What should be Mencap's vision for an effective education for pupils with SLD/ PMLD in the next 10-20 years?

This research project is to help Mencap develop their vision for the education of children with learning disabilities for the foreseeable future. It was decided to focus on the provision for pupils with severe and profound learning disabilities (SLD/ PMLD) as there is much less research evidence about that group than about children with mild and moderate learning disabilities most of whom are educated in inclusive settings in mainstream schools. Inclusive education, in relation to special Educational Needs, has been extensively researched over the past 20-30 years.

In this research study, the nature of the current educational provision for pupils with SLD/ PMLD will initially be explored. Some pupils with SLD/ PMLD are educated in mainstream schools but most are to be found in special schools, ranging from small schools specifically for pupils with SLD/ PMLD through to large generic special schools. Some are primary or secondary schools and others cater for both phases. Some are day schools and others are residential. Some schools provide outreach to mainstream schools to support pupils with SLD/ PMLD and others share a campus with mainstream or even share a building. There are many variations and the data, collected through a survey, should give an up-to-date picture of provision round the country in both special and mainstream contexts.

The second phase of the research will include examining examples of the provision in depth through a number of case studies. Observations, interviews with stakeholders and school document analysis will provide empirical data with the intention of showing what, in the opinion of the respondents, is an effective education for pupils with SLD/ PMLD, wherever they are placed.

From these two data sets, the position of the education of pupils with SLD/ PMLD can be examined within a policy framework of inclusive education.

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