

## Case Study: Empowering

This is a good example of how an IS worked very patiently at mum's pace as she was still adapting and adjusting to accommodate her daughters needs and was still feeling overwhelmed at times. The IS kept checking that mum really understood the significance of each stage of the EHCP assessment and demonstrates great diligence and persistence to ensure that mum is successfully enlightened and empowered.

### Lindy-Lou's story

This case study is about Lindy-Lou and her mum. Lindy-Lou is three years old, attends a private nursery school and has a physical disability as well as a communication impairment.

The Independent Supporter Service (ISS) was contacted by Lindy-Lou's mum after being recommended to do so by her health visitor. Mum had her parental input form to complete and submit and felt very worried and apprehensive about doing so without assistance.

When the Independent Supporter (IS) met Lindy-Lou's mum for the first time, she seemed stressed and anxious about her daughter's EHCP assessment. She expressed that she felt confused about what was happening and under pressure to 'write the right thing, using the right words' in order for her daughter to get an EHCP. She explained that this was important because after much thought, she had recently decided that the local special school would be the best place for her daughter, having been adamant for a long time that she should attend a mainstream school. This had been a tough decision for mum to make, especially as she is a single parent and so had to make the decision on her own and she was determined to make sure that Lindy-Lou had the support she needed to reach her full potential.

The IS took time to assure mum that the EHCP process was not a "test" or "judgment" which she could "fail" by saying the wrong thing; that if her daughter needed an EHCP in order to meet her needs then the needs assessment process would recognise this. Mum told the IS Lindy-Lou's story, and became very emotional as she spoke of how she had to come to terms with her daughter's disability, her pride in Lindy-Lou, and how it had changed her as a person, for the better. The IS captured mum's views and wishes in the parental input form. The first meeting lasted three hours as it was important to go at mum's pace and to allow her sufficient time to process all the information the IS was providing her with. During this meeting mum also expressed her passionate belief in a particular type of therapy that she believed had enabled Lindy-Lou to make a huge amount of progress. Not only did Lindy-Lou's mum want her daughter to continue accessing this therapy but she also wanted other parents to know about it too. The IS and mum came up with two SMART outcomes – both very simple but important outcomes which mum felt were the priorities for Lindy-Lou especially considering her young age. They both related to communication and mobility.

The next time that the IS met Lindy-Lou's mum, it was to help her prepare for Lindy-Lou's EHCP meeting at nursery. The IS aimed to empower mum to feel confident and happy to go to the meeting. Once again, Lindy-Lou's mum was worried about the situation and expressed that she believed the process of the meeting was to judge what she said, and that it would then go before a panel who would decide if Lindy-Lou would receive an EHCP. The IS assured mum that this was not the case and explained the actual purpose of the meeting – an information gathering exercise and a chance to express views, based around discussion and collaborative working. Lindy-Lou's mum was relieved and said, "*thank you so much, I'm so*

*glad you've come round, I feel so much better now*". The IS went through a resource designed to help parents get the most out of their child's EHCP meeting. Lindy-Lou's mum was again surprised and relieved at how parent-friendly the process seemed to be. The IS and mum did some preparation work for the meeting, thinking about the most important points that mum wanted to raise. Mum thanked the IS and said she was grateful that her visit had made such an impact on how she felt – the IS had clarified and demystified the meeting process for her. Before she left, the IS gave mum contact details for the local parent's forum, as during her first visit she had expressed a desire to link with and help other parents of disabled children. She was happy to receive the contact details and said that she would link with the forum on social media.

The IS contacted Lindy-Lou's mum after the meeting. Mum sounded happy and said that the meeting had "gone really well". She had found it to be a positive experience and was looking forward to looking over the draft plan, with the help of the IS.