

6 Methodology

Our approach is that of a literature review. We provide the reader with an overview of what is known about barriers to play for children with disabilities in these four key contexts. By exploring knowledge to date, we map the territory for further research in this area. The relative merits of narrative versus systematic reviews are much debated. Critics of narrative reviews suggest that they lack objectivity and transparency. They argue that systematic reviews are more rigorous, objective and transparent. Systematic reviews can, however, be difficult to undertake by large teams of researchers, and with mindful of these difficulties, we chose not to adopt this approach or, rather, not to make any claim to have conducted such a review. We strove, however, to mitigate certain criticisms directed towards traditional, narrative reviews. Our approach is best described as a narrative review 'informed' by social science versions of the systematic review – in particular, 'adapted' and 'integrated' approaches (Victor, 2008). We began by defining the review's scope. We developed a protocol to guide our review; in this case, we developed a set of key questions to focus our reading. A search strategy was developed.

Data extraction was undertaken by members of the team, with synthesis being a collaborative process. A narrative form of synthesis was employed, involving the description of the findings of studies we examined. Many of the studies were qualitative. For this reason, we applied a thematic approach, identifying key themes/ issues arising within the literature.

The following questions structured/guided our review:

1. How has the right to play for children and young persons with disabilities been researched?
2. What barriers to the play of children and young persons with disabilities are identified within the literature?
3. Has the 'voice' of children and young persons with disabilities been presented in existing research? When present, what methods were used?

Our approach to the literature search was necessarily dynamic and iterative. We ran numerous searches using the academic search engines: Scopus, ProQuest Central, Web of Science, PubMed, CINAHL, ERIC and Google Scholar. Where search engines permitted, we employed Boolean searches; where they did not, we applied similar principles when running searches. Key search terms included 'disability', 'child(ren)', 'disorder' 'disabled child', 'children with disabilities', 'play', 'playing', 'leisure', 'recreation' and various terms relevant to specific diagnostic categories in childhood (e.g. autism) and relevant to each of our four contexts, for example, 'school', 'playground/s', 'outdoor/s', 'built environment/s', 'home', 'family', 'friends', 'siblings', 'nature', 'nature play', 'natural environments', 'wild', 'adventure' and so on. We used Google to find non-governmental organisations promoting play and

in particular play for children with disabilities. This approach also resulted in the discovery of a number of relevant reports, which provided us with additional citations.

We included in our review academic literature. This included books published by reputable academic publishers, chapters in edited collections, journal articles and final reports from funded research. Conference proceedings were included only if they were formally published. Our key criteria for assessing 'quality' for this type of literature was whether it had been subject to peer review at some point. Grey literature was also included: reports produced by non-governmental organisations (e.g. Play England, Save the Children), reports written by professional bodies and reports produced by government agencies. Our key criterion for assessing 'quality' for this type of literature was whether it was evidence based.