



## children's charities' coalition on internet safety

### Immediate release

## New EU rules set to increase internet crime

The UK's major children's charities have called upon Chancellor George Osborne to oppose EU plans to raise the monetary limits of prepaid credit cards which can be used anonymously online. The charities say the new limits will lead to increases in internet crimes that harm children and young people.

Secretary of the Children's Charities Coalition on Internet Safety, John Carr, said

"The EU, the banks and other financial institutions are on the verge of promoting an internet crime wave. They plan to increase the monetary limit of so-called prepaid credit cards which can be bought for cash with no formalities at all. This means the cards can be used on the internet entirely anonymously.

The abuse of anonymity lies at the root of many enduring problems online. In August this year the Attorney General of the USA<sup>1</sup> expressed his worry that this type of prepaid card may fuel sales of child abuse images (child pornography).

The cards also allow online companies to supply age restricted goods such as knives, alcohol, tobacco and pornography to young people. These youngsters could not get these items on the High Street because their appearance would give them away as being not old enough.

The children's charities are calling on the Government not only to refuse to implement the EU's proposal to increase the upper values of prepaid cards in the UK, but also to reduce the existing upper limits<sup>2</sup> until such time as proper safeguards are put in place.

We have no problem in principle with prepaid cards for use in real world transactions where shopkeepers and suppliers can see what they are selling to whom, where the cards are simply a substitute for cash. But we can see no merit at all in promoting a system which allows anonymous purchases to be made over the internet. That spells trouble for children and their families, and will mean more work for the police. The police have already had to shed responsibility for dealing with the high volume of misuse of conventional credit cards so why open up another front? If the cards are traceable they will be much less likely to be abused."

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<sup>1</sup> Referring specifically to the online purchase of "child pornography", the Attorney General of the United States, Eric Holder, says "To further shield their identities, offenders occasionally will deviate from the common use of traditional credit cards and rely on digital currencies and prepaid credit cards to conceal transactions."

<sup>2</sup> The current upper limit is 150 Euros (although in practice most UK prepaid cards currently have a £50 limit). The proposal is to increase the limit to 250 Euros or, in some circumstances, 500 Euros.

Note to Editors: please see attached letter to the Treasury for more details.

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