
The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) is the UK's largest independent provider of research, assessment and information services for education and children's services. Its purpose is to make a difference to learners of all ages, especially to the lives of children and young people, by ensuring that its work improves the practice and understanding of everyone who works with and for learners.

**For more information see:
www.nfer.ac.uk**

Investigating what works:
through reviews



Reviews offer a cost and time efficient way of answering research questions based on existing literature.

There is universal acceptance of the importance of evidence-based policy making. Reviews are a very cost effective method of distilling a vast amount of information into a synthesis of the best and most relevant evidence. They also avoid the need to gather new data.

Reviews can help to address many different types of questions. Some examples might be:

- What is best practice... in leading education and children’s services?
- How can we most effectively... increase participation in higher education (HE)?
- What strategies do other countries use... to drive up educational attainment?
- What are the costs associated with... providing accommodation for looked after children?
- What do we know about... the impact of early intervention on children’s life chances?

There are many possibilities for reviews which will provide robust information underpinned by the benefits of NFER’s reputation for objectivity and rigour.

What can NFER offer you?

NFER is uniquely placed to work with your organisation to answer the questions that matter to you. We are the UK’s leading independent provider of research, assessment and information services for education and children’s services, with over sixty years’ experience of investigating this evidence. Our Centre for Information and Reviews is a hub of information and reviewing expertise, with access to a vast amount of national and international literature.

We can tailor our reviews to your specific needs, taking into account your budget, timeline, intended scope and desired outputs. Where this is a report, this can be descriptive or focused on future action, depending on your needs. We can present findings at events, deliver them as a set of slides, write a journal article, or work with you and your stakeholders to help you to interpret the implications of review findings for your organisation. We add value by disseminating findings through our own communication channels with researchers, policy makers and schools—free of charge.

We can also offer consultancy support to help you to design or conduct your own review. Alternatively, we can carry out individual components of reviews for you (such as search strategy development, database and online searching, coding, quality assurance or reference management).

Examples of recent projects

NFER has carried out reviews for a wide range of clients, including the, then, Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA), the Local Government Association (LGA), the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA), the Children’s Workforce Development Council (CWDC) and the CfBT Education Trust. We also manage and quality assure the extensive review programme for the Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Children and Young People’s Services (C4EO), which is designed to help the children’s sector improve services for children, young people and their families.

We have carried out scoping studies or reviews on:

- closing the gap in early years children’s outcomes
- international perspectives on integrated children’s services
- safeguarding
- strategies to tackle child poverty
- improving transition for children and young people
- pupils’ experiences of and perspectives on the national curriculum
- online risks and children’s safety
- recruitment and retention in initial teacher training
- teaching inference skills in reading
- approaches to working with children, young people and families from Traveller, Irish Traveller, Gypsy, Roma and Show People communities.

For more information, or to discuss a potential review, contact **Sharon O’Donnell**, Head of NFER’s Centre for Information and Reviews, at s.odonnell@nfer.ac.uk or visit www.nfer.ac.uk

The table below tells you a little about the types of reviews that we can offer:

Product:	Why would I use it?	What will it give me?	How long will it take?	Suggested report length
Rapid reviews	To get a quick overview of an area of policy or practice	An overview of what we know about a specific topic. It can be based on research literature, policy or practice evidence. Literature is located through limited searching	1–2 months	10 page report
Scoping reviews	To find out if there is enough evidence to merit a Rapid Evidence Assessment or full systematic review	A map of how much evidence there is on a topic	1–2 months	10 page report
Rapid evidence assessments (REAs)	To get a thorough evidence synthesis to inform policy or practice. To answer questions about what is effective	A robust synthesis of the evidence, with key messages and recommendations. Literature is found through comprehensive searching.	3–5 months	30-40 page report
Meta-analytical reviews	To pool results from a series of high quality quantitative evaluations	A numeric estimate of the overall effect of the intervention being evaluated.	3–5 months	15 page report
Full systematic reviews	To get a ‘gold standard’ evidence synthesis of all available evidence	A highly robust and systematic synthesis of the evidence, with key messages and recommendations. Literature is found through highly comprehensive searching.	6–12 months	60 page report