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For Immediate Release

Home Office “forgot the vulnerable”

The Home Office has been criticised for “forgetting the vulnerable” by a coalition of anti-abuse charities in the wake of the inquiry into the handling of European convictions of UK citizens.

“It seems that for fifteen years no one at the Home Office thought information on crimes committed by UK citizens overseas might have implications for public safety” noted Richard Curen, Director of Respond. “Yet information on criminal convictions is vital for protecting the most vulnerable members of society. I am surprised that this doesn’t seem to have occurred to anyone in the Home Office before 2006.”

“To prevent potentially dangerous people working with children, older people and people with disabilities, you need comprehensive information on convictions” explained Deborah Kitson, Director of the Ann Craft Trust. “Without that, Criminal Records Bureau checks are unlikely to stop convicted criminals from targeting vulnerable people for abuse or exploitation. However, I am pleased that action is being taken to close this loophole and I welcome the report.”

The report of the inquiry by Dusty Amroliwala OBE found:

“...no evidence that, prior to 2006, any official sought to assess the accumulated records in terms of the risk to public protection. The first evidence that the data was being assessed in terms of the risk to public safety came in the autumn of 2006.

... It is highly unlikely that this absence of risk management was owed completely to a misunderstanding of the true significance of the data. But even if this were the case, it might reasonably have been expected that a senior official in the Home Office at some point in the fifteen year history of the notifications might have undertaken to commission a risk assessment of the material.”

“The Home Office effectively forgot the vulnerable” said Kathryn Stone, Chief Executive of VOICE UK. “Things were not thought through to their logical conclusion – that this information can be used to protect the public from criminals. Public safety should always be at the forefront of civil servants’ minds, yet civil servants seem to have been blinkered for too long in this case.”

Note to Editors

1. VOICE UK supports people with learning disabilities and other vulnerable groups who have experienced crime or abuse. We also support their families, carers and professional workers. For further information visit www.voiceuk.org.uk.
2. The Ann Craft Trust works with staff in the statutory, independent and voluntary sectors to protect people with learning disabilities who may be at risk from abuse. We also provide advice and information to parents

and carers who may have concerns about someone they are supporting. For further information visit www.anncrafttrust.org.

3. Respond offers a range of services which provide emotional and psychological support to victims and perpetrators of abuse who have learning disabilities. It also provides training and support to professionals and carers working with them. For further information visit www.respond.org.uk.
4. Interviews available upon request.

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