I think health action plans and passports are very, very helpful. Certainly the hospital passport has saved people’s lives. I’ll give you a couple of examples of how this has happened.

In the hospital where I work, in our medical assessment unit, we had a young man with Down’s Syndrome and his carer and they didn’t know why he was nil by mouth. So I went to speak to the medical consultant and said ‘Why have you put this guy nil by mouth?’ And she said ‘Because I read, in the hospital passport, he regurgitates food and bubbles up liquid. I’m doing an emergency dysphasia assessment.’ That is excellent practice and could well have saved his life.

Another example, again about the hospital passport, was a sister on a ward, read in a passport of a person with severe learning disabilities, no verbal language and the carer wasn’t there, she read that person was allergic to eggs. Obviously, that could be anaphylactic reaction, which is life threatening as a respiratory condition. Or it could just be a rash. But she’s never going to get that from the patient, she couldn’t necessarily wait for the carer to come back because there’s trace elements of egg in many foods, obviously, and in a lot of the drugs that we give, so this is very important to find out. She rang the home and thankfully, it was a rash. Had it been the former, we would have at least known and could then
have done something to reduce the risks but also be very aware of the likelihood of it possibly happening as well.