

THE HOARDING HUB

Respectful Language When Supporting Someone With Hoarding Behaviours

Small language changes can make a significant difference to trust and engagement. Neutral and respectful wording reduces shame and defensiveness, helping people stay engaged in the process of change.

Helpful Language Swaps

Avoid saying	Try saying instead
Rubbish / junk	Belongings / items
Throw it away	Part with it
You need to clear this	Let's look at what feels manageable
This is a mess	I can see there are a lot of things here
Why are you keeping this?	Can you tell me a bit about this item?
You can't live like this	How are you finding living in the space at the moment?
You have too much stuff	It looks like things have built up over time
Just get rid of it	What would feel okay to start with?

Helpful First Conversation Questions

- How long have things been feeling difficult in the space?
- What do you find hardest about managing the belongings at the moment?
- Is there an area of the home that feels easier or more comfortable for you?
- What would you like the space to feel like in the future?
- What kind of support would feel helpful for you right now?

Remember: People who struggle with hoarding behaviours often experience deep shame, fear of judgement, and loss of control. Early conversations should focus on building trust, showing curiosity rather than judgement, and maintaining the person's sense of choice and autonomy.