

Three Houses Process

1. **Preparation:** In preparing to do the 'Three Houses' with a child or young person, it can be helpful to find out as much background information as you can. The other important part of preparation is working out what materials you will need to take. At a minimum, you will need sheets of paper (preferably one for each house, as well as some spares) and some coloured pencils and textas. The other important decision is where to meet with the child. If possible, choose a venue where the child is likely to feel most comfortable is important, particularly for your first meeting.
2. **Inform parents and obtain permission to interview child/ren.** Sometimes, child protection workers have to interview children without advising or seeking the permission of the parents or primary caregivers. Wherever possible, the parents should be advised/asked in advance and showing the 'Three Houses' Tool to the parents can help them to understand what the worker will be doing.
3. **Make decision whether to work with child with/without parents present.** Again sometimes child protection workers need to insist that they speak with the children without a parent or caregiver present. Wherever possible it is good to make this a matter of choice for the parents and the child, but when this isn't possible, all efforts should be made to provide an explanation to the parents as to why the worker feels it is necessary to speak to the child on their own.
4. **Explain and work through 3 houses with child** using one sheet of paper per house. Use words and drawings as appropriate and anything else you can think of to engage child in the process. They can re-name houses, use toys, lego houses, picture cuts outs etc. etc. Give child choice about where to start. Often start with 'house of good things' particularly where child is anxious or uncertain.
6. **Explain to and involve the child or young person in what will happen next.** Once the 'Three Houses' interview is finished it is important to explain to the child or young person what will happen next, and to obtain their permission to show the 'Three Houses' to others, whether they be parents, extended family, or professionals. Usually children and young people are happy for others to be shown their 'Three Houses' assessment of their situation, but for some children there will be concerns and safety issues that must be addressed before proceeding with presenting what they have described to others.
7. **Present to parents/caregivers** usually beginning with 'house of good things'. Before showing the child's 3 Houses, it can be useful to ask the parents: 'What do you think the child would say is good/worried about/dreams of?'

Three Houses: SOP Engagement Tool



House
of
Good Things

A large, empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for writing or drawing related to the 'House of Good Things' category.

House
of
Worries

A large, empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for writing or drawing related to the 'House of Worries' category.

House
of
Dreams

A large, empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for writing or drawing related to the 'House of Dreams' category.