

# WEE PEOPLE, BIG FEELINGS MORAY



  
**STARCATCHERS**

## SPRING INTO PUPPETS

Creative play ideas that support  
emotional literacy in early years



THE ARMED FORCES  
COVENANT FUND TRUST  
Funded by HM Government





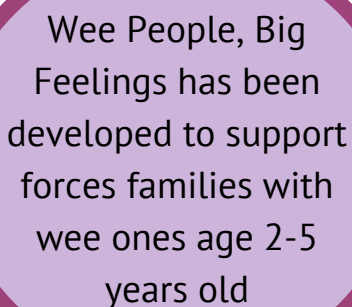
# ABOUT STARCATCHERS

Starcatchers is Scotland's Arts and Early Years organisation. We believe that our youngest children, those aged birth-to-five, should be able to fulfil their right to access arts and creative experiences that give inspiration, joy and wonder to early childhood in Scotland.

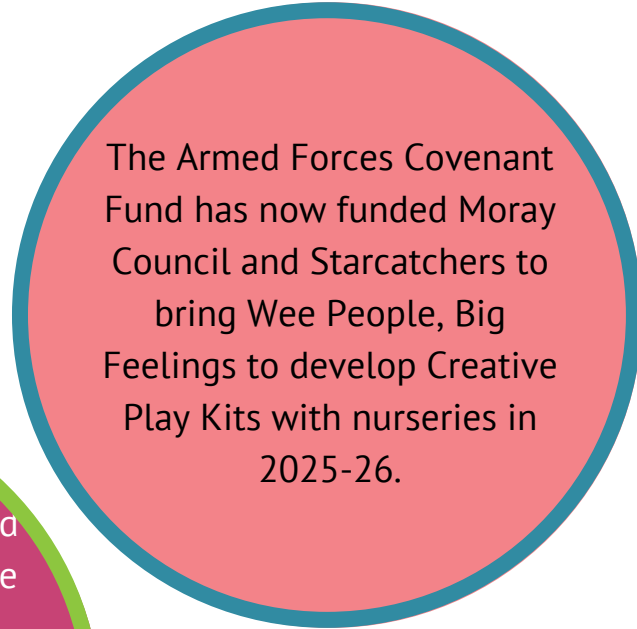
## A bit about the Wee People, Big Feelings Approach

*“Every forces family is different, and every deployment is different: sometimes we cope well with the transitions, and sometimes it can bring a lot of challenges. There's no one size fits all approach, its important we develop a repertoire of techniques to support wee ones and their families.”*

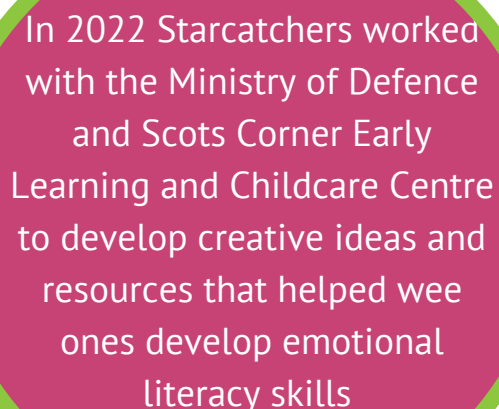
**Early Years Practitioner and Forces Family member**



Wee People, Big Feelings has been developed to support forces families with wee ones age 2-5 years old



The Armed Forces Covenant Fund has now funded Moray Council and Starcatchers to bring Wee People, Big Feelings to develop Creative Play Kits with nurseries in 2025-26.



In 2022 Starcatchers worked with the Ministry of Defence and Scots Corner Early Learning and Childcare Centre to develop creative ideas and resources that helped wee ones develop emotional literacy skills



# PUPPET POWER

## WHY ARE PUPPETS IMPORTANT?

Puppets provide a safe and fun way to explore complex emotions, build confidence and practice empathy with very young children. They allow us to make things accessible without using words or language. You can choose to give your puppet language or not, maybe your puppet just makes noises such as squeaking, roaring, or maybe your puppet just whispers in your ear, or does not speak at all.

You might feel a bit lost with how to approach puppets but don't worry, we have a short video created by artist Charlotte Allan about how you can turn toys into living breathing puppets.



Watch our video about bringing toys to life

## TOP TIPS FOR EXPLORING WITH PUPPETRY:

### CHEEKY PUPPETS

Puppets don't always have to be the hero. Sometimes they can be the mischievous character or even the villain in the story. When a puppet makes poor choices or behaves in ways that aren't usually "allowed," it creates a safe space for children to explore big feelings, tricky behaviours, and develop problem-solving.

### PUPPETS DON'T NEED WORDS

Puppets are a powerful way to explore stories and emotions without relying on language, making them especially good in supporting non-verbal children.

Through gesture, expression, movement, and shared imagination, children can share feelings, develop stories, and connect with others

### ANYTHING CAN BE A PUPPET

Puppets don't need lots of resource. Teddies, egg boxes, pegs, paper...you can make a puppet out of anything! All you need is a bit of imagination.

### PUPPETS CAN CHECK OUT

It can feel challenging to explore big concepts such as loss, anger, power, and resolution. For children, puppets can offer a way of safely exploring them. A puppet might check out simply by being switched off or put away. The child understands the difference between real and pretend; the story allows them to explore ideas in a contained and manageable way.

### STEER CLEAR OF FAVOURITE TOYS

Turning a favourite comfort toy into a puppet can sometimes feel unsettling for young children. Try using alternative objects, allowing children to keep their special friend separate from the play.

# STICKY NOTE PUPPETS

## THE BASIC IDEA

You don't need lots of resources to make a puppet. Got a sticky note lying around? Draw on a pair of eyes, stick it onto your hand and voilà - you have a puppet! A quick, and easy way to explore puppetry and storytelling with your wee one with almost no preparation at all.



### RESOURCES:

- STICKY NOTES
- PENS

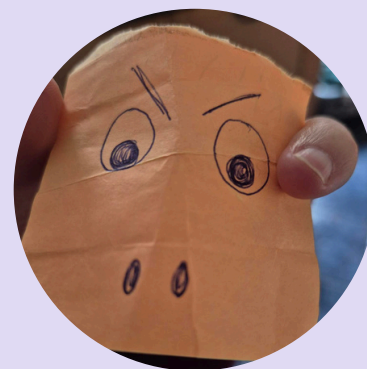
## OVER TO YOU, WEE ONE



If they can, let your wee one design their own puppet and take the lead in the play! Following their lead allows them to explore their interests and gives you a wonderful insight into their thoughts, feelings, and imagination.

## CHEEKY BONUSES

- Exploring emotions
- Decision making, design
- Problem-solving and curiosity



## VARIATIONS

- Your puppet pals are also great for some active storytelling; have a chat with them – retell their favourite stories
- Have a treasure hunt with the puppets! Hide them round the house and see if your wee one can find them. Then ask your wee one to hide them from you!

## AND REMEMBER...

Creativity is about the process rather than the product. Chatting about faces and exploring how to build one is more important than a perfect puppet.

SCAN ME



Watch this video on making origami finger puppets

# MINI WORLD BOATS

## THE BASIC IDEA

Use paper, old recycling or leaves to create your very own boat or submarine, then send it on an adventure to miniature worlds waiting just outside your door. Cracks in the pavement, little plants, or rocks, become exciting new places. Slow down, find an interesting spot, then ask some “I wonder...” questions.



### RESOURCES:

- PAPER, OR RECYCLING LIKE OLD BUTTER TUBS AND EGG CARTONS



## OVER TO YOU, WEE ONE

Listen to what your wee one adds and let them direct the story as they explore the environment. Bring your sticky note puppets or small toys who can “interact” with the mini world. You can also gather some natural materials: leaves, twigs, stones, to build and add to what you’re imagining together.

## CHEEKY BONUSES

- Co-creation: team-work and turn-taking
- Lets wee ones be the experts: helps them develop agency and decision-making skills
- Adds wonder and magic to an everyday space



## VARIATIONS



- Add your sticky note puppets to your boat
- Wee ones often stop to examine a specific spot or point and babble – use these great nonverbal cues to find mini worlds
- Take close up photos when you’re outdoors and ask “I wonder” questions as you look at them together

## AND REMEMBER...

It’s okay to find it tricky at first – your imagination, like lots of things, needs to be warmed up! You could start with a story that you know and change some details. Maybe Spiderman has gone to visit the Little Mermaid?

# FORTUNE TELLER FACE CHANGER

## THE BASIC IDEA

We all remember paper fortune tellers, right? Here's a simple twist on a classic favourite. Create an emotion-themed fortune teller and fill each flap with a different feeling. A playful, and safe way to explore emotions together.



### RESOURCES:

- PAPER
- PENS

## OVER TO YOU, WEE ONE



Let your wee one choose the emotions to include in the fortune teller. Talk about the different faces with your wee one, naming the different emotions and asking lots of "I wonder" questions. If they are a wee bit younger, think about the faces your little one loves to make, or include the silly faces they love seeing you make. Try copying the faces and see if your child does the same.

## CHEEKY BONUSES

- Builds fine motor skills
- Developing emotional literacy and empathy
- Great visual and tactile reference to use when children struggle to talk about their feelings



## VARIATIONS

- You might even make a separate one for each emotion, exploring why someone might feel happy, sad, or angry e.g. a child might feel angry because they're tired, hungry, or frustrated
- Explore colours and sounds using fortune tellers too

## AND REMEMBER...

You don't need to wait until your wee one is struggling with their emotions, play that involves chatting about different feelings is a safe, low stress way to help explore the idea.

# NESTING

## THE BASIC IDEA

We all love den building, but how about nest building? Create a cosy nest for you and your wee one to relax in together. Layer up blankets, cushions, and soft textures. Think about what feels comforting to you. What textures and colours do you like? Should you add music? Snuggle in, read a story, share a quiet chat, or simply enjoy being still together.



### RESOURCES:

- **FABRIC, CUSHIONS, TEDDIES...ANY COSY MATERIALS YOU HAVE IN YOUR HOUSE**
- **MUSIC**



## OVER TO YOU, WEE ONE

Let your wee one take the lead and build a big, cosy nest together at bedtime. Gather comfy teddies, soft blankets, pillows or even add some little eggs (rolled up socks or chalk eggs). Follow their ideas, where should everything go? They can revisit their cosy nest and adapt it how they'd like.

## CHEEKY BONUSES

- Young children learn about the world through their senses
- Imagination and concentration
- Bonding and chill out time together



## VARIATIONS

- Make it a story nest – sharing a book by torchlight in a snuggly space can be magical
- Nests come in all shapes and sizes. Can you introduce new colours, lights, soft music, or breeze from a window or fan?
- Go for a walk for inspiration and discover different types of nests you can find in nature

## AND REMEMBER...

Don't worry if your den doesn't look Pinterestready. The important part is the process of building and what you do inside. The best resource children have is the adults around them!

# MUSICAL CHATS

## THE BASIC IDEA

When we learn to speak, we're learning a lot of musical skills – and vice versa! When we engage in a musical call and response or conversation – even if it's nonsense – we're teaching babies how language and speech works. Shake an egg shaker, beat on a drum or sing with your voice - try having a musical conversation with your wee one.



### RESOURCES:

- **ANYTHING YOU CAN MAKE MUSIC WITH, OR JUST USE YOUR VOICE**



## OVER TO YOU, WEE ONE

For wee ones who are babbling, respond with your own sounds, then pause, and wait for them to babble again. It doesn't have to be perfect, it doesn't even have to be words: it's all about the to and fro. You can use a drum instead: respond to the beats they tap out by copying them.

## CHEEKY BONUSES

- Helps wee ones link language to communication
- Give wee ones, especially those who are pre or non-verbal, a sense of agency
- Rhythm builds foundational skills in literacy (syllables), and numeracy (patterns)



## VARIATIONS

- If your wee one enjoys getting a few notes from a musical instrument, try playing those same notes back, then waiting for another response
- Singing words, humming tunes, making noises are all valid ways to engage in a musical chat

## AND REMEMBER...

No one is expecting you to be Beyoncé! Your singing voice or rhythm doesn't have to be perfect, it's about opening up communication. Often the reason we feel self-conscious about our musical skills is because of adults from when we were wee. So model confidence and fake it until you make it!

# FOOT PUPPETS

## THE BASIC IDEA

Try popping different things on your feet and make them dance around! You could try fluffy socks, novelty slippers, an empty box, or even tie a scarf or piece of fabric (the sillier the better!). A lovely way to give your wee one a new sensory experience and explore different textures and shapes together.



### RESOURCES:

- **FLUFFY SOCKS, A BOX OR ANYTHING THAT YOU CAN BALANCE ON YOUR FOOT**



## OVER TO YOU, WEE ONE

See if your wee one will bring you other objects to try! Go ahead and give it a go, even if it doesn't stay on your foot—exploring and experimenting is all part of the fun.

## CHEEKY BONUSES

- Decision making
- Problem-solving and curiosity
- Sensory development
- You can sit up and drink a cup of tea while they play on the floor!



## VARIATIONS

- Try using more unusual items like toys, wrap them in paper, tinfoil, foil blankets (the sillier the better!)
- Make a different noise when your child touches your feet and turn it into a game of sounds.
- Turn your foot puppets into characters and explore different emotions

## AND REMEMBER...

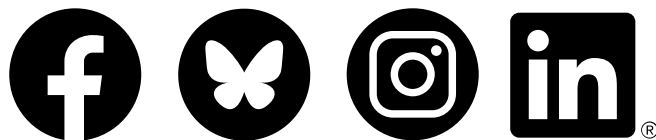
Don't worry about feeling a bit silly—what matters most is enjoying the moment and having fun with your wee one.

Let us know if you use this resource! Tag us on social media to share the fun @starcatchersuk. Check [starcatchers.org.uk](http://starcatchers.org.uk) for more Wee Inspirations and 5 Ways With.... creative play ideas for you and your little one.



If you have any questions, please email  
[info@starcatchers.org.uk](mailto:info@starcatchers.org.uk) to

**STARCATCHERS.ORG.UK**



@starcatchersuk

Registered and mailing address:  
Whale Arts Agency, 30 Westburn Grove,  
Edinburgh EH14 2SA



Starcatchers Productions is a limited company,  
registered in Scotland (SC392561),  
and a Scottish-registered charity (SC042222).



Ministry  
of Defence