afford to ignore this any longer, which is why *Safer Internet Day* is such a great opportunity to improve safeguarding here, too.

“We fully support Safer Internet Day because it recognises that online safety is everyone’s business. This is especially important because many churches cater for every age group, so their members range from nine months to 99. We believe that connecting the generations in this innovative way will combine young people’s technical expertise with the wisdom adults have gained from life experience. The upshot should be a better appreciation and implementation of e-safety all round”.

CCPAS is a partner agency of the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) and is a member of the UK Council for Child Internet Safety (UKCCIS).

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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

The Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) is the UK's national centre dedicated to protecting children from harm both online and offline. CEOP – www.ceop.police.uk [The CEOP Centre is affiliated to the Serious Organised Crime Agency (SOCA)].