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PRESS RELEASE

CCPAS THROWS WEIGHT BEHIND CEOP'S NEW CRACKDOWN ON CHILD SEX ABUSE

CCPAS agrees to partner CEOP to promote new online safety campaign in churches

The Churches Child Protection Advisory Service (CCPAS) has thrown its weight behind the Child Exploitation & Online Protection Centre's (CEOP's) new approach to tackling child sex abuse online. CEOP is affiliated to the government's Serious Organised Crime Agency (SOCA) and CCPAS – now a partner organisation of CEOP – will help promote the new initiative to churches, places of worship and faith based organisations across the UK.

Vernon Coaker, the government minister responsible for this area of criminality, attended the launch of the new "have fun, stay in control, know how to report" education campaign that will now be going into schools, foster homes and other youth environments (including churches).

David Pearson, Executive Director of CCPAS, said: "We fully support the aims and objectives of CEOP of „making every child matter...everywhere in ensuring that children and young people are safeguarded whenever they are online or using modern technologies.

"We are pleased to work in partnership with the CEOP Centre as the best way of protecting children is to provide what is effectively a „virtual police service as a vital new tool in the battle against child sex abuse."

The programme – called „ThinkuKnow – focuses on online safety and is the first programme that has been designed by combination of police, child protection specialists (including CCPAS), industry and children themselves. A key feature is that it empowers children to themselves fight against abuse by offering a dedicated online reporting mechanism, whereby inappropriate online contact may be reported to the CEOP at www.thinkuknow.net.

This means children of all ages are just a few clicks from contacting the CEOP, who will investigate, arrest and ultimately call any offenders to account. The programme will be delivered to schools, churches and elsewhere by over 1000 police officers, teachers and child protection teams including members of CCPAS. The CCPAS website has the CEOP branded „report abuse icon on its website which links directly to CEOP.

It is expected that, as a result of these initiatives, around 1 million children will have attended specially prepared safety first sessions by March 2007.

Places of worship outside of schools are the largest providers of children and youth work and it is CCPAS mission to safeguard children in these places. Our „stay safe on the net cards have already proved very popular with children and we are producing other resources – a series of „Help booklets on internet safety for parents, young people and youth workers – to build on that initiative.

Simon Bass, CCPAS spokesperson on internet safety, commented: “Places of worship need to address the issue of safeguarding young people when they use the internet. We are pleased that it is now recognised that most abuse happens either in a child s own home or that of the abuser, and we are working hard to educate people about all aspects of „stranger danger . We believe churches and church youth groups have a major role to play here.

“Sadly not everyone in cyber space is who they appear to be. The CEOP educational material will help young people stay safe online, and as a partner in that work CCPAS encourages all places of worship to use this material in their various young peoples groups. We want to equip young people to stay safe every second they are online”.

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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

The publication „Safe and Secure is available on the CCPAS website www.ccpas.co.uk