

# Suggestions for using the feelings cards direct work tool

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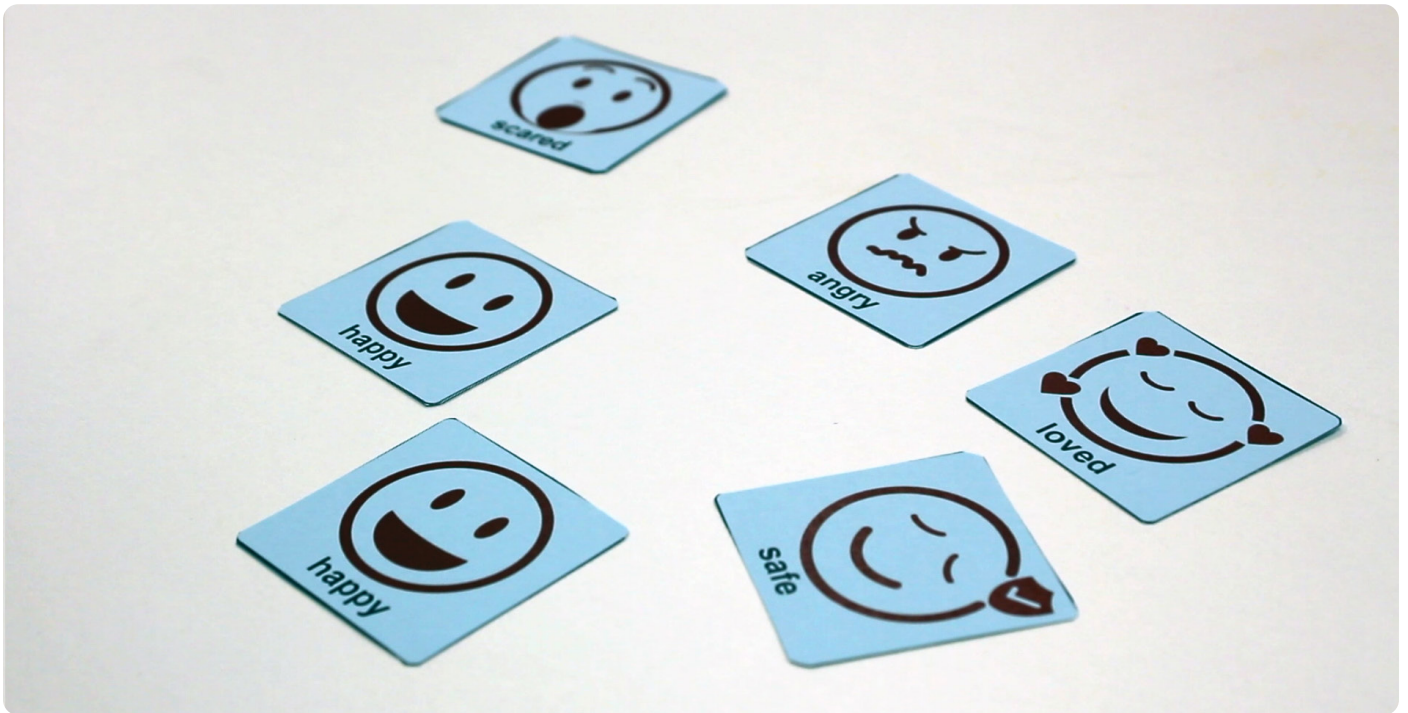
This tool is designed to help children express their wishes and feelings about keeping in touch plans and ensure that their voice can be heard in reports. It is suitable for children from about three to about 14. It can be used to inform care plans and reviews for children in all family types. In adoption and kinship, this tool can also be used by social workers to ensure the child's perspective is included when adopters or carers feel plans need to be reviewed.

Make sure you have spent some time getting to know the child and explaining who you are before this meeting. Make it clear what you will do with the information 'tell the judge what you said' or 'talk to the big meeting about this', or 'do some talking with Dad and Gran'.

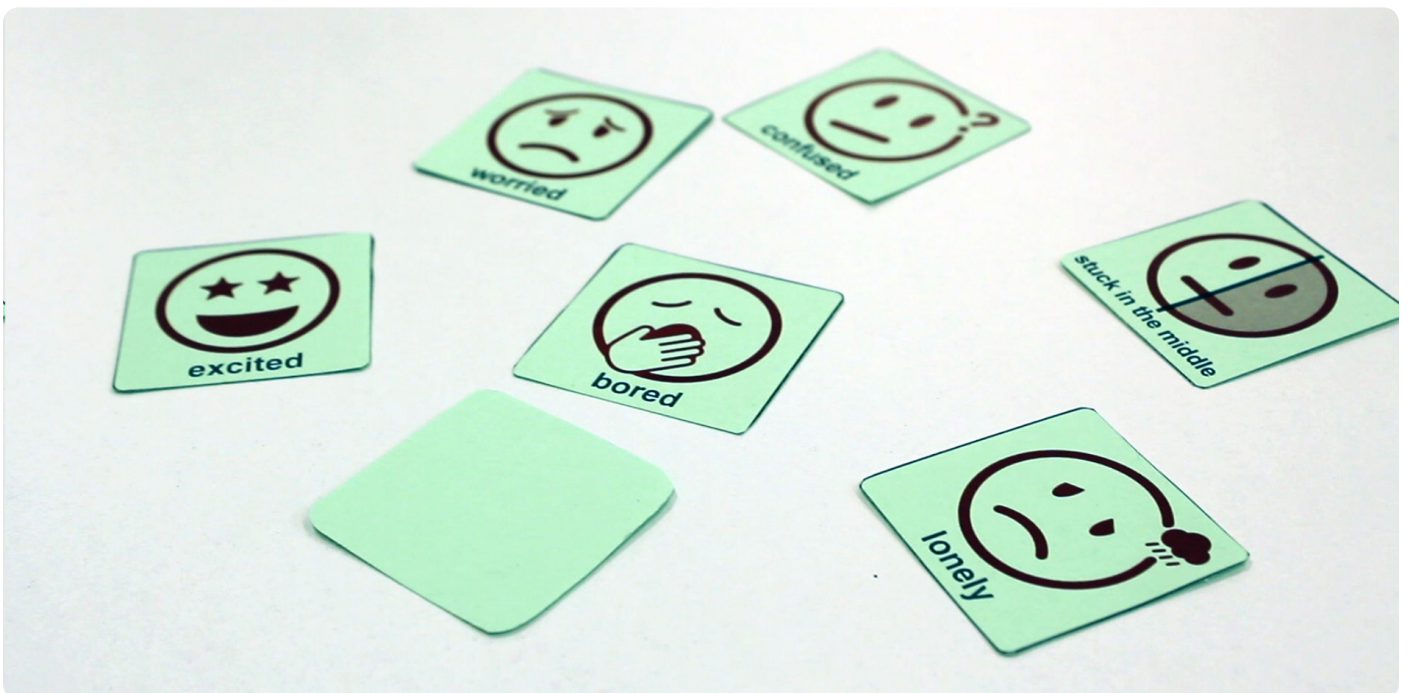
You will need the [worksheet](#), felt pens, some [feelings cards](#) – you can print these off from the website onto coloured card and cut them up – or draw your own.



Select the right cards for the child's age and level of understanding – simple cards for younger children.



Add in more complicated cards for older children.



You need more than one card for each feeling – children sometimes like to show that they are VERY happy or sad by putting lots of this feeling.

Leave some blank in case the child wants to add some feelings you haven't thought of.

Introduce the cards and the worksheet. Give the child time to have a proper look at these tools before you say what you would like them to do. Lots of children like to go through the box of cards and sort them out.



Others like to draw their family in the house.

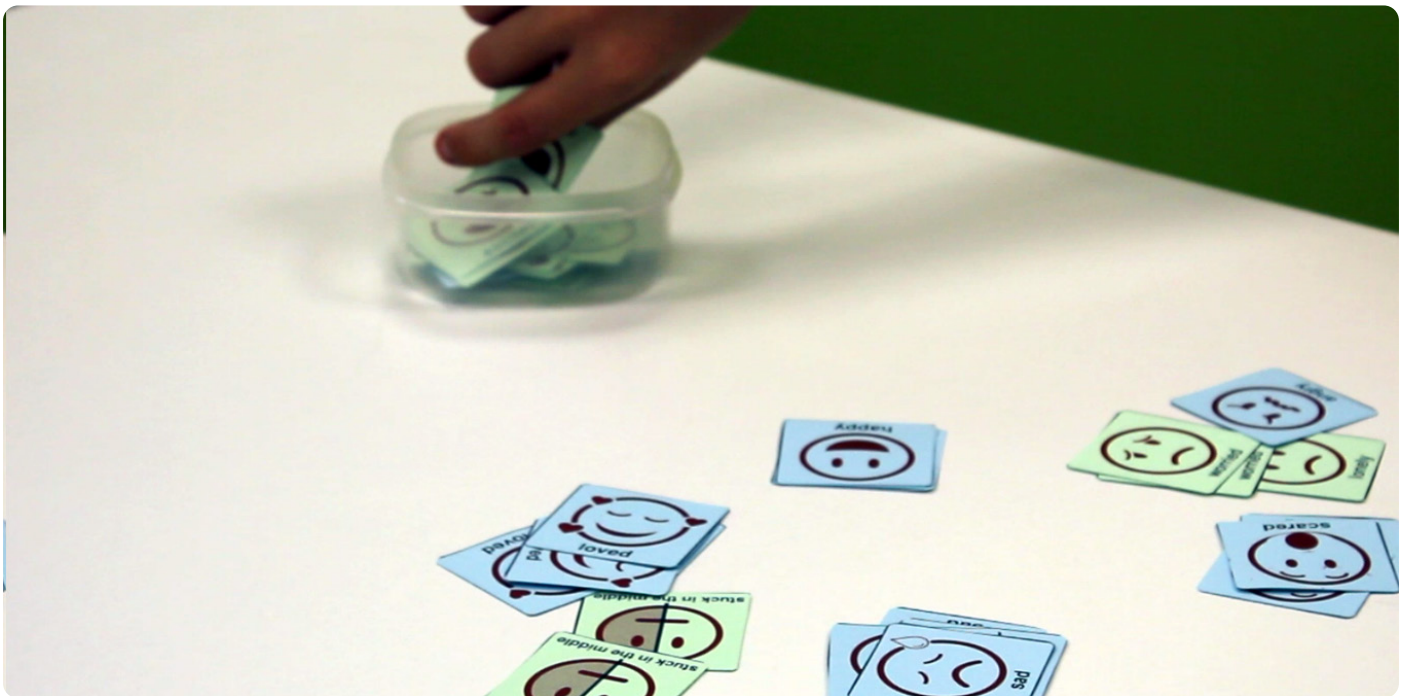


Use reflective listening to describe the child's responses and reassure them that what they are doing is ok, rather than praise – this can accidentally influence them. 'You are using lots of red in that picture' or 'it's ok to tip all the cards out on the table'.

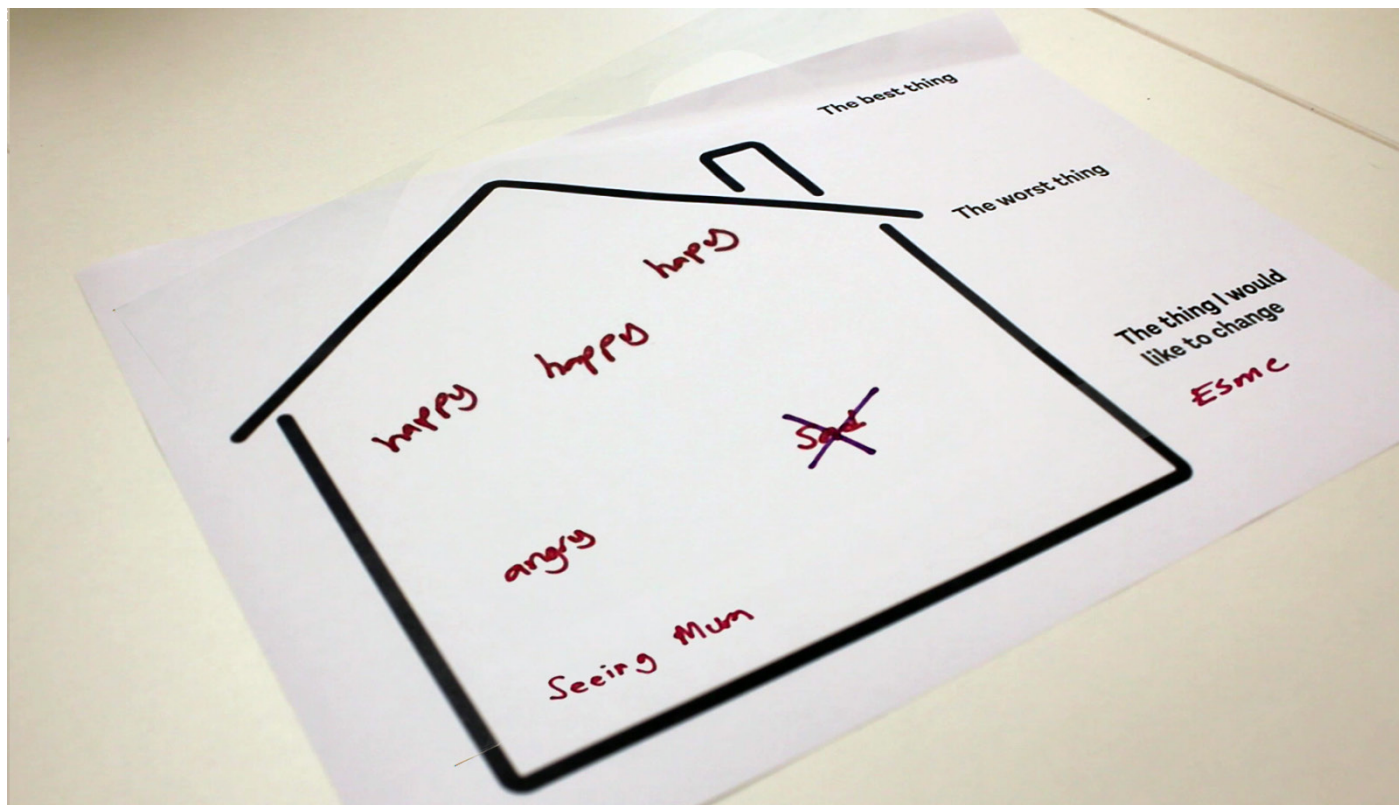
Have a little look at the cards together to make sure the child understands the feelings (rather than just being able to read the words). Share some examples of your own, e.g. I feel scared when I see a spider, what about you? I feel happy when I eat ice cream.

Write the situation that you are going to be talking about, e.g. 'seeing Mum' and the child's name on the worksheet. Try to give the child as much control as possible – like choosing where you sit and what colour pen to write with but explain that you are going to write down what they say so that you can remember it. Put your notes where they can see what you write.

Ask the child to choose cards to show what it is like in a particular situation – such as when they see their Mum – give plenty of time, try not to interrupt, give permission to use as many cards as they like, offer quiet attention.



Go through each card and write the feeling on the worksheet then ask for an example 'tell me a bit about feeling happy when you see Mum'. Write down their exact words – you often need to do this on a piece of paper if they won't fit on the sheet. If child chooses to remove a card or cross a feeling out, make a mental note. Try to dissuade children from doing the writing themselves – it can lead to them choosing only words they know how to spell or getting bored before you have done all the feelings.

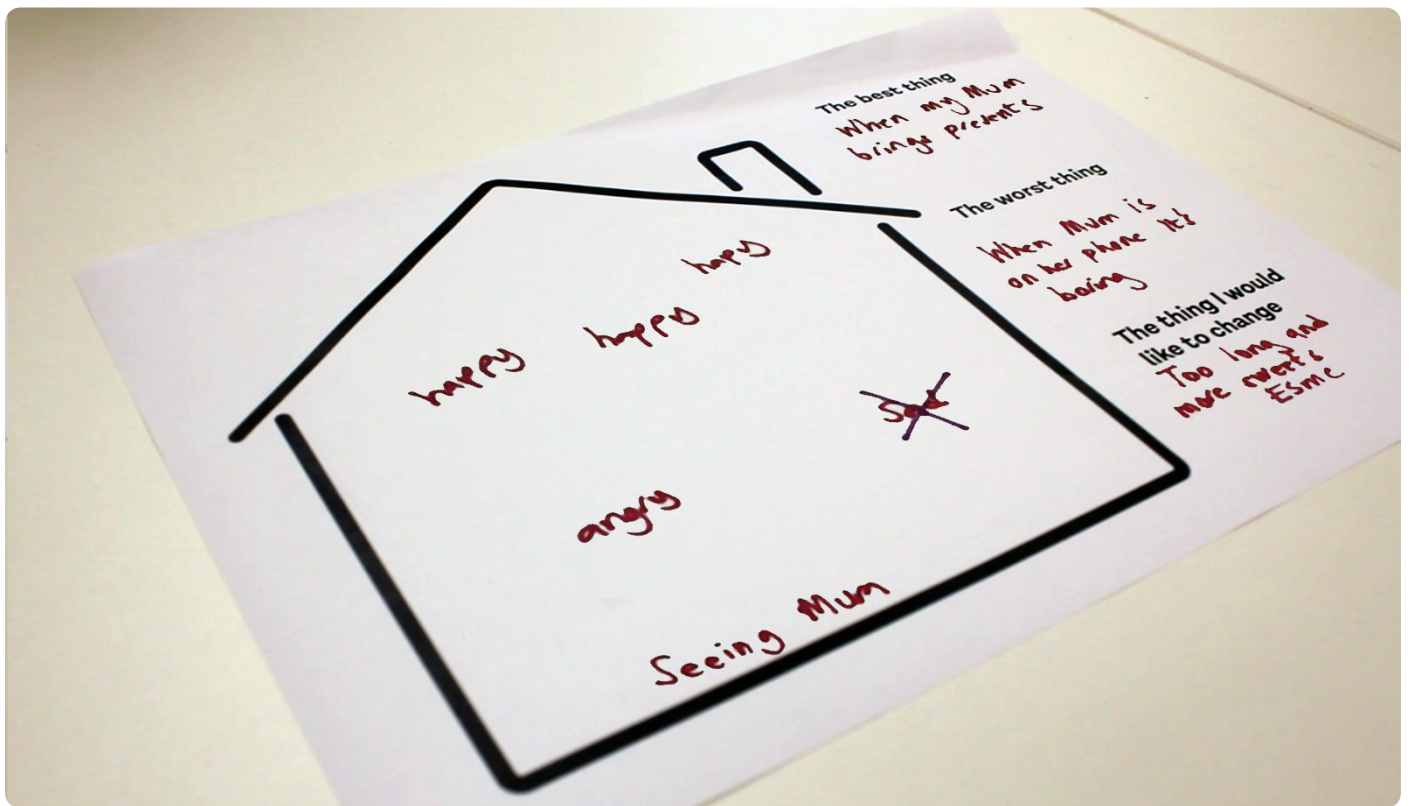


In this example, the child said

- > *happy cos I get sweets, happy cos I see my Mum, happy cos I go to the park with Ravi [her foster carer] after*
- > *angry when Mum's stupid boyfriend is on the phone*
- > *sad when Mummy doesn't like me – but quickly crossed the word out.*

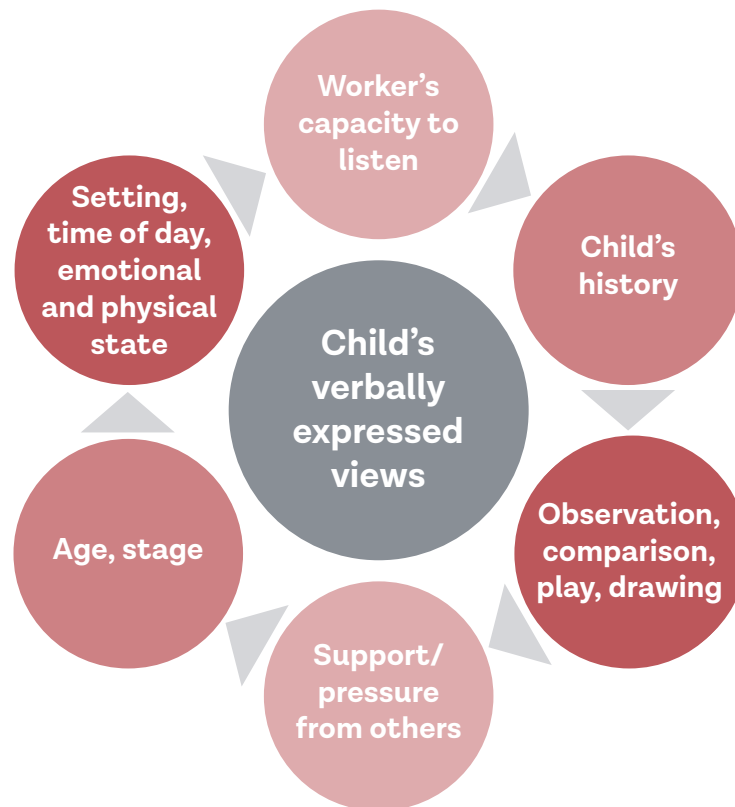
Accept whatever the child says about their feelings without any follow up questions. Then move on to the three questions on the side of the sheet. You can introduce these by saying how there are good things and bad things about everything – even chocolate. The good thing is it tastes yummy, but the bad thing is if you eat too much, you can feel sick. Write down the child's responses in their own words. Check if there is anything else they want to say or any questions they want to ask.

If the child is concentrating well, you can repeat the exercise with a different situation such as seeing their other birth relatives (including siblings) or living with/keeping in touch with their foster carers. Or you can do this another day.



## Writing up the session

Describe the tools you used and how well the child engaged – including any outside factors that may have influenced this. Describe the process of selecting the cards as well as the content – including cards they picked up and then rejected or words they wanted crossed out.



These issues are relevant if you are writing a report and when arrangements are being reviewed more informally with adopters or kinship carers – it is always important to put a child's expressed wishes in the context of wider knowledge of the child:

- > Was there emotional detail in their responses?
- > Were their answers congruent with the emotions chosen?
- > Were they comfortable to express a mixture of negative and positive emotions? If not, was this because they don't know you well enough or because they feel unsafe to do so? What might they have been told about talking to you?
- > Are their verbally expressed views in line with observations of their responses before, during and after contact?
- > How do their responses during contact vary from the way they are at home or at school?
- > Does this exercise highlight any changes that need to be made to arrangements for keeping in touch or the support available for child or adult?

You may want to put some photos of the child's direct work into your report or look at it together with adopters or kinship carers when you talk about any changes to plans.