



## **NORTH AYRSHIRE CHILD PROTECTION COMMITTEE**

### ***MULTI AGENCY PROTOCOL***

### **'MISSING CHILDREN FOR WHOM THERE ARE CHILD PROTECTION CONCERNS'**

April 2011

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## INTRODUCTION

Children and young people on the Child Protection Register or who have a Child Protection Plan in place have been identified as being at risk of significant harm. This vulnerability has necessitated a multi agency response and all key agencies should be aware of any change in the child's circumstance. Immediate action must be taken when a child on the Child Protection Register or with a Child Protection Plan in place goes missing and every effort must be made to locate the child / family as soon as possible. This also applies to vulnerable children or pregnant women who go missing where child protection concerns have been raised in relation to the child or unborn baby.

This document is the North Ayrshire protocol, based on West of Scotland good practice guidance, in relation to situations where either:

- 1 A child on the Child Protection Register / or with a Child Protection Plan in place, or a vulnerable child or pregnant women goes missing where child protection concerns have been raised in relation to the child, or unborn baby.

or

- 2 An Alert is received that a child on a Child Protection Register / with a Child Protection Plan in place, or a vulnerable child or pregnant women has gone missing from another local authority in the United Kingdom where child protection concerns have been raised in relation to the child, or unborn baby.

## DEFINITION:

For the purposes of this document the term 'vulnerable child' who goes missing, refers to a child for whom child protection concerns have been raised but the child's whereabouts have become unknown before a full assessment of risk and need has been carried out.

The term 'pregnant woman who goes missing' refers to woman for whom there are child protection concerns for the unborn child post birth. Where there are concerns that the woman herself may be an 'adult at risk' under the terms outlined in Section 3 (1) and (2) of the Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007 the relevant officer as outlined in local adult protection procedures should be notified.

## **SECTION 1 CHILDREN ON THE LOCAL CHILD PROTECTION REGISTER WHO GO MISSING**

All agencies have a responsibility to notify the Senior Manager Children and Families (Fieldwork) if they become aware that a child whose name is on the Child Protection Register has gone missing. This must be done immediately. The Senior Manager Children and Families (Fieldwork), in turn, must immediately inform The Head of Service Children and Families who will assume responsibility for ensuring appropriate management responsibility for the following processes.

### **1.1 INITIAL RESPONSE**

Where a child whose name has been placed on the Child Protection Register goes missing, the Senior Manager Children and Families (Fieldwork) should ensure that all appropriate professionals, are contacted to share information in an effort to trace the child. This includes:

- The Chair of the child protection conference
- Those who attended, or were invited to attend, the child protection conference
- The Police
- The Health Child Protection Advisor
- The Quality Improvement Manager in Education (for children aged over 5 years)

If the child is 'looked after' under the terms of S 70 Children (Scotland) Act 1995, then the Authority Reporter should also be notified. In such circumstances, consideration should be given to requesting a review of the child's supervision requirement to allow some thought to be given to the issue of a Section 45(4) or 45(5) warrant by a Children's Hearing to allow the police to find and keep the child in a safe place until the circumstances can be fully considered by a Hearing.

### **1.2 INFORMATION SHARING WITHIN SOCIAL WORK SERVICE.**

The Head of Service Children and Families, the Senior Manager (Fieldwork), (who is also Keeper of the Register) should be notified. An Alert should also be made to the Out of Hours Social Work Service.

### **1.3 INFORMATION SHARING WITH NHS AYRSHIRE & ARRAN**

The Senior Manger Children and Families (Fieldwork) should contact the Child Protection Advisor in Health to initiate a check on the local intelligence held by their agency. NHS Ayrshire & Arran will take all reasonable and practical efforts to locate the family. This will include discussion with other health professionals and interrogation of IT systems. If a family remain missing, the Keeper of the Register for Social Work Services (who is the Senior Manager Fieldwork) will complete the process regarding the need for a national alert.

### **1.4 INFORMATION SHARING WITH EDUCATION**

The Senior Manger Children and Families (Fieldwork) should contact the Quality Improvement Officer in Education & Skills, responsible for Children Missing from Education.

Schools in North Ayrshire follow strict procedures which include a range of measures that will be instigated when a child is missing. These include making enquiries at all establishments where siblings may be enrolled, liaising with support services such as educational psychology, and enlisting the assistance of home school inclusion workers. Should all measures to locate the missing child locally be unsuccessful, the Keeper of the Register for Social Work Services (who is the Senior Manager Fieldwork) will complete the process regarding the need for a national alert.

**N.B.** NHS and CME alerts are generated for children who are vulnerable but not on child protection registers. For children who are on child protection registers the alert should originate from Social Work Services to avoid duplication of alerts from other central bodies such as the CME team in Edinburgh.

## **1.5 INFORMATION SHARING WITH THE CHILD BENEFIT OFFICE**

If the whereabouts of the child / and or family remains unknown the Manager responsible for coordinating the search should arrange contact with the Customer Relations Unit of the Child Benefit Office (GB) on 0191 225 1986 who will be able to initiate a search of records in an attempt to locate the family.

## **1.6 NATIONAL SEARCH FOR MISSING CHILD ON THE CHILD PROTECTION REGISTER**

If the above action fails to locate the whereabouts of the child/ or family, the Senior Manager Children and Families (Fieldwork) should agree with their line manager whether a National search should be instigated. The timescales for initiating a national alert will be determined by the age and circumstances and perceived risk to the child.

The Chair of the Child Protection Committee should be informed that a national search has been initiated.

Where a National search for a missing child on the Child Protection Register is initiated, the Keeper of the Register (who is the Senior Manager Fieldwork), must notify all Local Authority Social Work Departments, in Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland, providing necessary background information on the child and family and asking to be informed if the child and / or family comes to their attention. Where appropriate this should include a request that details are also circulated to NHS Board Areas and Education Authorities in their local area. (see form contained in Appendix 1)

## **1.7 WHEN A NATIONAL ALERT HAS BEEN ISSUED**

Once a National Alert has been issued, a Review Child Protection Conference must be convened within two working days to ensure that all information is made available to partner agencies and that all efforts are being made to trace the child and / or family and to ensure appropriate action is taken to safeguard the child's welfare. The Senior Manager Children and Families (Fieldwork) must ensure that the Social Work Out of Hours Service is kept fully informed of all developments throughout this time.

## **1.8 ONCE THE CHILD IS LOCATED**

Once a child has been located, this information should be passed to the Keeper of the Register who should immediately notify all relevant Local Authority Social Work Departments, in Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland that the child has been found (standard letter in appendix 5). Where appropriate this should include a request this notification is also be circulated to NHS Board Areas and Education Authorities in their local area

The Senior Manager Children and Families (Fieldwork) should also ensure that all appropriate Professionals are aware that the child has been found. Out of Hours Social Work Service and Police should always be informed.

## **SECTION 2**

### **VULNERABLE CHILD OR PREGNANT WOMEN WHO GO MISSING**

Where serious child protection concerns have been raised about a child and their whereabouts are unknown, or a vulnerable pregnant woman ( for whom there are concerns around the unborn child post birth) goes missing then the Duty Social Work Manager Children and Families (or equivalent) must be immediately informed.

#### **2.1 INITIAL RESPONSE**

The Duty Social Work Manager Children and Families must inform their line manager who will decide what action (if any) is required to try to located the child or adult.

The nature and speed of action to locate the child will be determined by the perceived nature, degree and source of risk or harm to the child (including unborn child)

The Senior Manager children and Families (Fieldwork) should instruct the Duty Social Work Manager Children and Families to ensure that all appropriate professionals involved with the child, including the Chair of any recent meetings held with regards to the child, are informed and kept updated on the situation.

The responsible manger should contact the Child Protection Advisor in health to initiate a check on the local intelligence held by their agency

Out of Hours Social Work Service should be notified and kept updated. Depending on the nature and immediacy of perceived harm the Police may also be notified at this point.

If the child is a 'looked after child' under the terms of S 70 Children (Scotland Act 1995, then the Authority Reporter should also be notified. In such circumstances, consideration should be given to requesting a review of the child's supervision requirement to allow some thought to be given to the issue of a Section 45(4) or 45(5) warrant by a Children's Hearing to allow the police to find and keep the child in a safe place until the circumstances can be fully considered by a Hearing.

The Head of Service Children and Families Social Work should be advised in all cases where a child (including an unborn child) goes missing.

## **2.2. FOLLOWING A LOCAL SEARCH : ONCE THE VULNERABLE CHILD/ PREGNANT WOMAN IS LOCATED**

If a local search has located the vulnerable child/ pregnant woman the Senior Manager Children and Families (Fieldwork) should be notified so that all appropriate professionals can be made aware that the child/adult has been found and that if necessary, any further action can be taken. Out of Hours Social Work Service and NHS Child Protection Advisor should also be informed. Police and the Authority Reporter should be notified accordingly.

## **2.3 NATIONAL SEARCH FOR MISSING VULNERABLE CHILD**

Where initial local searches fail to locate the child or adult, consideration should be given to widening the search. The decision to widen the search will be determined by the level and nature of risk and be decided on an individual basis. This decision will be made by Head of Service, Children & Families, taking account of all available information from other agencies. When a missing vulnerable child is perceived to be at high risk a National search as outlined in 1.6 – 1.7 should be followed. This should link with both the NHS National Missing Family Alert and the CME national systems

## **2.4 NATIONAL SEARCH FOR MISSING PREGNANT WOMAN**

When a pregnant woman goes missing and there are concerns for the unborn baby on birth, information should be passed to the NHS Child Protection Advisor, who on receipt of an alert from the Keeper of the Register Social Work Services (who is the Senior Manager Fieldwork) will distribute the alert through the NHS Boards. Where the missing woman may have other children accompanying her then steps as outlined in 1.6-1.7 should also be followed.

## **2.5 FOLLOWING A NATIONAL SEARCH: ONCE A VULNERABLE CHILD/ PREGNANT WOMAN IS LOCATED**

If the vulnerable child / pregnant woman has been located, then this information should be passed to the Keeper of the Register (who is the Senior Manager Fieldwork) who should notify all relevant Local Authority Social Work Departments, in Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland, that the child/adult has been found (standard letter in appendix 5).

Where appropriate this should include a National request that notification is also be circulated to NHS Boards and Education Authorities in their local area.

Out of Hours Social Work Service and Police should also be informed.

If the child is 'looked after' under the terms of S 70 Children (Scotland Act) 1995, then the Authority Reporter should also be notified. In such circumstances, consideration should be given to requesting a review of the child's supervision requirement to allow some thought to be given to the issue of a Section 45(4) or 45(5) warrant by a Children's Hearing to allow the police to find and keep the child in a safe place until the circumstances can be fully considered by a Hearing.

## **2.6 WHEN A VULNERABLE YOUNG PERSON RUNS AWAY**

It is recognised that there is an increased risk of harm and exploitation to vulnerable children and young people who runaway, abscond or go missing from their place of residence. Where a vulnerable child or young person runs away the steps previously outlined should be initiated in line with the needs and circumstance of the child or young person and in conjunction with *Vulnerable Children and Young People: Good Practice Guidance*. This document can be downloaded at [www.childprotectionnorthayrshire.info](http://www.childprotectionnorthayrshire.info) on the professionals page.

If any information is gathered during the course of enquiries which indicates a child or young person will be at risk when they return home, social work and / or the Police must be informed immediately using child protection procedures.

## **SECTION 3**

### **NOTIFICATION OF MISSING CHILDREN/ADULTS FROM ANOTHER LOCAL AUTHORITY AREA**

Alerts regarding missing children and adults are received by local authority social services from other local authority areas across the United Kingdom. It is estimated that social services within the west of Scotland receive approximately 300 such alerts per year.

#### **3.1 ON RECEIPT OF ALERTS**

Local authority areas across the United Kingdom contact the Senior Manager, Children and Families (Fieldwork), in North Ayrshire Council Social Services, with alerts. The Senior Manager, Children and Families, (Fieldwork) is also the Keeper of North Ayrshire's Child Protection Register.

In the event of an alert being received directly by another social services officer within North Ayrshire, this should be sent to the Senior Manager, Children and Families, without delay.

#### **3.2 INFORMATION SHARING WITHIN SOCIAL SERVICES**

On receipt of notification of a missing child on the child protection register/or with a child protection plan in place or a vulnerable child or pregnant woman, the Senior Manager, Children and Families, (Fieldwork) should ensure that the child/family details are logged electronically on Carefirst, which is the social services information system. Details logged should include the responsible authority area and the reason for the concern.

This should ensure that if the child or pregnant woman presents to any area of social services they should be identified as being subject to a missing child/pregnant woman alert.



### **3.3 INFORMATION SHARING WITH NHS**

On receipt of an alert the Senior Manager, Children and Families, (Fieldwork) ensures that a copy of the notification is sent by secure email to the NHS Ayrshire and Arran Child Protection Health Team.

The Child Protection Health Team should then ensure that the case is considered under their missing family alert procedures and forward the alert across NHS services in their health board area including maternity services and accident and emergency services if appropriate. As Ayrshire and Arran Health Board covers three local authority areas only one NHS missing family alert should be issued.

### **3.4 INFORMATION SHARING WITH EDUCATIONAL SERVICES**

On receipt of an alert concerning a child that is aged 5 years or over the Senior Manager, Children and Families, should ensure that a copy of the alert is sent by secure email to the designated Quality Improvement Officer in Education & Skills.

The Quality Improvement Officer should then check to ensure if the child has been registered to attend a school within North Ayrshire. A copy of the alert should be kept on file for 12 months or until notified that the child has been located.

### **3.5 INFORMATION SHARING WITH HOMELESSNESS AND HOUSING SERVICES**

The Senior Manager, Children and Families, (Fieldwork) should ensure that a copy of the alert is sent by secure email to the relevant Divisional Housing Managers with responsibility for homeless and/or housing services.

The Divisional Managers should ensure that relevant checks and information sharing regarding the alert takes place throughout housing services.

### **3.6 LOCATION OF A VULNERABLE CHILD/VULNERABLE PREGNANT WOMAN**

If a missing child or a vulnerable/pregnant woman on alert from another part of the United Kingdom is located within North Ayrshire then the Senior Manager, Children and Families, (Fieldwork) should be notified immediately. The Senior Manager, Children and Families, (Fieldwork) will immediately advise the social work service who issued the alert that the child/adult has been found and agree the next course of action.

### **3.7 REMOVAL OF ALERT**

If a child/adult has been located or notification received that the child is no longer missing then the child/adult should then be removed from the social services electronic system. The contact person in the NHS, educational services, and housing services should also be informed. If no further information has been received about a child missing from another local authority area then after 12 months the child/adult details should be removed from the relevant information systems in North Ayrshire. A note should be made that this child/adult remains missing.

## **SECTION 4    ROLE OF THE POLICE**

It is the role and responsibility of the police where a person is reported missing/absconded, to make enquiries to establish the whereabouts of that person to ensure that he/she is safe and well.

The term “missing person” incorporates all persons officially reported missing. It also includes the following category of person at risk where there is any concern for his/her safety, regardless of whether he/she has been officially reported missing or not.

On receipt of a report of a missing person the police will obtain all relevant details of the person being reported missing/absconded including;

- Personal details
- Address reported missing from
- Place last seen and by whom
- Description including clothing worn
- Possessions (Money, Valuables etc)
- Previously missing (where located)
- Places frequented
- Details of Family and Friends

Details of the missing/ absconded person if appropriate will be broadcast to all operational officers on duty via personal radio and without exception details of the individual will be circulated to all offices in Strathclyde Police area and to other Police areas depending on the perceived risk. In all cases a “missing person marker” will be placed on the Police National Computer (PNC).

An initial risk assessment will be made based on all the known information at that time. The missing person will be classed as either: Low Risk, Medium Risk, High Risk. The risk assessment will determine the resources dedicated to the enquiry.

The police have access to numerous databases, which can assist in gathering information on a person reported missing. In most cases the following will be checked to obtain all information available, including potential addresses and associations;

- Scottish Criminal Record Office (SCRO)
- Police National Computer (PNC)
- Internal Police Databases such as Crime Management, Family Protection Unit and Vulnerable Persons Database (Domestic Abuse and Adults at Risk).
- Scottish Criminal Intelligence Database (SID)

When the missing person is traced or returns to their place of residence, he/she will be interviewed as soon as possible to establish when and where the subject was traced, where the subject had been while missing, persons with whom the subject had associated while missing and the likelihood of the subject having been involved in criminal activity or having been the victim of criminality while missing.

Where a child has been a victim of a crime it will be investigated in line with normal police procedures and any relevant inter agency protocol.

When a child is traced a report will be submitted outlining the circumstances to the Reporter to the Children's Panel.



**MISSING CHILD ALERT**

**SECTION 1  
NOTIFICATION TO ALL CUSTODIANS OF CHILD PROTECTION  
REGISTERS AND RELEVANT PARTNER AGENCIES FROM:**

Name/ job title	Address	Email	Telephone number	Fax

**SECTION 2  
CHILD'S DETAILS**

Surname		Forename(s)	
Alias / AKA		Dob or EDD ( if unborn)	
Gender		Ethnicity	
Any additional needs		Preferred Language spoken	
Last known address		Home address (if different)	

**SECTION 3  
DESCRIPTION OF CHILD/YOUNG PERSON ( *Photo attached if available* )**

**SECTION 4  
KNOWN RISK FACTORS FOR CHILD**

**SECTION 5  
DATE OF REGISTRATION**

**SECTION 6  
LEGAL STATUS OF CHILD**

**SECTION 7  
A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES CAUSING CONCERN**

**SECTION 8  
PARENTS AND OTHER SIGNIFICANT FAMILY MEMBERS / ADULTS**

Full name	Relationship to child	Do they hold Parental Rights?	Dob	Last known address/ contact details ( if known)

**SECTION 9**  
**DATE CHILD WENT MISSING:**


**DATE ALERT ISSUED:**

**SECTION 10**  
**WHERE THEY MIGHT BE or WHOM THEY MIGHT BE WITH ( ie with parent, friend, etc - identify area if possible)**

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**SECTION 11**  
**WHAT YOU WANT RECEIVER TO DO IN ADDITION TO NOTIFYING APPROPRIATE PROFESSIONALS**

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**SECTION 12**  
**IF YOU HAVE ANY INFORMATION ON THE WHEREABOUTS OF THIS CHILD/FAMILY, PLEASE CONTACT:**

Name	Job Title	Address	Email	Tel no	Fax no

Additional information attached? *Please tick*

Yes

No



## MISSING VULNERABLE UNBORN CHILD ALERT

### SECTION 1

**NOTIFICATION TO ALL SOCIAL WORK SERVICES, NHS TRUSTS AND OTHER RELEVANT PARTNER AGENCIES FROM:**

Name/ job title	Address	Email	Telephone number	Fax

### SECTION 2

#### PREGNANT MOTHER'S DETAILS

Surname		Forename(s)	
Alias / AKA		Expected date of delivery of unborn child	
Gender		Ethnicity / Religion	
Any additional needs		Preferred Language spoken	
Last known address		Home address (if different)	

### SECTION 3

**DESCRIPTION OF PREGNANT MOTHER ( ie height, hair colouring etc)**

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**SECTION 4  
A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES CAUSING CONCERN AND  
ARRANGMENTS FOR THE CONFINEMENT**

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**SECTION 5  
PARTNER, CHILDREN AND OTHER SIGNIFICANT FAMILY / FRIENDS**

Full name ( also approximate age if known)	Relationship to woman	Current address / contact details ( if known)	Are they likely to be with the missing person?

**SECTION 6  
KEY AGENCIES INVOLVED WITH MISSING WOMAN**

Name,	Job Title	Contact details



**SECTION 9**  
**DATE WOMAN WENT MISSING:**


**DATE ALERT ISSUED:**

**SECTION 10**  
**WHERE THEY MIGHT BE or WHOM THEY MIGHT BE WITH ( ie with partner, parent, friend, etc - identify area if possible)**

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**SECTION 11**  
**WHAT YOU WANT RECEIVER TO DO IN ADDITION TO NOTIFYING APPROPRIATE PROFESSIONALS**

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**SECTION 12**  
**IF YOU HAVE ANY INFORMATION ON THE WHEREABOUTS OF THIS PERSON PLEASE CONTACT:**

Name	Job Title	Address	Email	Tel no	Fax no

Additional information attached? *Please tick*

Yes

No

## APPENDIX 3

### LOCAL CONTACT DETAILS – LOCAL MISSING CHILD (UNBORN CHILD)

The list below offers basic contact details of those who might be contacted when a child or vulnerable unborn child goes missing. Not everyone on the list will be notified in all cases. Who will be contacted will depend on the nature and urgency of the concern and the individual circumstance of the child. The list is not exhaustive and others may be notified in certain circumstance.

Name	Title/agency	Email	Tel number	Fax number	If notified please tick
Sheena Gault	Head of Social Work Services/ Chief Social Work Officer	<a href="mailto:Sgault@north-ayrshire.gov.uk">Sgault@north-ayrshire.gov.uk</a>	01294 317734		
David MacRitchie	Senior Manager Social Work Services	<a href="mailto:Dmacritchie@north-ayrshire.gov.uk">Dmacritchie@north-ayrshire.gov.uk</a>	01294 317763		
On Duty Operational Supervisor	Police		01294 404400		
	Out of Hours Social Work Services		0800 811505		
Sandra Winton	NHS Child Protection Health Advisor	<a href="mailto:Sandra.Winton2@apct.scot.nhs.uk">Sandra.Winton2@apct.scot.nhs.uk</a>	01294 322028		
Frances Rodman	Education – missing children	<a href="mailto:Frodman@north-ayrshire.gov.uk">Frodman@north-ayrshire.gov.uk</a>	01294 324459		
Carol Nelson Janeine Barrett	Housing Department	<a href="mailto:Cnelson@north-ayrshire.gov.uk">Cnelson@north-ayrshire.gov.uk</a> <a href="mailto:Jbarrett@north-ayrshire.gov.uk">Jbarrett@north-ayrshire.gov.uk</a>	01294 324873 01294 314702		
Customer Relations Unit	The Child Benefit Office (GB)		0191 225 1986		

## APPENDIX 4

### LOCAL CONTACT DETAILS – ALERT FROM OUTWITH THE AREA

The list below offers basic contact details of those who might be contacted when an Alert is received about a missing child or vulnerable unborn child from another local authority area. Not everyone on the list will be informed of all cases. Who will be contacted will depend on the nature and urgency of the concern and the individual circumstance of the child. The list is not exhaustive and others may be informed in certain circumstances.

Name	Title/agency	Email	Tel number	Fax number
David MacRitchie	Children and Families Social Work Services	<a href="mailto:Dmacritchie@north-ayrshire.gov.uk">Dmacritchie@north-ayrshire.gov.uk</a>	01294 317763	
On Duty Operational Supervisor	Police		01294 404400	
Sandra Winton	NHS Child Protection Health Advisor	<a href="mailto:Sandra.Winton2@aacpt.scot.nhs.uk">Sandra.Winton2@aacpt.scot.nhs.uk</a>	01294 322028	
Frances Rodman	Education – missing children	<a href="mailto:Frodman@north-ayrshire.gov.uk">Frodman@north-ayrshire.gov.uk</a>	01294 324459	
Carol Nelson Janeine Barrett	Housing Department	<a href="mailto:Cnelson@north-ayrshire.gov.uk">Cnelson@north-ayrshire.gov.uk</a> <a href="mailto:Jbarrett@north-ayrshire.gov.uk">Jbarrett@north-ayrshire.gov.uk</a>	01294 324873 01294 314702	
	Out of Hours Social Work Services		0800 811505	

## ***Appendix 5***

### **Proforma notification letter that a child/ vulnerable unborn child has been located**

Our Ref:  
Your Ref:  
Date:  
Enquires:  
Email Address:

Dear Colleague

#### **Re: Notification of Location of Missing Child / Vulnerable Unborn Child**

A Missing Child Alert / Missing Vulnerable Unborn Child Alert [*delete as appropriate*] was issued on [*insert date*] by [*insert name of Local Authority*] Social Work Department in respect of the following child / unborn child [*delete as appropriate*]:-

Surname:

Forename:

Date of Birth / Expected Date of Delivery [*delete as appropriate*]

I wish to inform you that this child / this vulnerable unborn child [*delete as appropriate*] has now been located. Please pass on this information to colleagues to whom you sent the original Alert.

Thank you for your assistance.

Yours sincerely