

16th June 2010

## Next Generation Child Protection for Mobile Social Networking

Isis Forensics, a Lancaster University spin out company based in InfoLab21, with the support of the Northwest Regional Development Agency (NWDA) and InfoLab21's Knowledge Business Centre, has launched a £54,000 Research and Development project to develop next generation child protection technologies that can be run on mobile phones.

The project is being part funded by the NWDA with a £34,528 Grant for Research and Development.

Recent years have seen a major boom in social networking via the Internet. This rise of online social networking leads to the classic dual-use dilemma. On the one hand these sites offer their members unprecedented access to online communities but, on the other, expose vulnerable user groups to a number of potential risks.

The most vulnerable are children who are often the target of predatory advances and bullying. With mobile devices becoming increasingly powerful and merging communication mechanisms (e.g. SMS, e-mail, instant messaging, etc), the typical online child safety mechanisms, i.e. supervised Internet use, are no longer feasible.

As part of this project, Isis Forensics will develop next generation tools for protecting children engaged in mobile social networking. Core to this is the development of lightweight language analysis software that can be used to identify when a child is at risk, and can be run on a mobile phone.

In order to help inform the project Isis Forensics plans to actively engage with parents and children in the North West, setting up special focus groups in which the developments will be demonstrated and discussed so they can be tailored to meet their needs. The first of these will be held in July and interested participants should visit [www.isis-forensics.com/childprotection](http://www.isis-forensics.com/childprotection) to register and to find out more.

**James Walkerdine** of Isis Forensics said:

PRESS RELEASE



**"We are excited to be able to launch this important and ambitious project and are very grateful to the NWDA for co-funding it and to the KBC for supporting us. Children are increasingly using mobile devices to access online social networks such as MySpace and FaceBook, and it is vital to ensure that they are properly protected when they do so. By working closely with parent and children groups we are hoping to be able to develop technologies that help alleviate the concerns of parents whilst also being acceptable to children."**

Grant for Research and Development is part of Solutions for Business, the Government's package of publicly funded business support designed to help companies start and grow, helping entrepreneurs and business owners introduce innovative products and processes, including research trials and product testing.

**Steven Broomhead, Chief Executive, NWDA said:**

**"As Europe's second largest media hub, the Northwest is internationally recognised for innovation and quality within the digital and creative sector. The NWDA is delighted to support Isis Forensics who have identified a large and growing market for a new product that will allow the company to grow and diversify into new areas of business."**

**Steve Riches, Director of InfoLab21's Knowledge Business Centre said:**

**"The ethos of InfoLab21 is to help new and existing digital technology based businesses develop and expand; to this end I am pleased to be able to support Isis Forensics in InfoLab21. Perhaps even more significant is the focus of Isis Forensics' work. Hardly a day goes by when the media haven't picked up on predatory forces at work attempting to access our children via the Internet. The internet plays an ever-increasing part in our daily lives and it is essential that children are safe to realise its full benefit. Anything that can be done towards eliminating the potential threat of predatory forces, has the full support of the KBC team."**

As part of the response to the current economic downturn, GRAND is funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) with £1.1 million, together with £1.2 million from the Northwest Regional Development Agency (NWDA).

The NWDA is playing a crucial role in response to the current economic downturn, with a number of actions being taken to meet the needs of businesses during these financially challenging times.

To keep updated on the range of support being offered by the NWDA go to - [www.nwda.co.uk/supportingbusiness](http://www.nwda.co.uk/supportingbusiness)



### Notes to Editors

For further information please contact Shelley Tattersall on 01925 400256 or mobile 07500128482 or email [shelley.tattersall@nwda.co.uk](mailto:shelley.tattersall@nwda.co.uk) For urgent out of hours press enquiries please call 01925 400259 For further information and to view previous press releases visit us at [www.nwda.co.uk](http://www.nwda.co.uk) or [www.erdfnw.co.uk](http://www.erdfnw.co.uk)

### ERDF in the Northwest

The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) is making a real difference to people and businesses in the Northwest. With €755 million to invest between 2007 and 2013, ERDF is enhancing the competitiveness of the region's economy by supporting growth in enterprise and employment.

ERDF in the Northwest is managed by the Northwest Regional Development Agency (NWDA).

For further information please visit [www.erdfnw.co.uk](http://www.erdfnw.co.uk)

The Northwest Regional Development Agency (NWDA) works to deliver economic success in England's Northwest by building the competitiveness of its businesses, people and places. Utilising our technical expertise and strategic influence, we help the region's 250,000+ businesses to develop and grow, as well as supporting international trade and encouraging inward investment.

