Sources can include people, as well as written and electronic materials. Colleagues, family, friends, books, online databases and the internet are all potentially valuable sources of information.

A well thought out search question will help you identify relevant sources.

Types of information

You have now written your search question and identified search words. In order to find the right information, it is important to consider 'Where will I look for the information?'

There are many types of information sources, but before looking at them in detail, it is helpful to understand the differences between the types of information available.

There are two main types of information or knowledge - explicit and implicit.

Explicit knowledge is that taken from books, journal articles and documents. It is information that is written down and explained.

Implicit knowledge is the information we carry around in our heads, usually not written down or explained. Social service workers will carry a lot of this information around and share it in face-to-face discussions. This type of information is also known as tacit information. It is an invaluable source of knowledge, and the sharing of it is encouraged through online communities and social networking websites.

Information sources

You will now understand the difference between explicit and implicit/tacit knowledge.
Below is a list of information sources and their descriptions.

Bibliographic databases	Electronic indexes of book and journals. They contain document summaries or abstracts and can tell you where the resource was published. Some may also contain a link to full text documents. Examples include Social Care Online and the Campbell Collaboration.
Primary sources	Original data and information. Examples include legislation, policy documents, surveys, opinion polls.
Secondary sources	Literature reviews, reports, text books, reference works (dictionaries and encyclopaedias) and journal articles that develop arguments and analyses based on original information.
Academic journals	Peer reviewed periodicals in which academic research on a particular subject is published. Content usually takes the form of articles presenting original research and reviews.
Audio/visual materials	CDs, DVDs, podcasts, audio books.
Internet	Electronic online resources which provide fast access to a diverse range of information worldwide.
Search engines	Search engines are easy to use and are a good way of finding information quickly. Examples include Google and Yahoo.
Portals	Many sources of information on a specific discipline available in one place online. An example includes the SSSC Learning Zone.
Intranets	Private computer networks that organisations use as their internal websites.
Media	Newspapers, television, radio.
People	Keep in mind that a colleague/friend may have the answer to your question.
Social media	Examples include Twitter, LinkedIn, communities of practice (like SSKS) and blogs.

Search engines

The internet has changed the way people communicate and share information. People are using the Internet, and more specifically, search engines to find the information they need. While search engines are, for the most part, extremely useful, there are some points to be aware of when using them.

Popular search engines include Google and Yahoo. These services are basically indexes of information retrieved from websites. When a person enters a search term in the search box, the search engine retrieves every page on the web that contains that word.

Advantages of search engines:

- Fast
- Easy to use
- Search a vast amount of information
- Results are generally very useful
- Searches can be refined using tools such as advanced search, Google Books, Google Scholar and Yahoo Image Search.

Be aware that:

- Anyone can publish on the web, so it can be hard to judge whether the information is reliable and credible
- Search engines provide a lot of information
- Results may include material that is not directly relevant to your search
- On occasion, search engines will only provide a reference to an article and not the full text.

In Step 1 you drafted a search question to help you get to the information you needed. From useful the information you got back from your search, from the list above, identify which type of source it/they were. What does this tell you about the trustworthiness of the information?