June 2023

Schools SEN Information Comparative Report

family voice peterborough

together improving services

for children and young people with disabilities and additional needs

INTRODUCTION

Family Voice Peterborough (FVP) is the designated Parent Carer Forum (PCF) for the City of Peterborough which brings with it a statutory duty to work at a strategic level with partners in participation and co-production, to actively consult with, inform and seek to improve their services relating to SEND. It is FVP's general aims as a PCF to:

- *Create a culture of participation and co-production across the education, health, social care and the voluntary sectors. This means that we are involved in all aspects of designing, commissioning, delivering and reviewing services as an equal partner.*
- *empower our members to ensure that their voices are heard at a local, regional and national level*
- *Inspire our partners by sharing good practice and knowledge.*

FVP duties are imbedded in the collective participation stated in the Code of Practice (CoP) 2015 and its statutory duties with a clearer focus on the participation of children and young people and parents in decision-making at individual and strategic levels.

In the past FVP looked into the school's SEN information report in August 2015, where it was found that 12 schools' did not have an SEN information report published. FVP were asked to revisit the School's SEND Information Report on regular basis and to produce a "where we are now" overview year on year since the last report. This report is used as a tool to ascertain the progress and practical application of the Local Authority initiatives regarding SEND best practice.

FVP criteria is based on the existence of send statutory guidance and its requirements, do schools have a SEN Policy, a SEND Information Report and respective link to the SEND Information Hub (Local Offer). The main purpose for requiring schools to publish a SEN Policy, cooperatively contribute to the Local Offer and publish an annual SEN Information Report is to increase accountability.

While SEND Information Report is technically a written, annual account of something that has been achieved or completed. The revised SEN Code of Practice (DfE, April 2014) Section 6.74 states that is it is an account of the implementation of the policy:

'The governing bodies of maintained schools and maintained nursery schools and the proprietors of academy schools must publish information on their websites about the implementation of the governing body's or the proprietor's policy for pupils with SEN.'

The same as above paragraph relays that the information on the report must include information about:

- ☑ The kinds of special educational needs that are provided for
- ☑ Policies for identifying children and young people with SEN and assessing their needs, including the name and contact details of the SENCO (mainstream schools)

☑ Arrangements for consulting parents of children with SEN and involving them in their child's education

☑ Arrangements for consulting young people with SEN and involving them in their education

☑ Arrangements for assessing and reviewing children and young people's progress towards outcomes, including the opportunities available to work with parents and young people as part of this assessment and review

☑ Arrangements for supporting children and young people in moving between phases of education and in preparing for adulthood. As young people prepare for adulthood outcomes should reflect their ambitions, which could include higher education, employment, independent living and participation in society

☑ The approach to teaching children and young people with SEN

☑ how adaptations are made to the curriculum and the learning environment of children and young people with SEN

☑ The expertise and training of staff to support children and young people with SEN, including how specialist expertise will be secured

☑ Evaluating the effectiveness of the provision made for children and young people with SEN

☑ How children and young people with SEN are enabled to engage in activities available with children and young people in the school who do not have SEN

☑ Support for improving emotional and social development. This should include extra pastoral support arrangements for listening to the views of children and young people with SEN and measures to prevent bullying

☑ How the school involves other bodies, including health and social care bodies, local authority support services and voluntary sector organisations, in meeting children and young people's SEN and supporting their families

Schools have the autonomy to decide the format; as long as the above points are covered and the format is accessibly and children-, young person- and parent-friendly. The revised SEN Code does stress the use of plain language.

A SEN Policy is a policy that can be defined as 'an expected principle and course of action adopted by an organisation in relation to a specific area'. The DfE in February 2013 published advice on the policies and documents that governing bodies and proprietors of schools are required to have by law, i.e. statutory policies. Policies should be based on a shared understanding of:

☑ Why the school exists (its mission)
☑ What it believes to be right (its values)
☑ What it is trying to achieve (its vision)
☑ What it is going to do to make this a reality (its aims)
☑ The underpinning rules that will guide action (principles)
☑ The practicalities of implementation (policies and procedures)

The SEN Policy should include , Status , Purpose, Consultation groups , Cross-reference to other documents and policies, roles and responsibilities of head teacher, staff and governors – the core and most detailed part of the policy, monitoring and evaluation arrangements – what evidence would demonstrate success and how and when it will be brought to the attention of the governing body, date established by governing body, date for review, and finally the signature of Chair of Governors (or Chair of Committee).

BACKGROUND

The check list was created against the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Code of Practice (CoP) 2015 (see below). The full checklist is appended to this report.

> *4.34 Schools have additional duties under the Special Educational Needs and Disability Regulations2014. Schools must publish more detailed information about their arrangements for identifying, assessing and making provision for pupils with SEN(see Chapter 6 Schools).*
>
> *4.35 The information must also include information about the arrangements for the admission of disabled pupils, the steps taken to prevent disabled pupils from being treated less favourably than other pupils, the facilities provided to assist access for disabled pupils and the schools' accessibility plans. The school - specific information should relate to the schools' arrangements for providing a graduated response to children's SEN. It should elaborate on the information provided at a local authority wide level in the Local Offer*
>
> *4.36 The Local Offer must make clear where this information can be found and must make clear how young people and parents can find relevant information published by post - 16 institutions about their SEN provision (see Chapter 7).*

And this is underpinned by the Children and Families Act 2014

> *69 SEN information report*
> *(1) This section imposes a duty on—*
> *(a) the governing bodies of maintained schools and maintained nursery schools in England, and*
> *(b) the proprietors of Academy schools.*
> *(2) A governing body or proprietor must prepare a report containing SEN information.*
> *(3) "SEN information" is—*
> *(a) such information as may be prescribed about the implementation of the governing body's or proprietor's policy for pupils at the school with special educational needs;*
> *(b) information as to—*
> *(i)   the arrangements for the admission of disabled persons as pupils at the school;*
> *(ii)the steps taken to prevent disabled pupils from being treated less favourably than other pupils;*
> *(iii)the facilities provided to assist access to the school by disabled pupils;*
> *(iv)the plan prepared by the governing body or proprietor under paragraph 3 of Schedule 10 to the Equality Act 2010 (accessibility plan).*
> *(4)In this section—*
> *   "disabled person" means a person who is a disabled person for the purposes of the Equality Act 2010;*
> * "disabled pupil" includes a disabled person who may be admitted to a school as a pupil.*

PROCESS

A spreadsheet was created to record findings on Educational settings ie Maintained, Academies, Secondary and Primary in Peterborough City Council (PCC) Boundary. They were evaluated/scrutinized in the following manner:

- Do they have a SEN Policy?
- Do they have a SEN Information Report?
- Is there a link on their website to SEN report?
- Has there been Parent/Carer involvement in producing the SEN report?
- Has the Education Provider stated the Parent/Carer involvement in SEN Report?
- How many clicks it takes to access these pages?

Data was collected by individual analysis of all of the settings within PCC boundaries. A google search was conducted originally to find the various setting specific SEN information reports, alongside a review of a list originally held on the on the Local Offer (LO) website (if it worked), and find the appropriate documents. The link to the documents was then inserted on the spreadsheet.

On completion of the spreadsheet, SEN information report was printed out and filed. Each SEN information report was then read and further comments made using a checklist created from what information is required in the schools SEN report (please see the Code of Practice Jan 2015: Publishing information: SEN information report P.106 – P.107 sections 6.79 – 8.83).

The checklist comprised of 19 questions, 16 musts as stated in the Code of Practice, and three should, it would be best practice to include this information.

Over time the link saved to the spreadsheet was used to facilitate the search which bought up an unexpected issue, whereby as setting websites were changed/ updated the pages containing the SEN information report and/ or policy had often been removed or moved so the links were broken, and a fresh search had to take place.

RESULTS

Numbers of settings with Policies and/ or Reports

2022 results show:

(a) results show that 85.71% of schools had an updated SEN information report published on their school website
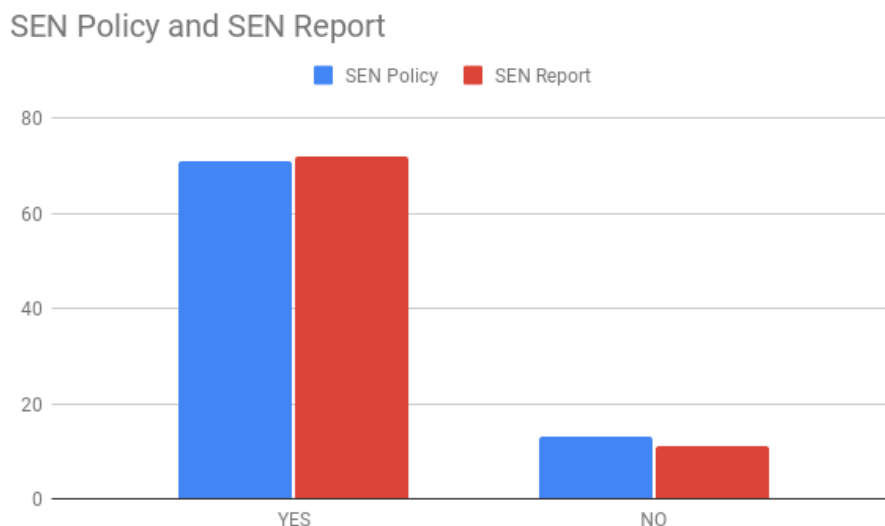(b) results show that 84.52 % of schools had an updated SEN policy

Fig.1 SEND Policy and /SEN Information Report overview of 84 Educational settings
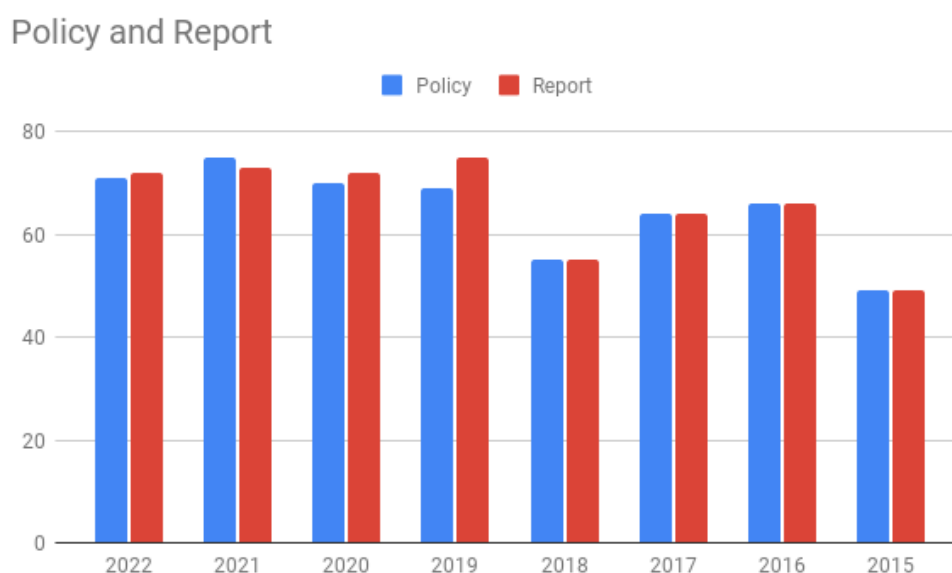

Fig.2 SEND Policy and /SEN Information Report yearly comparison

When the work first started to establish if settings had a SEND Policy and/ or a SEN Information report numbers were low initially and then succeeded by a spike in numbers, and then another dip in numbers all of which corresponded with the work of FVP and PCC SEND services to not only conduct the review but report on it a variety of school forums. After the spike and then dip, numbers have been consistent up until 2022 which again saw a slight dip. It is unclear why this latest dip may have occurred, but could be linked to ongoing LA changes connected work with settings and changes to the SENCo Forum.

Search Information & Review Dates

An average of 2.57 clicks were taken to find the SEND Policies and 2.48 to find the SEN Information reports, which is a slight improvement of previous years. This may be in part due to having a better idea of what to search for and also more links working.

A further examination of the reports also showed that a number have not been updated in one or more years, as seen from table 1 and fig.3 below.

Last Reviewed	SEND Policy	SEN Information Report
2022	11	12
2021	41	50
2020	8	6
2019	6	0
2018	0	0
2017	1	0

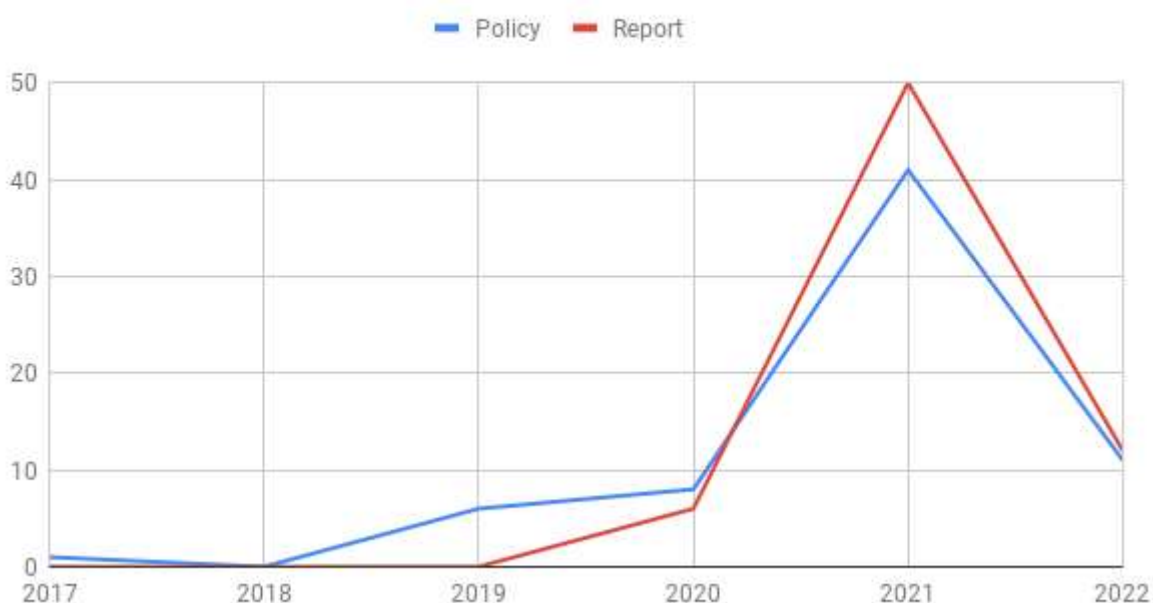**Table 1: Review dates of policies and reports**

Fig.3 SEND Policy and /SEN Information Report Review Dates

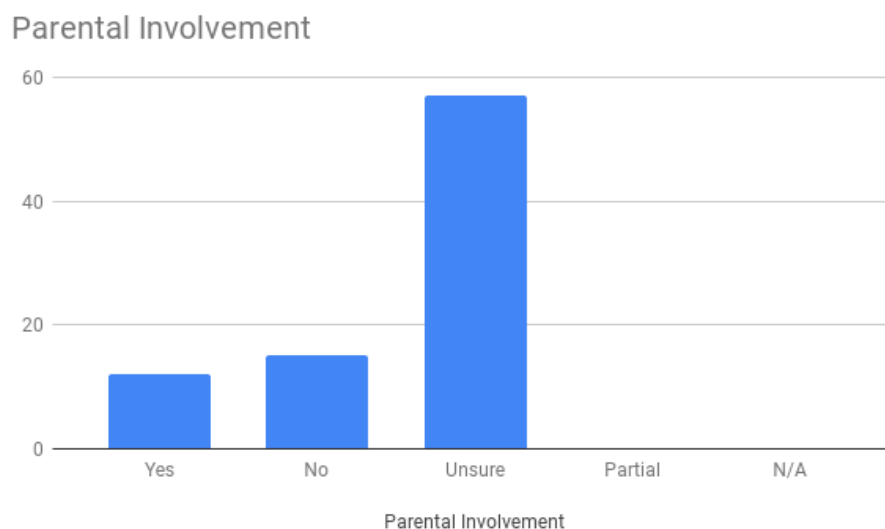**Parental Involvement**

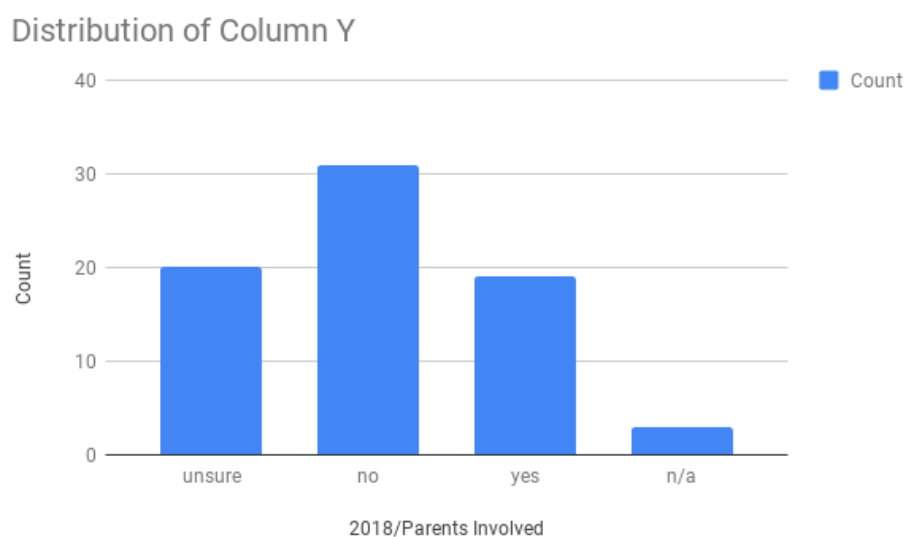**Fig. 4 Breakdown of parental involvement in the SEN Information Report 2022**

Fig. 5 Breakdown of parental involvement in the SEN Information Report 2018

Parental involvement is an area where there has been a dip in involvement since the work started to review the reports. In 2018 there were 19 educational settings reporting parental inclusion in SEN information report development compared to 12 in 2022. SEN Information Report is for the benefits of parents and it is important that parents feel that they are fully informed of the support that their child is having within the educational setting, also that the information is clear and accessible.

Part to the review process, also involved the reviewer recording their views on whether they could ascertain the parental involvement in the SEN report development. The results from the review in 2022 are as follows:

T here are quotes from parents about provisions for their child. I'm not sure this constitutes involvement.
parents are encouraged to give feedback, but there is no mention of collaboration in the writing of the report.
this report was compiled in collaboration with parents of SEN children with various levels of need.
this document has been created in collaboration with students, staff and parents of children with SEN at ****************
this SEND report has been compiled in collaboration with staff, SEND governor, parents and children, and is reviewed annually.
parents views are formally sought at termly support plan review meetings and in the end of year SEND questionnaire
this report has been produced in consultation with parents.
parents are involved in care planning, but unsure if involved in report.
parents have given feedback quotes.
no info or report given.
this report has been produced in consultation with parents.
this information...was sent to parents for consultation in october 2021
parents can offer feedback and views via the ofsted website.
deputy head and senco devised the policy. no mention of parents.
incomplete report
(for) this report...to be effective, it needs the views of all: Parents/carers,pupils, governers and staff
this report has been co-produced with parents
this report....will be approved by the Governing Body
parents are involved in care planning, and can give feedback, but no mention of involvement in the report.
this report....will be approved by the Governing Body
this policy will be reviewed by the SENCO every year...alongside stakeholders.

Table 2: Reviewer Comments

The drop in Parent Carer involvement and the reviewer comments, point to a potential lack of focus for some settings on participation and coproduction of Parent Carers and CYP and it could be perceived that SEN Reports and their coproduction are not valued.

Checklist Data

The next set of data is the result of the answers given by the document reviewers when analysing the relevant documents to ascertain from a parental perspective how satisfactory they found the information and whether they felt it would address their concerns and needs. The data represents a 'yes' in answer to each question on the checklist.
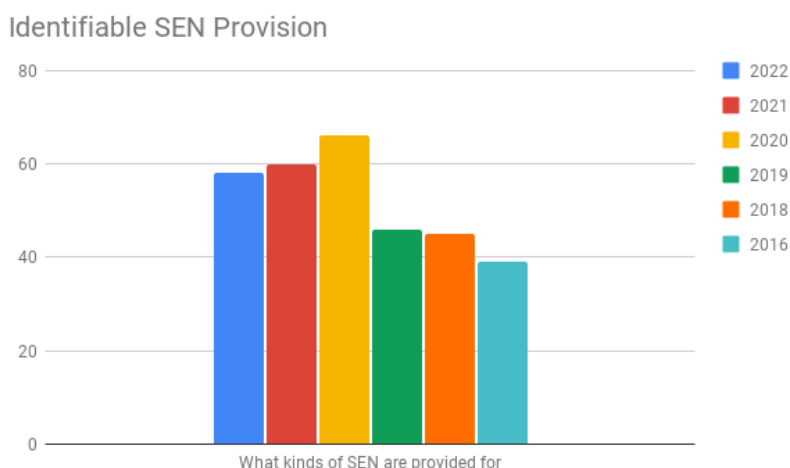
SEN Provision

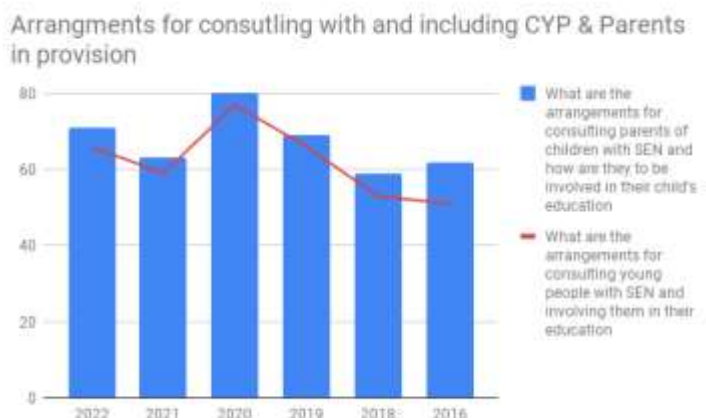**Fig. 6 Can SEN provision be identified in the SEN Information Report?**

Fig. 7 Arrangements for consulting about SEN Provision

The reviewer asked them self "do the reports identify clearly SEN provision and do the reports show what arrangements there are for consulting with people about the SEN provision" the results were that more settings had their reports recorded as a 'no' the information could not be identified. For 2022 71 settings had information in their reports that showed what the arrangements were for consulting with parents about their CYP educational provision. This can be seen where from Fig. 6 & 7 and is a drop compared to previous years which is a downward trend in how SEN Information reports present information regards SEN provision. The numbers of reports where this information is available to read and understand has dropped to levels last seen in 2019.
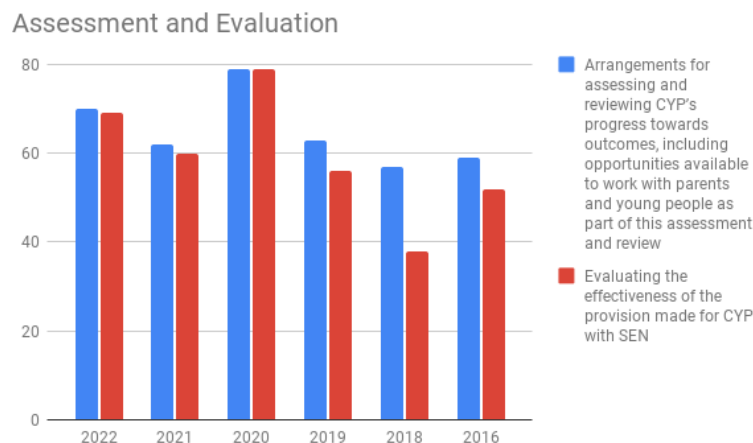
Fig. 8 Arrangements for assessing and evaluating SEN

A similar trend of a drop off in the number of settings receiving a 'yes' in answer to the questions does the report identify '*Arrangements for assessing and reviewing CYP's progress towards outcomes, including opportunities available to work with parents and young people as part of this assessment and review*' and '*Evaluating the effectiveness of the provision made for CYP with SEN'*. From Fig.8 it can be seen that numbers of settings scoring yes dropped between 2020 and 2021 and rose only slightly in 2022. It could be assumed from fig. 8 that there is less focus on evaluating any SEN provision made available to CYP with SEND in many settings.

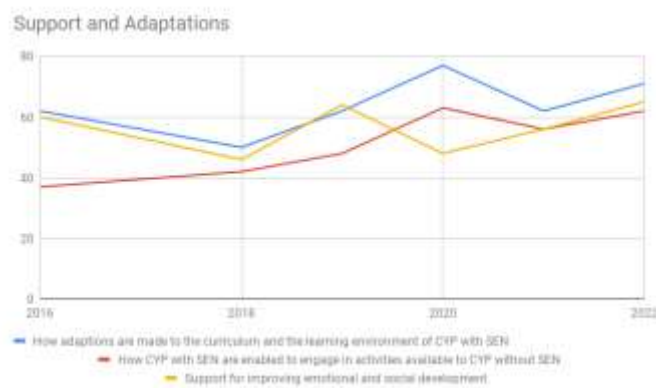**Fig. 9 Approaches of teaching CYP with SEN**

Fig. 10 Support and adaptions to enable CY with SEN to access the curriculum.
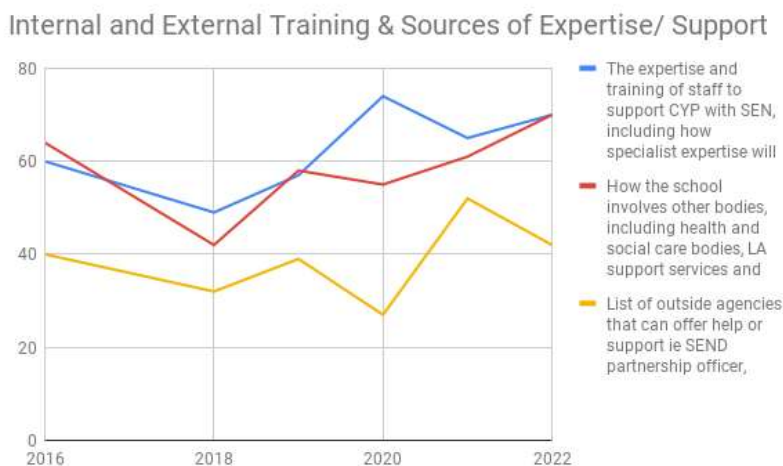
Fig. 11 External and Internal training and expertise to support CYP with SEND

Figures 9 to 11 show the same trend, whereby there was an increase in settings being recorded as a 'yes' in response to the checklist questions (see table section below) between 2016 and 2020, with a marked decrease between 2020 and 2022 and then a slight increase in 2022.

	Question	Yes	No
6	The approach of teaching CYP with SEN		
7	How adaptions are made to the curriculum and the learning environment of CYP with SEN		
8	The expertise and training of staff to support CYP with SEN, including how specialist expertise will be secured		
10	How CYP with SEN are enabled to engage in activities available with CYP in the school who do not have SEN		
11	Support for improving emotional and social development. This should include extra pastoral support arrangements for listening to the views of CYP with SEN and measure to prevent bullying		
12	How the school involves other bodies, including health and social care bodies, LA support services and voluntary sector organisation in meeting CYP SEN and supporting their families the kinds of special educational needs that are provided for		
15	List of outside agencies that can offer help or support ie SEND partnership officer, family voice,		

Table 3 – Section of Checklist referencing q's 6,7,8,10,11,12 & 15

Even amongst the questions reference in table 3 there is some variation in the number of settings scoring a 'yes' as to whether the SEN Information report answers the questions being asked from its review. Support relating to CYP emotional health and wellbeing, how CYP with SEN are enabled to engage in activities accessed by their Peers and the list of outside agencies utilised to provide support score lowest overall. This could be perceived by parent carers that only areas relating to attainment of CYP with SEND are a propriety for settings.

Fig. 12 Settings with links to SEND Information Hub (LO)

Fig.12 which shows the results relating to how many SEN Information reports reference the SEND Information Hub (LO) present something interesting in that unlike very other area of the review this is one area where there is a general year on year increase in the number of settings having this information in their reports, especially between 2020 and 2022. This may be due the concerted effort of the LA to raise awareness and the importance of the LO to individual settings.
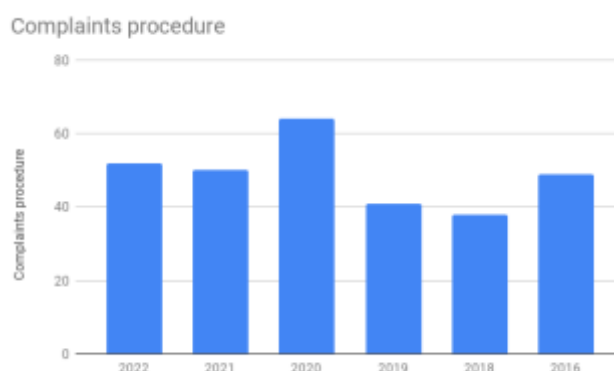

Fig. 13 Settings with information on how to complain

Fig. 14 Best Practice Information for SEN Information Reports
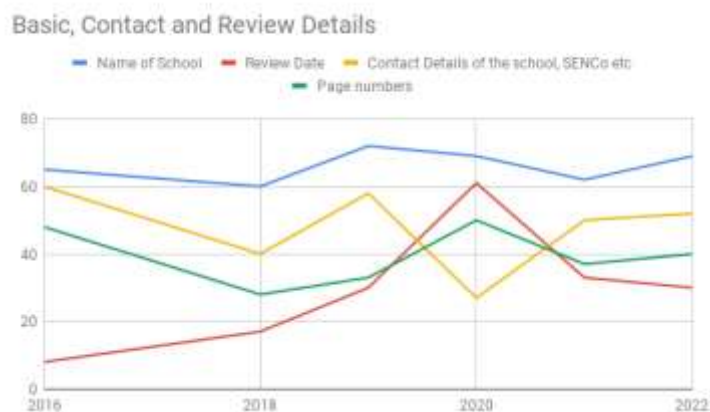
Fig. 13 and 14 revert back to the previous identified trend of an increase in the number of reports where the relevant information could be identified followed by a clear decrease and then a slight increase again. Worryingly from Fig.14 is the decrease in the number of settings reviewing their SEN Information reports annually; with some not being reviewed since 2019.

DISCUSSION

Setting and Parental/ CYP Involvement (Engagement, Participation, Coproduction)

Underpinning the SEND reforms were the section 19 principles and these were embedded throughout the CaF 2014 and SEND CoP 2015 whereby the voice of the parent and CYP were central to raising educational and other outcomes, facilitated in part through participation and ultimately coproduction. The SEN Information Reports are one vehicle by which this may be demonstrated and could help to enable Parents and CYP to feel involved in their own education experience and outcomes.

> **Local authority functions: supporting and involving children and young people:**
>
> In exercising a function under this Part in the case of a child or young person, a local authority in England must have regard to the following matters in particular—
>
> (a)*the views, wishes and feelings of the child and his or her parent, or the young person;*
>
> (b)*the importance of the child and his or her parent, or the young person, participating as fully as possible in decisions relating to the exercise of the function concerned;*
>
> (c)*the importance of the child and his or her parent, or the young person, being provided with the information and support necessary to enable participation in those decisions;*
>
> (d)*the need to support the child and his or her parent, or the young person, in order to facilitate the development of the child or young person and to help him or her achieve the best possible educational and other outcomes.*

Very few schools have self-reported / indicated that they have co-produced their SEN information report. This number remains consistently low, and from a parental perspective does little to encourage wider engagement in the educational experience of their CYP.

The numbers of settings that clearly identify how/where they involve CYP and their parent carers in the provision of CYP with SEND on an individual level although higher than the numbers in relation to SEN Information Report formulation are still lower than ideal. This could again lead parent carers to feeling as if SEND and their involvement are not a priority for the settings their CYP attend. There is much current anecdotal evidence that parent carers of feel that their CYP are not welcome in the settings their CYP attend. It should be stressed here that this information is anecdotal and based on individual lived experience of a small number of SEND families who have chosen to report on their experiences.

Accessibility and Usability of SEN Information Reports

In would appear that in a move towards more online working and streamlining of information systems such as their websites more settings have started to utilise a web based format for their SEN Information Reports in particular which is not always ideal in relation to accessibility and usability. Having the information only web based relies on a certain level of digital literacy and affordability. Some small scale work with parents in Peterborough has identified a level of digital poverty and digital illiteracy. This should be a consideration when making any information accessible in web format only. This also becomes more problematic when websites are changed and updated so information becomes lost somewhere; that is it becomes much harder to find.

It is not clear if some settings are aware that SEN Policy's and SEN information Reports are two separate documents with different purposes. Some settings move towards a tendency to combine the SEN Information report into their SEN Policy. It is important that schools and

parent are aware of the importance of both documents and how those impact on the school practice, family life and child outcomes. Addressing the school practice of SEN outside the presence of an EHCP is essential and crucial for the sustainability of statutory compliance, good practice and general wellbeing of Peterborough population.

There are also a number of settings that place SEN Information Reports on sections of their websites dedicated to policy and practice as opposed to information made readily available for and to parent carers whom are the intended audience of such documents. If someone were to conduct a general search it may take longer to find the information as a result due to the potential of not knowing what to look for; that is to say parent carers may be unaware of SEN Information Reports, what they are about and their importance so may not even look for them.

Focus on SEN Information Reports

A bit of commentary on what has led to the trends identified may be prudent here to show that there are potentially a number of factors that may affect who they are reviewed, worked on, and prioritised. The number of settings who have updated their SEN Information reports and where it can be seen that they are reviewed annually is worrying low. During the past five years however there have been a number of national and local factors that may have impacted here.

There was the global pandemic known as COVID-19 (C-19) which resulted in school closures during periods of lock down, home working even for teaching staff, illness due to C-19 of teaching staff and wide scale changes to the academic landscape as a result; there has been a period of financial stress as a result of the ongoing cost of living crisis faced by all across the UK resulting in ever decreasing school budgets and there have been periods of political and national unrest and resulting for some in the 'need to take action' in the form of strikes which have also including staff from educational settings. This is all taking place during a rise in the number of CYP with needs presenting requiring support leading to an increase in the number of CYP with EHCp's and the number of CYP listed as being in receipt of SEN Support.

Ideally SEN Reports should through their development from design to delivery:
1. Help to improve communication, across all agencies and in every area, which would go a long way to making a reality of the 'person-centred' approach the SEND system is trying to achieve
2. Help to show where and how training for all staff working with children and young people, for example on identifying SEND, and understanding the particular needs of every child would make a difference to the CYP's educational outcomes.
3. Encourage all agencies to enable all children to experience full inclusion and to enjoy a wide range of experiences in an education setting regardless of need.
4. To encourage all agencies to discuss, develop strategies and work together to ensure that every child enjoys fulfilment from an educational and vocational experience.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Settings and the LA do more to raise the importance of SEN Information reports to Parent Carers
2. For the LA to impress upon settings the importance of their SEN Information Report – this a document that will be looked for by Ofsted when inspecting schools as well as a legal requirement.
3. To work to help settings see the value in having parental involvement so as to co-produce their SEN information report
4. For settings to have access to a good practice example of SEN information report so they have more of an understanding of what is required
5. To make sure schools review their SEN information report on an annual basis – this can be shown by having a published and review date on the document (*COP Jan 2015 "6.79 The information published should be updated annually and any changes to the information occurring during the year should be updated as soon as possible.*)

Appendix 1

	Question	Yes	No
	MUST		
1	What kinds of SEN are provided for		
2	What are the Schools policies for identifying CYP with SEN and assessing their needs, including name and contact of the SENCO (Mainstream school only – would be best practice if all schools issue this information)		
3	What are the arrangements for consulting parents of children with SEN and how are they to be involved in their child's education		
4	What are the arrangements for consulting young people with SEN and involving them in their education		
5	Arrangements for assessing and reviewing CYP's progress towards outcomes, including opportunities available to work with parents and young people as part of this assessment and review		
6	The approach of teaching CYP with SEN		
7	How adaptions are made to the curriculum and the learning environment of CYP with SEN		
8	The expertise and training of staff to support CYP with SEN, including how specialist expertise will be secured		
9	Evaluating the effectiveness of the provision made for CYP with SEN		
10	How CYP with SEN are enabled to engage in activities available with CYP in the school who do not have SEN		
11	Support for improving emotional and social development. This should include extra pastoral support arrangements for listening to the views of CYP with SEN and measure to prevent bullying		
12	How the school involves other bodies, including health and social care bodies, LA support services and voluntary sector organisation in meeting CYP SEN and supporting their families the kinds of special educational needs that are provided for		
13	Complaints procedure		
14	Link to LA Local Offer		
15	List of outside agencies that can offer help or support ie SEND partnership officer, family voice,		
16	Name of School		
	BEST PRACTICE		
17	Review Date		
18	Contact Details of the school, SENCo etc		
19	Page numbers		