



Locating research literature for social services research: case studies and challenges

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- ❑ Has been undertaking, supporting, and developing methods for systematic reviews since 1993
- ❑ www.eppi.ioe.ac.uk

A selection of our funders:



NICE Collaborating Centre for Social Care

Is a collaboration led by SCIE



Three case studies

Identifying research about **care and support**

- Home care for older people
- Transition between child and adult health and social care services
- Transition between mental health hospital and community settings

Each topic = 7+ systematic reviews e.g:

What interventions work?

What are people's experiences?

What helps or hinders different service models?

Objectives

To reflect on:

1. Experiences and challenges of seeking social care literature from databases and websites
2. Utility of health and social science bibliographic databases

1. Conceptualising the search

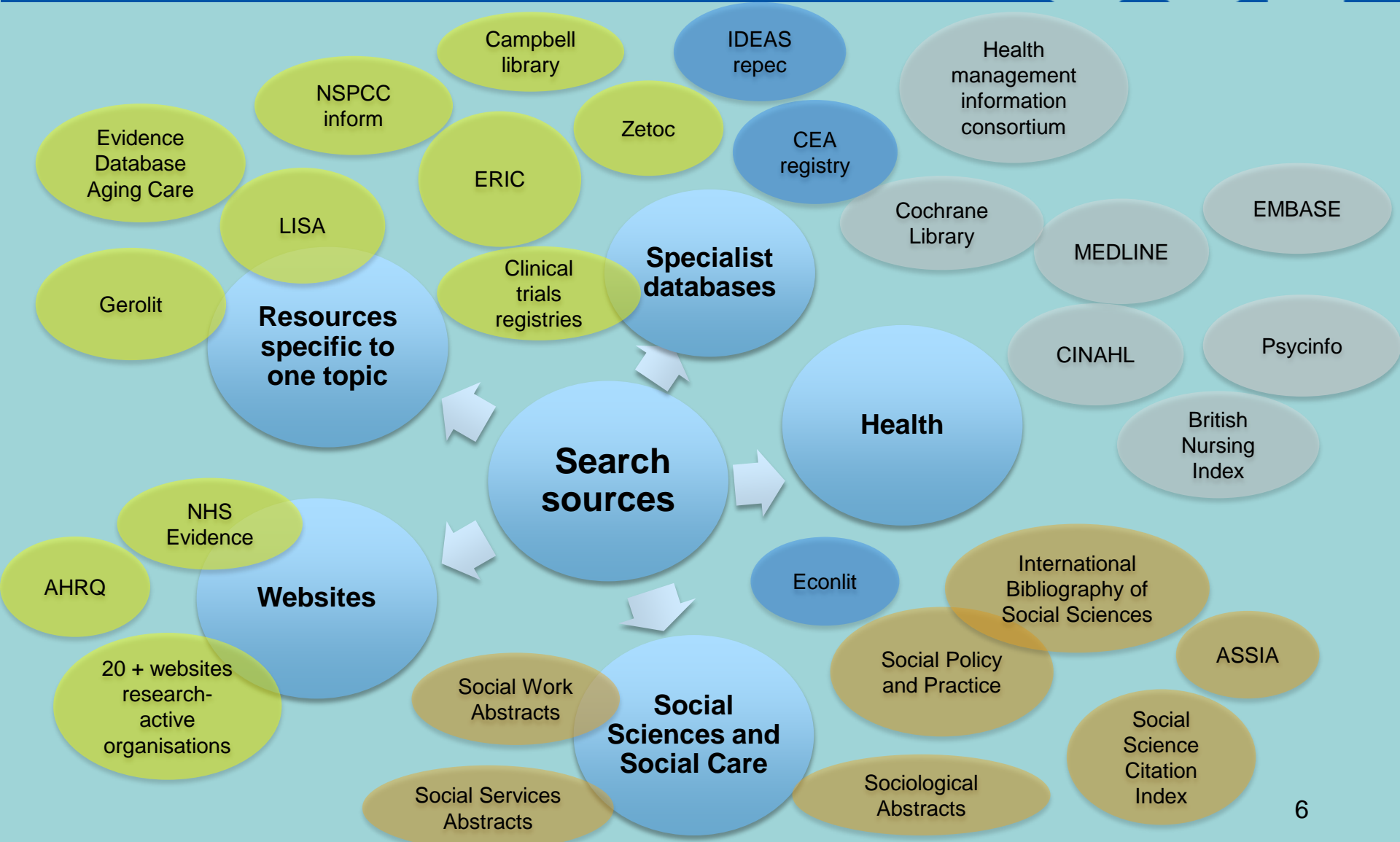
Key Challenges

Population and settings:

- individual to organisation-level
- often merged (mental health patients, mental health units in a hospital)
- Minimising clinical studies
- Terminology diverse
 - “transition to community” = discharge, return home, continuity of care, leave hospital...

Some solutions

- Many test searches
- Database searches on multiple medical and social science, social care, economic topics
- Using exclusions in the search to reduce unwanted populations/clinical studies in large health databases
- Browsing/scanning websites and specialist repositories
- Choice of websites for different populations, study designs (increased focus UK views studies)



2. Utility of search sources

- 1) Where did our evidence searches identify studies?
- 2) How well did the database searches locate the studies within the sources?
- 3) Are some sources more useful for particular study designs?

Methods:

- a) Retrospective analysis of which sources located studies

2 topics on transitions = 152 citations

- b) Searching multiple databases to assess which contain the studies

3 topics = 225 citations, 20 databases

Studies found outside databases

Websites, citation checking,
sourced by team, trials registries

23% Home care

14% child to adult transitions

6% mental health transitions

Performance of searches

Topic	Number of citations retrieved from each source	Precision (%)	Median	Sensitivity (%)	Median
		Range		Range	
Mental health transitions (n=65/71)	Range: 573-6258 Median = 2969	0.5-1.4	1.0%	45-76	57%
Child to adult transitions (n=70/81)	Range: 255-5132 Median = 2705	0.6-3.4	1.1%	44-95	76%

Analysis for 9 databases: ASSIA, British Nursing Index, CINAHL, EMBASE, HMIC, MEDLINE, Psycinfo, Social Policy and Practice, Social Science Citation Index

Utility of sources – individual topics- % studies in the reviews.

Home care

Social Policy and
Practice
73% (55/72)

Mental health
transitions

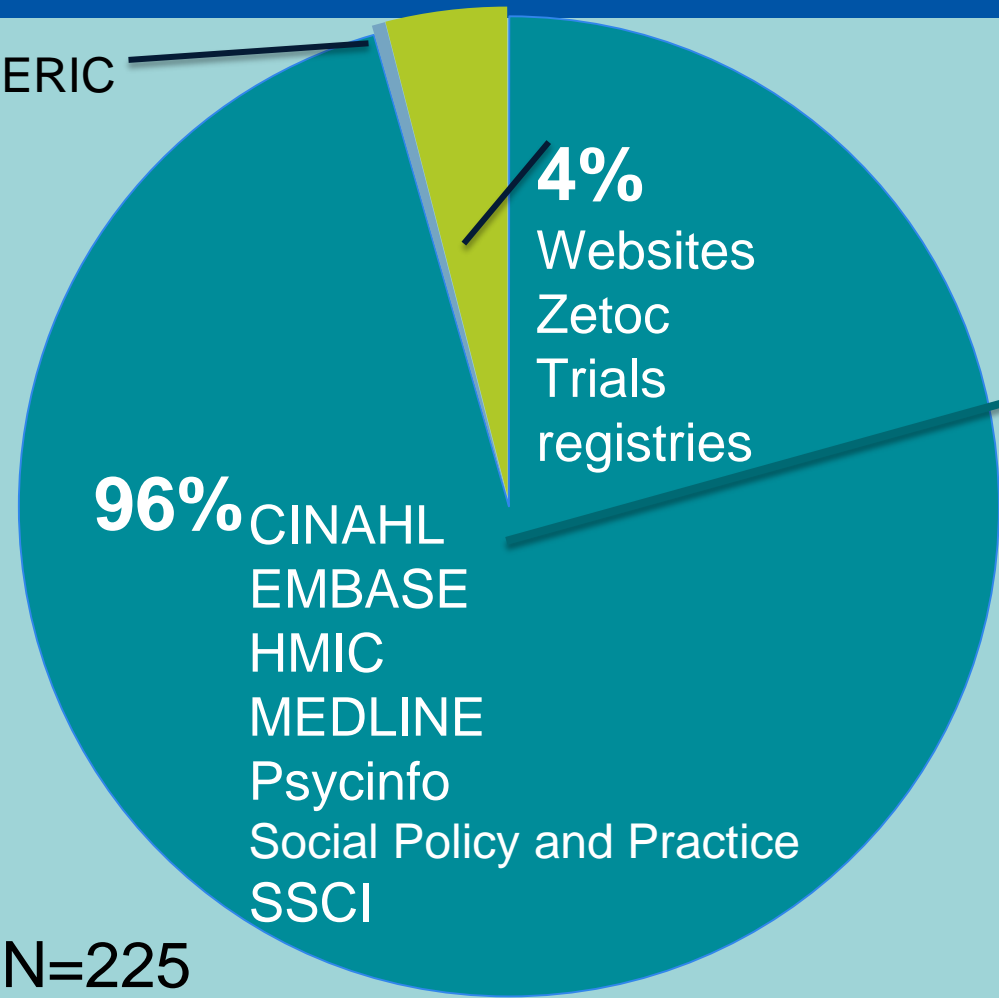
Psycinfo
90% (64/71)

Our searches: 56%

Child to Adult
Transitions

CINAHL,
EMBASE, SSCI
52% singly
70% (57/81)
collectively

Our searches: 54%



From our searches, for two topics, n=152:

86% studies (n=130/152)
plus BNI=89% (n=135/152)

Remaining items **11%**
(n=17/152) (websites, trials registries, Zetoc, ERIC, citation searching)

Which search sources contain the studies?

Utility of sources – study design (items present, all topics)

Study design (N=225)	Cost n=15	Systematic Reviews n=26	Views and Experiences n=123	Effectiveness n=59	Other n=13
Database	CINAHL Plus, HMIC, and Embase or Medline 15 (100%)	SSCI, Psycinfo, SPP 25 (96%)	CINAHL Plus, HMIC, SPP, SSCI, 113 (92%)	CINAHL Plus, Embase, SSCI, SPP 59 (100%)	Embase or Medline, and SPP 13 (100%)
Not present in a database		1	8		

Conclusions



- Variable performance to locate studies within individual databases
- Core set of 8 databases collectively important across 3 topics
- Searching websites and resources specific to individual topics important
- Sources by study design potentially useful for different research questions, though low sample sizes

Thank you

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