**Strangers die after suicide pact on internet**

**By Nicole Martin**

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Two strangers who met online killed themselves in what is thought to be Britain's first internet suicide pact.

Christopher Aston, 25, of Liverpool, and Maria Williams, 42, also known as Sanchez, from Deptford, south-east London, were found slumped in a car in a retail park in London with a tray of burning charcoal. They had died of carbon monoxide poisoning.

They had never seen each other before and had spoken only briefly on the telephone, an inquest in Southwark, south London, was told. The case prompted calls for websites promoting suicide to be banned.

Mr Aston travelled to London in February to see Miss Williams after they made contact on a suicide website.

Det Insp Brendan Butler, of Lewisham police, said: "He had limited contact with Maria Sanchez on the internet and on the phone shortly before their deaths. They had both researched internet sites about suicides at or around the time of this incident."

Andrew Sampson, the coroner, was told that the couple left separate suicide notes. Recording a verdict of suicide in both cases, he said: "It was a voluntary incident. They both chose to be there."

Tony Cox, of the Parents for Prevention of Young Suicide charity, said the incident highlighted the need for greater regulation of the internet.

"Internet suicide seems to be a growing phenomenon in parts of the Far East, especially in Japan," he said. "We have been dreading the moment something like this would happen. We hope this is not the start of a trend. Websites that bring people like this together should be closed down."