



## Reframing Resistance in Hoarding

### Practical Thinking & Conversational Tools for Professionals

Resistance in hoarding is often labelled as non-compliance. In reality, it is usually a response to fear, shame, overwhelm, or previous interventions that felt unsafe. When we treat resistance as the problem, we escalate it. When we understand it, we can work with it.

This resource supports organisational and frontline reframing — shifting from enforcement-led responses to engagement-led practice.

*Resistance is not defiance. It is information.*

#### 1. Organisational Reframing: System Thinking Shifts

- **From:** Non-compliance **To:** Not yet engaged
- **From:** Access as the goal **To:** Safety as the foundation
- **From:** Quick clearance **To:** Sustainable change
- **From:** Enforcement first **To:** Engagement first
- **From:** Measuring 'stuff removed' **To:** Measuring engagement, behaviour and emotional change

#### 2. Thinking Reframes for Professionals (In the Moment)

- “What might feel unsafe for them right now?”
- “Am I moving faster than they can tolerate?”
- “Is this about control rather than cooperation?”
- “What emotion is underneath this behaviour?”
- “What has their past experience of support been like?”

#### 3. Conversational Reframing Examples

- **Instead of:** “You need to clear this”  
**Try:** “What feels like the hardest place to start?”
- **Instead of:** “Why haven’t you done this?”  
**Try:** “Can you help me understand what makes this difficult?”
- **Instead of:** “We need access now”  
**Try:** “What would help you feel more comfortable letting us in?”
- **Instead of:** “You’re not engaging”  
**Try:** “It feels like something about this isn’t working for you — can we talk about that?”

#### ***4. What Reduces Resistance in Practice***

- Consistency of approach and worker
- Clear, calm and non-judgemental communication
- Respect for autonomy and choice
- Small, achievable steps
- Psychological safety before practical intervention

**You don’t reduce resistance by pushing harder.**

You reduce resistance by making it unnecessary.