Our daughter Sarah is 10 years old and has had a Statement of Special Educational Needs since she started Infants School. As a year 5 pupil she is one of the first to transition to the new Education, Health and Care Plan.

We were aware of the Children and Families Act 2014 and the requirement to replace the Statement of Special Educational Needs with EHC plan but had little knowledge of what the new plan entailed. Our initial thought was that the EHC plan and the Statement of Special Educational needs were essentially the same thing but just under a different name.

Fortunately we were offered the opportunity to attend two evening seminars run by the Independent Support Service. The seminars were very informative and we learnt that the EHC plan is fundamentally different to the Statement with a central element of the Plan being Sections A which sets out the views needs and aspirations of the young person concerned.

At the seminar examples of Section A were provided and guidance was given on how to draft this part of the plan. As a result of these seminars we became better informed about how the EHC Plan differs from the Statement of Special Educational needs, what Section A should contain and the requirement for the young person's views to be taken into account.

Armed with this information we set about putting together the Section A for our daughter's EHC Plan remembering that Sarah's views, interests and aspirations must be at the centre of the plan. Although Sarah is too young to write her own plan we spent time talking to Sarah to ensure that she made a contribution we included details of her interests which include reading and being read stories by her favourite authors Roald Dahl, Jacqueline Wilson and Michael Bond. Mention was made of her interest in theatre and that fact that she enjoys her weekly drama class where she had a small part in a recent production of "The Sound of Music". We also mentioned that Sarah would like to be an author or an actress when she grows up. In future years we expect Sarah to take a greater role in the drafting of Section A.

In addition to the seminars the Independent Support Service reviewed the draft plan and suggested where changes could be made. Funke Adeloye from the Independent Support Service also attended Sarah's Annual Review meeting. As well as providing support to us as parents she was able to support and guide the school in what was only their second annual review / transfer meeting.

As a result of Funke's involvement we were able to identify a further aspiration for Sarah when we mentioned that Sarah had told us that she would like to make her own way home from Brownies when she was 10.

In our view the assistance of the Independent Support Service has been invaluable in spreading the word about the SEND reforms, explaining the differences between the Statement and the Plan and educating us that Sarah's needs and aspirations are the cornerstone of her EHC Plan.