



When a Clean Becomes a Crisis

Conversational Tools for Cleaning Professionals

Many cleaning professionals walk into homes expecting a routine clean — but sometimes what they discover is far more complex. This guide will help you recognise warning signs, respond with confidence, and communicate with compassion when situations become more than expected.

Warning Signs Cleaners Should Never Ignore

- Severe clutter blocking access to rooms or exits
- Strong odours indicating hygiene concerns
- Large quantities of stored or hoarded items
- Signs of self neglect or distress
- Animal waste or pest activity
- Drug paraphernalia, sharps, or hazardous materials

Cleaner Decision Guide: Clean or Specialist Support?

Situation	Recommended Action
Normal household mess	Proceed with scheduled clean
Clutter slowing cleaning but safe	Clean small areas and discuss with client
Blocked exits, hygiene risk, strong odours	Pause clean and discuss safer plan
Biohazards, sharps, bodily fluids	Stop work and recommend specialist support

What To Say: Conversation Tools

It looks like things might have become a bit overwhelming here. How are you managing at the moment?

Please don't worry — I'm here to understand what support might help.

This might need a slightly different approach than a standard clean.

Situations like this are more common than people realise.

We don't have to tackle everything today. Starting small can help.

Cleaner Quick Reference Cheat Sheet

- Stay calm and neutral in your language
- Avoid judgement or criticism
- Protect your own safety and wellbeing
- Set clear professional boundaries
- Pause work if you encounter hazards
- Recommend specialist help when necessary

About the Author



Rachel Murphy is a Hoarding Specialist, CBT Practitioner, and Complex Living Environments Consultant with a background in psychology and education. She works with housing organisations, social care teams, and government agencies supporting professionals responding to hoarding and complex living environments.

Training & Consultancy

Rachel delivers professional training and consultancy supporting organisations responding to hoarding and complex living environments. Services include:

- Workforce training for housing and social care teams
- Complex case consultancy
- Multi agency strategy development
- Professional guidance on environmental risk and behaviour

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