

# Practice spotlight: Making space for children's voices

## A simple feelings tool in a Children's Contact Service

At Better Place Australia's Children's Contact Service, we introduced a visual feelings tool to create intentional opportunities for children to share how they experience visits. The tool uses a series of illustrated faces children can point to if they choose. Participation is always voluntary, and the aim is to support children's expression rather than measure outcomes.

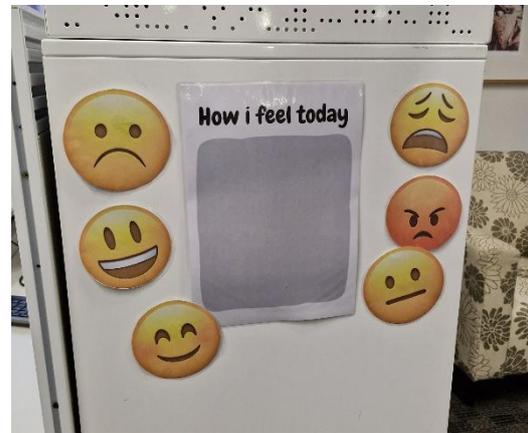
### How it works

The faces are printed and laminated and placed in the walkway children pass through when moving between parents. This allows children to engage before or after visits, away from parents and without pressure. Contact workers introduce the tool during the child readiness visit using a storybook that explains the service and how staff may check in with how children are feeling.

Staff may invite children to select a face or ask prompting questions, while also using professional judgement. For example, when a child is upset, busy playing, or focused on leaving. The tool is designed to sit naturally within the environment rather than feel like a formal activity.

### How children use it

Some children use it regularly; others choose not to. As the faces include no text, the tool has been used with children as young as 2 through to early adolescence. Children more often engage with the tool before a visit.



When children choose to engage, they express a range of feelings (both positive and negative). This gives staff another way to understand children's experiences alongside standard observation.

### Why this matters in practice

The tool provides a simple, child-centred way to create space for children's voices within routine CCS workflow. Responses can be used to inform how contact workers support children during visits, rather than assess outcomes or make judgements about children's progress.

### Things to consider

- Keep participation voluntary and flexible
- Maintain children's agency to choose how much or little they share
- Use professional judgement about when to invite engagement
- Expect variation: children will use the tool differently depending on context

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