Submission from Michelle McNamara

As an adult living with a visual impairment, I am extremely interested in this Inquiry. As a child living with a visual impairment, I attended several able bodied schools before I was transferred to a school for disabled children, however, I was by then entering in to my third year of high school and my formative educational years were just about over. I was not a high achiever at school and left with few formal qualifications but did however go on to Manage homeless projects for young people as well as a Senior Advocacy Worker, working with individuals living with a severe and enduring mental health problem. I'm currently doing a placement at Glasgow Centre for Inclusive Living, an organisation run by disabled people for disabled people.

I am now 49 and realise that many of the systems and procedures may have improved or changed somewhat since I was at school but some of the hurdles and barriers in my experience are caused for a variety of reasons.
I think it's also vital to point out that the long term implications and effects of a poor educational experience or attainment are carried with that individual potentially for life.

To enable sensory impaired children the opportunity to attain and aspire on an equal basis to their peers, several things should be done:-

. Assessment
A thorough assessment of the sensory needs of the individual, by an individual who is trained, has knowledge of, or experiences in that field. Whilst also considering the emotional, social, physical and psychological needs.
. Advise, discuss and inform
Involve and engage with the child and/or their guardian re their needs and how they can best be met.
Ensure all parties are aware of all the options to allow for informed choice wherever possible.
. Educate
Ensure staff and peers are informed and aware that having a sensory impairment does not in itself mean that child is unable or incapable.
. Practical
Identify the practical changes that could be implemented or put in place to ensure the child can continue with the same education as their peers - i.e. large print, magnifiers, the use and awareness of current technologies, an allocated assistant.
. Encourage
Encourage, support and promote their aspirations and expectations.

These are a few of the barriers and limitations that I experienced and know there are many more.
It is therefore in part, some of the reason I look upon your inquiry with interest and intrigue.

Kind Regards
Michelle McNamara