

Top tips to remember when writing for children and young people

In your communications with children and young people about the Bright Spots surveys, it's important to adapt your style appropriately for the age of your audience. Reference these top tips:

1. Readers at all levels prefer simple language

Complicated or unfamiliar words or phrases put people off reading any further. Use plain, everyday English as much as possible. Simple language is clear and easier to understand. If you're not sure, say it out loud - does it make sense? For example:

Your answers will help us improve our services ✓

~~Answering the surveys will help us make systematic changes to our practice and policy~~ X

2. Think about who you are writing for

How old is your target audience? What kind of language do they use? Before you start writing, imagine explaining your message in person to someone from that age group. How would you explain a concept like 'wellbeing' differently if you were talking to a 4 year old compared to a 14 year old?

3. Use the active voice

The active voice means that someone or something (the subject) is doing the action. The passive voice means that someone or something (the subject) is affected by the action. Passive sentences often use linking verbs like *was* and *had been*. For example:

Children in care designed the survey ✓

~~*The survey was designed by children in care*~~ X

Use the active voice to make your sentences feel clearer and more direct.

4. Beware verbs that end in -ing

The passive voice often uses verbs that end with -ing. This can lead to longer than necessary sentences. Scan for *-ing* verbs in your text. Could you swap them for something more direct? For example:

Sit with the child as they complete the survey ✓

~~*Sitting with the child as they complete the survey is recommended*~~ X

5. Use short sentences

Short sentences are direct and to the point. They are more engaging and easier to understand, particularly for younger children. For example:

When we've got the results, you can tell us what we need to work on ✓

~~*Once we get the survey results back, we'll discuss what we found out with all care leavers to hear what's important to work on*~~ X