

# CREATING A WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT FOR CHILDREN

It can be easy to forget what it's like to be a child in an adult's world, where furnishings, waiting rooms and reception areas are typically designed for adults. It can even be easy to overlook children in our busy day to day lives as adults but in an effort to change our ways and the way children are valued in society, we need to make a conscious effort to ensure we are working towards creating welcoming environments for children.

Here are some simple but effective ways to do this at your office or workplace;

## Physical Environment

**Furniture** - You can imagine how intimidating it might be stepping into a new environment where everything has been made for giants and nothing is at eye level or reachable. Whether in a reception area, waiting room or hospitality venue, one way to help children feel at ease and comfortable is by providing furniture that is suitable for their size and height.



Small chairs, tables or even a safe way for a child to see over a reception desk or counter can make even your smallest visitors feel welcome and less intimidated.

**Colours** - Colours can go a long way in creating a happier and more welcoming space for not only children but adults too. While bland grey, beige and white offices may be an inexpensive and easy choice these colour schemes feel sterile and are proven to induce feelings of sadness and depression.



For a more calming environment add splashes of blue, green and pink. For an energised and uplifting feel opt for yellow and orange shades.

**Space** - Most young children come with a lot of accessories. From diaper bags to strollers, parents rarely have the luxury of travelling light. For this reason, it is important to ensure there is enough space within waiting rooms, receptions and venues for prams and wheelchairs to move freely and without feeling restricted.



**Child-friendly activities** - Activities and books are a great way to keep children entertained and content while they wait. Even the placement of child-friendly posters at children's eye level can provide entertainment.

A simple idea to consider at your workplace may be to provide children with colouring-in sheets or drawing utensils and display their pieces of art within the space, amongst other children's pieces who have visited.



The artwork will spruce up the walls as well as provide an activity for children.

\*For cleanliness ensure items are cleaned and disinfected on a regular basis.

## Acknowledgement and Language

How would you feel entering a new environment and everyone was greeted except you? Not very welcomed or valued I'm sure.

Everyone, no matter how big or small should be acknowledged and greeted in a friendly manner when entering a workplace, waiting room, venue or space. It is too often as adults we will go to greet other adults, yet forget the child or children with them.

Here are some tips on how to acknowledge children so that they feel valued;

- ✔ A warm, sincere and positive welcome goes a long way
- ✔ When possible get down to a child's level when speaking to them (crouch or kneel down)
- ✔ Acknowledge children by their name
- ✔ Ask questions to show your interest and make them feel more comfortable. E.g. Sarah I like those giraffe's on your socks! Are they your favourite animal?
- ✔ If appropriate ask if they can assist you in a small task, to make them feel useful and comfortable. E.g. Jacob, would you like to help me sort these pencils into colours?
- ✔ Acknowledge children and their parents when they they leave. You could also add a mention of their contributions for the day if relevant. E.g. Bye Lisa, was lovely to see you again, thank you for waiting so patiently while we spoke to your mum.



It's important to note that children will observe interactions between you, their caregivers and parents.

What they notice in these interactions will impact on how they perceive you and whether they feel comfortable interacting with you.