Section 9.3

Identifying an increasing range of emotions and feelings in ourselves and others

Why is this important?

Facial expressions convey numerous and complex emotional states and we begin to infer another person's feelings by watching how they react/feel (from happiness, sadness, anxiety, etc.). They are an important part of emotional intelligence and link closely to being able to make inferences. (For more information, refer to the WellComm *Handbook*.)

What to do

- In pairs or a small group, act out scenarios by allocating roles: a scene in a shop perhaps – a long queue, an annoyed customer, etc.
- Encourage children to work out feelings from gestures, tone of voice, body language and facial expression.
- Use illustrated stories or composite pictures: look at the scene and then work out the feelings of the characters (e.g. a messy bedroom discovered by Mum! 'Look at her face, how does she feel?').
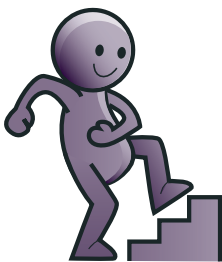
Step up

- Without using pictures, use more subtle words for inferencing (e.g. thoughtful, serious).
- Use more complex composite pictures, taking in the peripheral/less obvious characters and encourage inference (e.g. 'Who has to wait a long time?' for a child at the back of the queue for the swing in the park).
- Each child has a card: in a group, children take turns to act out the feelings on their picture card and the others must guess what it is.
- If the group can manage this successfully, try taking turns around the group to suggest reasons *why* Ahmed/Ben/Sonny/Jane might feel as they do.
- Read a sentence or paragraph where the child is encouraged to reflect on how the characters are feeling (e.g. 'Jack ran very quickly because the giant was chasing him. How did Jack feel? Why?').

Step down

- Use puppets for the role play.
- Don't use pictures.
- Use a simpler story.
- Make facial expressions and body language very obvious.
- Add speech bubbles to the toys (e.g. 'He feels worried, what might he say?').