
What to do when there are no current literature reviews

1. Define what it is you want to research.

eg, I want to find current research around good practice for enabling contact with siblings for a five-year-old girl with severe learning disabilities where older siblings are still at home with their parents.

Think very clearly about what it is that you specifically want to research and why.

Think about every word - is it as clear as it can be (eg, 'research' or 'current research', 'learning difficulties' or 'severe learning disabilities')?

2. Identify accessible and relevant databases and pull out the essential key words to use as search terms. Start with a broad search, then narrow it down.

eg, first stage – 'contact', 'family placement'

eg, second stage – 'contact', 'family placement', 'siblings', 'disability'

For help with identifying databases and sources see

www.rip.org.uk/research-tools

3. Compile a list of relevant and recent sources listing author, date, title and publisher and the most relevant pages.

For evidence to underpin assessments and reports for the family court, use 'safe' sources. See www.rip.org.uk/research-tools for tips on appraising research.

4. Read the texts with a mindset focused on producing an end product (an analytical evaluation of current research in the area).

Look at the index and contents. Read the preface or overview. Skim-read them with an emphasis on conclusions and the key elements that interest you, then read those in more depth. When reading electronic documents use the 'find' function to search for key words in the text.