



RISE

Retrofit information,
support & expertise

Resident Engagement

Toolkit

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Contents

Summary	3
Who should use the toolkit?	3
When should you use the toolkit?	3
How should you use the toolkit?	4
Recommended process.....	4
Level 1 Introduction	5
Why is resident engagement important?.....	5
Challenges	5
Solutions.....	6
Level 2 – Framework	7
The seven stages of resident engagement	7
Level 3 – Detailed Guidance	9
Engagement planning	9
Stakeholder mapping	19
Launch stage	24
Design stage	27
Installation stage	29
Handover stage	30
Post works stage	32
<i>Summary of recommendations</i>	34

Summary

Developing and delivering a successful retrofit project requires a strong resident engagement plan. This toolkit explains the importance of resident engagement and will help you to develop a strategy following best practice to deliver retrofit outcomes to a high standard.

This toolkit has been developed for retrofit projects because they require a different approach to resident engagement. This is because they can be more disruptive and less familiar to residents than the usual planned programme of works. This toolkit presents information about resident engagement that is likely to be relevant to your retrofit plans. This toolkit can also help support your future applications for retrofit grant funding.

Who should use the toolkit?

The toolkit has been designed to help Social Housing Providers, Local Authority (LA) officers and other stakeholders involved in Warm Homes: Social Housing Fund with the delivery of the retrofit project. Those responsible for delivering and monitoring the end results of the retrofit project will get the most value from the toolkit.

This toolkit will support you to create a detailed engagement plan that considers ways to reach eligible landlords and residents. This will also include messaging, how to reach all of your residents, and anticipating possible risks such as residents who decide to drop out of your retrofit scheme.

When should you use the toolkit?

Use this toolkit whilst developing the retrofit project, and in securing support and funding. It should be used from the initial outline application stage, during project delivery and after the retrofit is completed.

It is essential for contractors to understand the importance of resident engagement within their role. For this reason, a resident engagement plan should be included within any contract specification and be regularly updated and refined as new information becomes available.

This toolkit is viable for both long term and short term 'one off' retrofit projects.

How should you use the toolkit?

This toolkit has three levels of increasing detail:

- Level 1 – a brief introduction
- Level 2 – a framework for co-ordinating effective resident engagement during retrofit works, organised into key resident engagement stages
- Level 3 – an explanation of the key actions for each resident engagement stage, with high level guidance and a checklist for each stage. This also includes links to masterclass videos, external reports, guides and a final 'Summary of Recommendations'

Recommended process

1. Read the information in Levels 1 and 2 to understand the toolkit basics
2. Use Level 3 to check the key actions required for each stage and ways to bridge any gaps

Level 1 Introduction

Why is resident engagement important?

Effective resident engagement is key to a smooth retrofit plan. It can help to:

- **Improve no or low access rates** – Encourage people to participate, converting interest to action, so you don't have low take up
- **Address residents' concerns** – Residents' concerns vary with the demographic and type of households – they may have concerns about disruption, changes to homes and lack of understanding of the benefits of retrofit. Myth-busting about new technologies is essential
- **Comply with PAS 2035 requirements** – Resident engagement is a key part of PAS 2035 compliance and is required for all publicly funded domestic retrofit projects
- **Support residents in a tailored way** – Ensure that information is tailored for residents including those with general accessibility, visual, hearing, physical or learning difficulties. Residents who have not traditionally engaged with local authorities and landlords, and those not understanding the benefits of retrofit, may need specific support
- **Improve satisfaction of residents** – Increasing resident participation and involvement in decision making can improve their satisfaction with a retrofit project. Good resident engagement may also improve the relationship between residents and contractors
- **Save cost and time** – Recontacting residents who will not engage is timely and costly. Getting people bought-in to the programme early on therefore saves time and reduces the delivery risk
- **Reduce risk of residents not understanding how to use their new systems** – By providing behaviour change advice and guidance on the operation of new systems (e.g. for heating or hot water) to residents, you can help to maximise their potential impact
- **Reduce reputational and financial risks** – Not reaching your net zero target as a result of poor resident engagement may damage your organisation's reputation, with possible loss of financial capital, social capital and/or market share

Challenges

Residents may face challenges throughout the customer journey as indicated in the table below. One common problem is the technical knowledge required to

understand retrofit. Residents often do not understand what 'retrofit' is or what 'energy efficiency measures' are. You need to ensure you are engaging with residents using terms accessible to the lay person. If residents are not feeling confident about the scheme, there is a greater likelihood of dropouts, resulting in additional costs and lost time.

Pre works	During works	Post works
<p>Dislike changes in their homes</p> <p>Insufficient information to familiarise residents with the works</p> <p>How works may affect those with young children</p> <p>How works may affect animal assistant or pet owners</p>	<p>Time taken to do works</p> <p>Change in house appearance</p> <p>Mess and disruption</p>	<p>Changes in energy bills and energy usage</p> <p>Maintenance requirements – particularly those falling on residents</p> <p>Quality control of works</p> <p>Understanding the operation of new technologies (e.g. heat pumps)</p>

Solutions

Effective resident engagement will support you to overcome these challenges, ensuring resident interest is converted into action and that residents are kept well-informed of progress. We recommend creating a detailed resident engagement plan that makes use of stakeholders to ensure residents can access support and receive consistent information.

Level 2 – Framework

The seven stages of resident engagement

The arrows in the graphic below outline the seven stages of a retrofit project. The bubbles highlight the key resident engagement activity at each stage. Note that there can be an overlap between the resident engagement activity across the different stages.

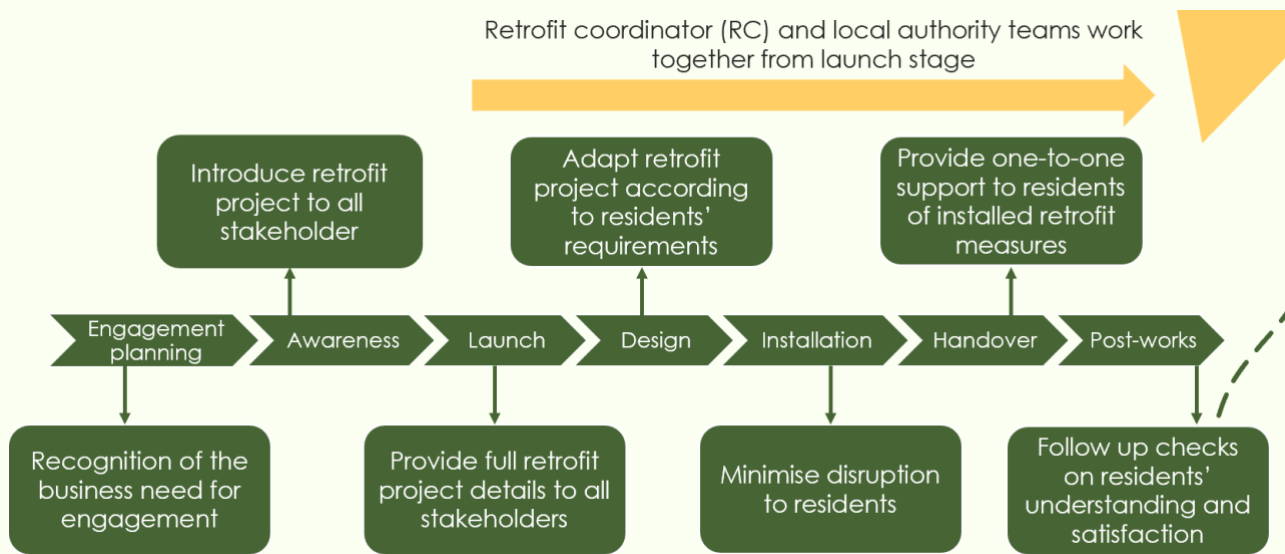


Figure 1 Framework describing the seven stages of resident engagement

1. Engagement Planning

Prepare a full engagement plan before beginning the actual retrofit work. Make sure the planned activities are budgeted and resourced.


2. Awareness

Make sure the landlords are engaged and residents are fully aware of the proposed retrofit programme. Involve them early, demonstrate the benefits and create a sense of inclusion. This will improve participation, avoid suspicion, and reduce resistance.

3. Launch

Present as much detail about the project as possible to the residents, explaining what will happen and when, and how they can contribute to improving their homes.

4. Design



During the design stage, the Retrofit Assessor, Retrofit Designer and Retrofit Coordinator will be developing the plan for each home. Keep the residents informed and provide opportunities for their feedback to influence the design.

5. Installation


Most of the disruption to residents will occur during this stage. Keep them informed of progress, respond to any questions or problems, and make sure they can contact you. Focus on minimising disruption and remember to provide additional support to residents who have not traditionally engaged with authority.

6. Handover

At the handover stage, residents will get their first direct experience of their new home. Provide tailored advice to aid understanding and ensure that the new systems are correctly used. This will reduce the risk of future complaints and maintenance issues.

7. Post-works

After completion of the retrofit works and handover, it is important to continue resident engagement. Monitor energy performance and resident satisfaction. Deal with any teething problems and make sure that residents can use their new systems correctly and efficiently. Make an induction pack available to any new resident that explains how to use their home. Installation of heat pumps requires a follow-up visit at some point to ensure that the system is being used correctly; ideally this visit would take place within a few months, or shortly after the start of the heating season.



Level 3 – Detailed Guidance

This section provides a more detailed description of each of the seven stages with:

- Key actions and high-level guidance on how to tackle each task
- A checklist of all the essential tasks
- Additional useful resources

A final Summary of Recommendations and links to additional external content are included at the end of this toolkit.

Engagement planning

Engagement planning should start as soon as possible. Ideally at least six months before the programme starts.

Key Question – Have you linked resident engagement in your retrofit project back to your organisational policies and strategies?

Key Outcomes of this stage: To complete all aspects of strategic planning before your retrofit project starts. This can help you to:

Receive full support from your organisation

Benefit from cost effective and well-resourced resident engagement

Support business policy or strategy commitments.

The engagement planning stage is integral to the smooth running of resident engagement and helps to secure support for the retrofit project. There are four key considerations:

1. Strategic purpose of Resident Engagement
2. Benefits of Resident Engagement for your organisation
3. Costs and financing for Resident Engagement
4. Resources required for Resident Engagement

1. Strategic purpose of Resident Engagement

Action: Link resident engagement for retrofit works to your organisation's strategies and policies:

- Fuel poverty strategies/policies
- Net zero carbon strategies/policies

- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion strategies/policies

2. Benefits of Resident Engagement for your organisation

Action: List the main benefits of effective resident engagement for your organisation:

- Saving your organisation time and money (e.g. having a reduced number of drop-outs and not having to re-contact residents who do not engage)
- Allowing residents space to talk about their priorities so they can be considered in the retrofit project
- Identifying issues or opportunities with the homes which might not be evident from the data alone
- Reduce the no access rate, drop-outs, increasing resident participation and satisfaction
- Improving the relationship between residents and contractors, and improving the reputation of the council
- Providing evidence that residents have been involved in decision making

3. Costs and Financing for Resident Engagement

Including the costs of resident engagement in the retrofit project financing is essential. External grant funding opportunities offer good potential to fund part of your retrofit programme, however core costs should be covered by your organisation.

Action: Budget for resident engagement:

- Create a resident engagement action plan with timescales and budget costs

Action: Consider applying for funding and delivering retrofit projects as part of a Consortium

- Collaboration between LAs and partnering with trusted community organisations can be an effective approach to delivering resident engagement for area-based retrofit schemes
- Involving staff who regularly interact with residents with the delivery of community programmes could provide useful insight into the challenges faced by the community
- They could also provide access to community advocates to help engage residents who have tended to hold back from interacting with local authorities and landlords
- Costs for resident engagement within consortia can be reduced by using existing communication channels of community partners such as social media, websites, newsletters and notice boards

- Using community buildings or school halls for engagement events and meetings can provide local space which is easily accessible to the community
- The sharing of resources and expertise for larger projects can also help to deliver resident engagement more cost effectively

4. Resources required for Resident Engagement

Action: Consider if resident engagement should be outsourced or completed in-house:

- If relying on outsourced resident engagement, ensure the contractors have the following:
 - access to your residents' demographic information to understand how to tailor their engagement to the different needs of residents
 - GDPR-compliant processes for data sharing and data security
 - good interpersonal skills to engage well with residents
 - experience of engaging with residents with complex needs and the correct processes in place to do so

N.B. It is a good idea to include resident engagement as part of your procurement of the external contractor. Develop KPIs to ensure resident engagement is delivered to your expected standards. Any impact on project KPIs as a result of increased timescales for engaging with certain resident groups should be clearly communicated by the contractors.

If resident engagement will be completed in-house, ensure that your team has access to demographic information of your residents, and that they are trained in your resident engagement processes, particularly for engaging with residents with complex needs.

Action: Work closely with the teams required for good resident engagement:

- Communications Team: To advise on online and social media channels, branding, written and visual communication
- Resident Liaison Team: If your LA has Resident Liaison Officers (RLOs), you may want to use their experience to provide day to day engagement with residents. However, this will be with private homeowners or tenants rather than social tenants. Some degree of supplementary training may be required
- In-home energy advisors: To provide in-home advice once the work has been completed (behaviour, ventilation, tariff switching, operation of new systems)

- Installation contractor: Your contractor will need a clear understanding of your resident engagement plan and access to materials
- Engaged residents: Resident associations, neighbourhood committees, resident engagement boards, Resident Champions or individual engaged residents can help in developing and testing communication materials and promoting a retrofit project
- Community networks: Explore links that your team members may have to other networks which could help raise awareness and promote the benefits of the retrofit project within the community
- Referral networks: Work with potential referral agencies to promote participation in the scheme. These could include GP surgeries (particularly for households with people who suffer from conditions exacerbated by poor quality housing), community care coordinators, and charities with an interest in low income or vulnerable groups such as elderly people. This is a low-cost method of increasing engagement in likely beneficiaries
- Energy advice contractors: To provide additional domestic energy grants and funding information to reduce overall annual energy costs

Customer Journey Mapping

Action: Map the expected customer journey that residents will be experiencing:

- Identify the different stages the residents will be going through from engagement to post installation
- Establish timelines for each stage so the residents will know what to expect
- Highlight areas where extra support might be needed, for example, with explanations of new technologies, or residents who might have complex needs
- Establish one point of contact throughout the customer journey if possible

Checklist for Engagement Planning

Map the strategic purpose of resident engagement in your retrofit plan to:

- Organisational strategic/policies
- Regulatory drivers
- Draw up a list of the benefits of resident engagement for your organisation
- Create a resident engagement action plan with timescales and budget costs

- Consider the benefits of a consortium project for delivery of resident engagement
- Consider if staff resources should be in-house or contracted out

Additional useful resources

- [Engaging and empowering tenants in council-owned housing, Local Government Association and Tpas, 2019.](#)

Awareness stage

Engagement planning should start as soon as possible, ideally six months before the programme starts

Key Questions – Are the residents fully aware of what the scheme is, what the benefits will be, how long the retrofits will take and the potential disruption to their homes?

Key Outcomes of this stage: Promote a positive culture within your organisation and make all residents, staff and retrofit contractors (if in place) aware of the upcoming retrofit project and its benefits and other impacts. Receive feedback from stakeholders on how to improve the resident engagement process and demonstrate how this feedback has been considered. Ensure residents' concerns are factored into communications.

The Awareness stage is essential in presenting the details of the retrofit plan to residents, staff and contractors as early as possible. Residents will provide feedback and highlight any concerns they may have. This stage is part of a best practice resident engagement strategy, however not all project delivery times allow for this stage. This stage can also overlap with the Engagement Planning stage.

Action: Have one single point of contact for residents

- Use one member of staff to engage with residents who will be known to residents as their single point of contact
- If you are contracting out your resident engagement, ask your contractors to provide a named single point of contact. When first introducing the single point of contact, send a letter or email with a photo of that person so residents know who to expect

Channels to communicate with residents

Action: Plan your communication methods

Consider how you communicate with residents, addressing the needs of different customer groups (particularly anyone who has a history of disengagement with landlords or local authorities):

- Act on feedback from residents on how they prefer to be contacted
- List the project stakeholders (groups of residents, staff and external stakeholders) and identify how each group may be best informed about the retrofit project (e.g. letter, text, telephone, email, videos, face to face visits)
- In-depth information on the retrofit project could also be provided via:
 - Your external webpage or newsletter
 - Internal webpage for staff
 - Local magazines/publications
 - Attending community group meetings such as those organised by potential referral agencies, for example, charities working with vulnerable people.
 - Workshop sessions with residents (ensure you have a reserve list of residents in case some drop out, are uncontactable or are uninterested)

You could also look to engage with people who might be able to tap into eligible communities via broader outreach: “Help an elderly neighbour to keep warm this winter” or similar branding.

Action: Make your residents feel special!

- Highlight to residents that they are part of an exciting new retrofit project
- Make clear that their home will be getting quality improvements to the highest standards free of charge
- Tell them that all ongoing maintenance and repairs will be dealt with by their landlord
- Highlight any Whole House Approach benefit, such as the planned programme of works being brought forward
- Outline the comfort, health and wellbeing and lifestyle benefits of the works. Also point out any modelled financial savings and the contribution the retrofit will make to reducing the carbon impact of their home
- Link the improvements to any current issues with the home and talk about how the retrofit will help to address them
- Reassure people that support will be provided for any technologies which are new to them and their homes

Action: Ensure that all information materials are 'resident friendly'

- Create clear and concise written and visual materials
- Use non-technical language and diagrams to ease understanding and make technical concepts more tangible
- Get support from your Communications team who may be familiar with the 'Plain English campaign' to produce clear messaging
- Consider translating written communication into the most widely used languages spoken by your tenants, or make translation services available for them
- Provide a glossary of terms for difficult or unusual words, if you have to include them, and always write acronyms out in full

Action: Contact residents using the best 'contact method' in order of preference

- Develop a preferred order for your different methods of contact. This may need to vary according to the groups of residents you are liaising with and your understanding of their needs. Try the following:
 1. Initial letter with council and HM Government logos, addressed directly to residents (not a generic 'Dear Resident' address), providing retrofit project details, telling residents when and how you will recontact them. If you have not already done so, this could be a good point to introduce their single point of contact including a photo of that person
 2. Text message
 3. Telephone call
 4. Face-to-face visit - leave a 'Missed visit' card with clear details of who to contact if the resident does not answer
- For each contact method, be sure to mention any external webpage links, if available

Action: Confirm with residents how they prefer to be contacted in the future

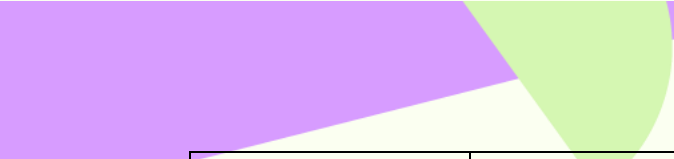
- Ask resident groups or engaged residents for their feedback on how to make information more 'resident friendly'
- Check with residents how they would prefer to be informed of any project updates or future visits to their home
- Ensure that the resident is consistently contacted using their chosen method.
- In some cases, residents might wish to select a password or memorable phrase that is used in communications to reassure them they are receiving information from a trusted source

Action: Select your resident engagement tools

- Start collating and analysing available demographic data on your residents, segmenting them into different groups. Use this to identify appropriate engagement methods and messaging for different resident groups
- Consider who might be uninterested in retrofit works to their homes and/or may be harder to engage with
- Tailor materials and communication methods for your different resident groups
- Consider your organisation's branding and tone in all communications, but be aware that you may be required to adapt the style, depending on your audience
- Use examples to explain the retrofit project, such as:
 - Resident case studies
 - Void properties which have been retrofitted as show homes
 - Promoting Resident Champions or those with positive retrofit experiences
- Create easily understood materials designed alongside residents
- Present details of the retrofit plan to resident groups/on the website
- Invite questions and address concerns during workshop sessions, face-to-face visits and roadshows
- Consider what life stage(s) residents are at, as there are certain points when people are more likely to undertake renovations to support a change in their personal circumstances, such as:
 - Spending more time at home (e.g., young children, retired, or working from home)
 - Reshaping homes (e.g., child moves out and adaptations may be required)
 - Moving or renting out a home (i.e., getting home ready to sell or for renting, so resident may be ready to spend time and money improving their home)

With all the groups in the table below, it is best to ask the residents directly what will help them most. Would they like to bring someone to support them during engagements? Do they require any specialist equipment? There are various considerations in the table:

Customer Group	How to engage in written format	How to engage face to face	Other considerations
Elderly	Provide larger print guidance	Always provide a written summary of what has occurred on any face-to-face visit and what to expect next	They may nominate another person to be the main contact if they wish More face-to-face support is required for this group Some older people may not be active online Be aware of hard of hearing issues Ensure that all retrofit measures are easy to understand Use diagrams to aid understanding wherever possible
Language and/or literacy considerations	Translate guidance into residents' preferred languages	Slow down speech if required Use bilingual staff or a family member for translations	Use more visual aids to explain things
Different cultures, ethnicities or religions	Be conscious of cultural, ethical or religious differences in	Be aware of any cultural, ethnic or religious etiquette e.g. not wearing shoes in the household	Use more visual aids to explain things Outreach via religious or cultural facilities, or other locations of focus for these communities



	your written and visual materials		
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Families with young children	Provide concise messaging using visuals	Involve the whole family when providing guidance	Work with families around their time schedules (considering school times and school holidays) Link the retrofit project to sustainability lessons at school
Hearing Accessibility	Provide written information well in advance	Use a British Sign Language translator if needed Use Speech to Text Reporters Provide a written summary of any face-to-face visit	Carry out <u>observed user testing</u> to ensure your website works for people with disabilities
Sight Accessibility	Use transcription services Print in Braille if required	Encourage a family member to accompany the visit	Carry out <u>observed user testing</u> to ensure your website works for people with disabilities Ensure that all images and diagrams have alt. text They may nominate another person to be the main contact if they wish
Physical Accessibility		Ensure that enough time is left to answer the door	Ensure community events are accessible
Learning Accessibility	Use an Easy Read format document	Encourage a family member to accompany the visit	People with learning difficulties may need more time than usual to understand information and be able to respond

	Use an easier to read font		Use more visual aids to explain things They may nominate another person to be the main contact if they wish
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Stakeholder mapping

Local Authorities can undertake a stakeholder mapping exercise to better understand which engagement interventions would be best suited to which groups. The usual steps in stakeholder mapping – for which many resources exist online – are:

- Identify your stakeholders, and revise the list frequently enough to cater for changes as the project progresses. Consider engaging key stakeholders such as the local MP and councillors, local business and community groups
- Analyse the stakeholders: how much interest do they have in the project; are they likely to be in favour of the retrofit works; how might different groups be won over?
- Map stakeholders according to the level of interest they are likely to display and the level of influence they might exert
- Prioritise your engagement with the stakeholders, giving appropriate weight to those stakeholders who stand to benefit and to those who could exert significant negative influence

Training for stakeholder engagement

Action: Train internal staff and contractors involved in the retrofit project

Provide training through workshops, short training sessions and briefings to relevant internal staff and external retrofit contractors on the upcoming retrofit project, so they are aware of the details and understand how to deal with queries from residents.

Internally	Externally (if in place)
Comms team	Installation contractor
Resident liaison team	External RLO's
Customer contact centre	Retrofit Coordinator
In-home energy advisors	External energy advice contractor
Internal Retrofit Coordinator (RC)	

A project summary will be useful to share with the teams and can help to emphasise key messages to share with residents.

Messaging to residents

Action: Plan your communications content

Think about what you want to communicate, including the specific content and styles you adopt, based on your understanding of your residents:

- Do not link the retrofit project to fuel poverty. According to Placeshapers and <https://www.mentimeter.com/> Tpas tenant engagement experts, campaigns that focused on fuel poverty failed to engage residents. Although everyone wants to save money on their energy bills, most people don't think of themselves as being in poverty, let alone fuel poverty
- Avoid terminology such as 'vulnerable residents' – again people might not recognise themselves as such and therefore may be put off from engaging
- Be clear about the opportunity to improve their lives as well addressing climate change
- Think carefully about the imagery you use in communications
- Offer the opportunity for residents to participate in the design of your campaign

Action: Include information on the residents' typical concerns

The Northern Consortium Jury Report provided 19 recommendations from 30 housing tenants on retrofit. Some of their concerns include:

- How mess and disruption will be kept to a minimum
- What support will be offered to residents who don't like changes to their home
- Time taken to do works – think about whether residents will have to take time off work and for how long contractors will be in the property
- Any support to help residents during retrofit, such as helping to move items of furniture or clearing loft space
- Contractor cleanliness and the standards you'll be expecting them to meet
- Potential changes in house appearance, including any house space taken up by new measures
- Who will pay for and undertake any redecoration required
- How any new systems will impact on energy bills
- How works may affect an animal assistant or pet
- How works will be completed to an excellent standard, letting them know this will be checked by an inspector at handover
- What residents will be required to do to maintain the new installation
- Who to contact if there is a problem and who their single point of contact is

- Liability for ongoing maintenance of measures. By according with the PAS/MCS standards, LAs are largely protected from liability for maintenance and repair, which instead sits between the householder and the installer (the standards include a minimum 2 year warranty on parts and labour, extending to as much as 25 years for some measures)

Action: Consider Whole House Approach during retrofit works

Residents will appreciate retrofit projects that occur alongside other upgrades. Consider a whole house approach that can benefit residents practically, whilst improving efficiency and levels of comfort in their homes.

- Work with the planned works teams to investigate whether the planned works, e.g. kitchen or bathroom upgrades, can be carried out in line with the retrofit

Action: Create a short and simple 'Retrofit project fact sheet' summary document

Provide information on the intranet for internal staff and put together a 1-page condensed overview document about the upcoming retrofit project:

- Introduction and overview of the retrofit, including information on where the retrofit project is taking place, how many homes and the improvement targets
- What kind of measures are being installed
- Who to contact if they have any questions about the retrofit project
- The proposed retrofit project timelines
- The key internal teams and external contractors who will be involved

This is particularly important for measures that may be unfamiliar, such as heat pumps, or for which they may be a misapprehension, such as cavity wall insulation.

Action: Engage with residents based on their motivations

Highlight "What's in it for me?". Benefits to resident can include improved comfort, health and wellbeing, lower bills, carbon savings, and reduced risk of condensation, damp and mould. Inform residents about:

- Money savings: According to Tpas, messaging that highlights saving on bills will resonate well with most people
- Softer outcomes:
 - Estimated thermal comfort improvements to their home, for instance the fact that their home should be warmer after the works are completed
 - Improvements to any existing problems with condensation, damp and mould in the property
 - Any health and wellbeing positive impacts for residents, such as improved indoor air quality
- You could provide residents with free, small energy and water saving devices for taking part in the retrofit projects, or other incentives such as food gift vouchers or fuel vouchers for those with Prepayment meters
- Some residents may be interested in the estimated carbon savings from the retrofit works. Make the tonnes of CO₂ savings easy to understand by comparing them to something they can relate to, such as the equivalent CO₂ of X miles driven by a petrol car

Action: Get permission to install energy monitoring equipment in homes before retrofit works begin

Request permission early to install equipment to monitor and analyse pre- and post-retrofit project data.

- Consider what kind of equipment to install pre-retrofit works; to measure temperature, humidity levels and energy consumption
- Install as early on as possible within the retrofit project

Action: Tailor communication methods and content for engaging with leaseholder tenants

There are legal issues, costs and complexities in a mixed tenure retrofit project which will need to be considered.

- Read the wording of leases carefully to determine whether you have a right to access and carry out works, and whether there is a right to recover costs from leaseholders
- Communicate directly with the leaseholder for permissions (rather than property tenants)
- Communicate directly with the property tenant to organise access rights and the right to carry out works
- Discuss the same concerns that owner occupiers have as mentioned above, such as costs, privacy, on-going maintenance, reliability, disruption, and aesthetics
- Promote the benefits to leaseholders:
 - Financial incentives - free partial grant funding to improve their property (including possible free full grant for low-income landlords)
 - Increased thermal comfort
 - Reduced home running costs
- Provide system guidance to both the leaseholder and property tenant in both written format and face to face (if they are two different people)

Action: Provide opportunities for residents to feedback or be involved

- Allow residents the opportunity to feedback on how the retrofit project can be improved
- Ask residents to 'co-produce' the retrofit works for their property, working together with the retrofit coordinator to find a shared solution

Awareness stage checklist

How to communicate with residents:

- Plan your communication methods and timings
- Train internal staff and contractors involved in the retrofit project
- Make your residents feel special!
- Ensure that all information materials are resident friendly
- Contact residents using the best contact method in order of preference
- Confirm with residents how they prefer to be contacted in the future
- Have one single point of contact for residents
- Select your resident engagement tools

What to communicate to residents:

- Plan your communications content
- Include information on the residents' typical concerns
- Consider Whole House Approach during retrofit works
- Create a short and simple 'retrofit project fact sheet' summary document
- Engage with residents based on their motivations
- Get permission to install energy monitoring equipment before retrofit works begin
- Tailor communication methods and content for engaging with leaseholder tenants
- Provide opportunities for residents to feedback or be involved

Additional Useful Resources

- [A Guide to Good Engagement with Residents, London Borough of Barnet](#)
- [Free Guides, Plain English Campaign](#)
- [Private rental sector and home energy retrofit investment, Xchange](#)
- [Residents' voices in the UK's Net Zero Carbon journey, Placeshapers and Tpas](#)
- [The Social Housing Tenants' Climate Jury Report, Northern Housing Consortium](#)

Launch stage

Approximate timing: 2-4 months before work starts

Key Questions – Have you contacted all the residents affected by the retrofit project? Is your Retrofit Coordinator (RC) now in place to help you plan the engagement so there are no repeat visits? Do residents understand the aims of the retrofit project?

Key Outcomes of this: Contact the residents and ensure they are provided with the correct, resident friendly information for the retrofit project. Ensure the best contact methods are used to convince them to fully engage with the retrofit works. At the end of this stage you should have a complete number of residents to engage with, and a reserve list of residents to contact in case of dropouts.

The Launch stage is where the full details of the retrofit project are introduced to residents, staff and contractors. At this stage residents are encouraged to agree to the retrofit process. You may depend on your external RLO for this stage if your contractor is already in place, or you will be using your inhouse RLO team.

The RLOs and RC can work together on the resident engagement plan. The RC's role is to oversee all retrofit advice for residents. This is an opportunity to launch the plan, invite questions from residents and address any concerns.

If there is a time restraint on your retrofit project and Stage 2 Awareness is not possible, then you can implement the actions from Stage 2 at this Launch stage.

Action: Contact residents you have not heard from during the Awareness Stage

Ensure that residents you have not yet engaged with during the retrofit project are engaged and interested at first point of contact:

- Go door knocking for the residents who are yet to be contacted, face to face engagement at this stage will be ideal
- Reiterate the benefits for the residents, e.g. comfort, health and wellbeing, lower bills and carbon savings

Action: Use engaging and trusted staff to liaise with residents

- Hire staff who are personable, well trained, knowledgeable and who can gain the trust of residents

- Train, upskill and employ local residents or trusted members of the community who know the local area and will be able to liaise well with all different types of residents in their community
- Work closely with any local community groups who are already trusted in the community. Provide community groups with information and training on the retrofit project

Action: Bring in the Retrofit Coordinator (RC) to support the engagement

- Ensure the RC is liaising with your internal or external RLO at this stage

Action: Minimise engagement fatigue!


Plan your consultation and engagement activities, pool resources and work jointly whenever possible to avoid duplication of engagement activity.

- Create a joined-up process with all contractors including a live action plan which is regularly updated by the team, highlighting the contact process for residents, listing:
 - when residents will be contacted
 - the methods for contacting residents - using the residents' preferred contact method
 - residents' responses
- Share the action plan with the necessary teams who are speaking to residents: RLO, PAS 2035 staff, external contractors
- Ensure contact with residents strikes the balance between keeping them updated and not overwhelming them with communications
- Make sure all contractors understand the contact process for residents, including where there are specific approaches in place for individual residents or households
- Conduct an in-depth dwelling assessment. This will help to understand any remedial works required to fix existing construction or structural defects, before retrofit works commence

Action: Contact more homes than required for retrofit project

- Inevitably there will be dropouts, uninterested or uncontactable residents at this stage. Ensure you use your reserve list of residents to contact if you still have capacity to replace those who have dropped out
- Undertake the same order of contact as mentioned in the Awareness stage


Action: Install monitoring equipment in homes before retrofit works begin



Install any monitoring equipment as early as possible in the retrofit project to monitor and analyse pre- and post-retrofit data. If possible, install at this stage, or at the latest in Stage 4 the Design stage

- Consider what kind of equipment to install pre-retrofit works; to measure temperature, humidity levels

Action: Consider all safeguarding and lone working requirements to protect residents

- Ensure that all RLO and RC staff are trained on and understand your organisation's safeguarding and lone working policies and procedures
- 

Action: Get the residents interested through visual aids

- Show physical samples of external wall insulation (EWI) or internal wall insulation (IWI), or any free small measures that will be provided
- Show pictures of what the retrofit measures look like in a real home once it has been installed
- Invite residents to any homes that have already been retrofitted
- Use written and video case studies
- Residents are most engaged when the work is happening

What's what guide for residents:

Key barriers to resident engagement are tightly linked to a lack of retrofit knowledge, misconstrued cost vs perceived value, and limited trust in the quality of contractors' workmanship. Contact with residents about the benefits of retrofit (e.g., saving money on bills and home comfort improvements), whole house plans, and evidence of using accredited installers and suppliers, is vital in gaining resident support and increasing project transparency.

- Contact residents you have not heard from during the Awareness Stage
- Use engaging and trusted staff to liaise with residents
- Bring in the Retrofit Coordinator (RC) to support the engagement
- Minimise engagement fatigue!
- Contact more homes than required for retrofit project
- Install monitoring equipment in homes before retrofit works begin
- Consider all safeguarding and lone working requirements to protect residents
- Get the residents interested through visual aids

Additional useful resources

- [A quick guide to low carbon heating, Energy Saving Trust](#)
- [Factsheets and leaflets, Community Energy Plus](#)

Design stage

Approximate timing: 1-3 months before work starts (depending on the measures package)

Key Question – Are you keeping residents up to date with what measures will be installed and ensuring that measures are suitable for residents' lifestyles?

Key Outcome of this stage: To provide advice to residents about the retrofit measures that are due to be installed using the best engagement method, tailoring advice to the residents' lifestyle and energy usage.

The Design stage ensures that your RC and RLO team are working together to ensure residents' interests are being represented while surveying residents' homes, designing the retrofit solution and assessing the home for any construction or structural defects, leaks, condensation or mould.

At this stage your contractors will plan an efficient, joined-up process, including the collection and dissemination of survey data, to ensure that resident home visits are kept to a minimum.

Action: Keep the residents up to date and keep them happy

- Contact the resident before visits - send a reminder text or email, or call them the day before an appointment
- Be realistic with your timelines and let residents know of any changes as soon as possible
- Listen to residents' concerns and expectations and ask them how disruption could be reduced
- Show courtesy and respect and be sure keep appointments

Action: Consider the materials used to engage with residents

- Make sure the materials are simple to understand and that they highlight the social and economic outcomes for residents as well as environmental impacts
- State clearly the purpose for getting in touch with the residents

Action: Ensure all retrofit advice according to PAS 2035 is provided to residents

- Cover the key features of the design including all the proposed Energy Efficiency Measures (EEMs) and a brief explanation of the next stage – Installation

- Show and explain to the residents about the current Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) and Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) rating of their home produced by the Retrofit Assessor
- Tell residents what the estimated EPC and SAP rating will be after retrofit works are completed and the estimated changes to their energy bills
- Ensure employees who perform work alone (lone workers) refer to the companies' policies and actions on lone working

Action: Ensure that all planned measures are suitable for the residents

- Ensure that residents' mobility or dexterity issues are considered when designing measures
- Ensure that all installations are easily accessible and suitable for residents in their homes, e.g. you may need to lower new heating controls on walls for wheelchair users

Design stage checklist

- Keep the residents up to date and keep them happy
- Consider the materials used to engage with residents
- Ensure all retrofit advice according to PAS 2035 is provided to residents
- Ensure that all planned measures are suitable for the resident

Installation stage

Approximate timing: During installation

Key Question – Are you keeping residents up to date with what measures will be installed and ensuring that measures are suitable for residents' lifestyles?

Key Outcome of this stage: To provide advice to residents about the retrofit measures that are due to be installed using the best engagement method, tailoring advice to the residents' lifestyle and energy usage.

The installation stage is where residents' retrofit works are completed.

Action: Minimise inconvenience to residents

- Maintain strong project management
- Offer regular updates for residents through bulletin boards and newsletters
- Monitor residents' satisfaction
- Help residents to cope with the disruption
- Keep a tidy working environment on site
- Focus particularly on groups of people who face the greatest challenge in interacting with people in authority to ensure their concerns are addressed
- Keep the number of visits from contractors to a minimum

Handover stage

Approximate timing: Immediately after work has been completed

Key Question – Have residents received tailored energy advice and guidance about their installed measures?

Key Outcome of this stage: Face to face tailored advice to residents on the measures installed in their home. Residents should be provided with 'resident friendly' written guidance on how to use the fitted measures efficiently as well as general behaviour change advice to encourage energy efficient behaviours.

Educating resident on measures

Action: Provide tailored energy advice to residents according to PAS 2035

- The RC, RLO or energy advisor should deliver tailored, face to face advice for the residents, and leave clear guidance on:
 - How to use and protect the installed EEMs and how they should affect the energy performance and comfort levels of their home. This is particularly important for measures that are more likely to be unfamiliar to residents, such as heat pumps
 - Behavioural advice, including use of any installed ventilation, heating and hot water systems, lights and appliances and their controls
 - How to get the best performance from the EEMs and the potential consequences of switching off or disabling ventilation
 - How repair and maintenance of the installed EEMs can help sustain the building and contribute to its energy efficiency. Note that the PAS/MCS standards require a minimum 2 year warranty on parts and labour, extending to as much as 25 years for some measures
- Recruit and train local trusted community members who know the local neighbourhood and community to become Resident Champions or RLOs
- If required, you could offer free small energy and water saving measures to residents to encourage them to take part in advice sessions
- Retrofit advice should be tailored to the householders' needs and cover the following topics, as appropriate:

- Living patterns and energy usage including: use of ventilation, heating and hot water systems, lights and appliances, and system controls, including simple key instructions
 - Health and safety risks related to fuel poverty such as damp and mould, cold and hypothermia
 - Mythbusting about the new measures
 - The need to maintain buildings properly
 - How to reduce energy costs by reviewing and changing energy tariff or supplier
 - The typical fuel cost savings from the energy efficiency measures
 - Applicable quality assurance regimes (e.g. TrustMark, including the Consumer Charter)
 - Means of complaining about poor service
 - Data considerations, including the need for data about the performance of the home and how that data might be used in monitoring and evaluation
- During an advice session, energy advisors can record information, e.g.
 - Annual energy use from residents' homes who did not have energy monitoring equipment installed
 - EPC rating of homes
 - Residents' monthly incomes
 - Residents' monthly outgoings (rent, council tax, energy costs)

Action: Show residents the change in their EPC and SAP rating

- Show the EPC and SAP ratings to the residents before the works
- Inform residents of the new EPC and SAP rating, and what it means for them in terms of a reduction in their energy bills

Action: Provide resident friendly guidance on all new retrofit measures

- The RC, RLO or energy advisor should provide residents with written materials that are clear, using non-technical language and diagrams of the specific measures that have been installed
- Provide links for videos that are clear and use non-technical language. Make them available to offline residents
- Provide any long-term maintenance information of retrofit measures
- Provide contact details of staff to contact if there are any questions or issues with retrofit measures in the future
- Get support from your Comms team to produce clear messaging

- Consider translating written communication into the most widely used languages

Action: Conduct an aftercare walkthrough

Make sure people are comfortable and are using the new systems efficiently through:

- Offering residents extra support over the phone and/or through face-to-face visits
- Checking systems are being used correctly
- Checking instructions are available
- Ensuring residents know who to contact if they have any questions or issues with their retrofit

Handover stage checklist

- Provide tailored energy advice to residents according to PAS 2035
- Show residents the change in their EPC rating and SAP rating after retrofit works have been completed
- Provide resident friendly clear guidance on all new retrofit measures installed
- Provide information to internal teams and repairs and maintenance contractors
- Conduct an aftercare walkthrough

Post works stage

Approximate timing: a few months after handover/first heating season/for any new residents

Key Questions – Have you done post occupancy surveys with your residents? Have you analysed and reported the data collected from the surveys and energy monitoring equipment? Are your teams sure of how to pass on EEMs information to new residents?

Key Outcomes of this stage: To ensure that residents are confident in using their new retrofit measures efficiently, and to undertake post occupancy monitoring

and evaluation gaining qualitative feedback through surveys, and quantitative feedback through surveys and analysing any monitoring equipment installed.

The Post works stage is where residents are contacted again to check that: they are still using their retrofit measures efficiently, that there are no ongoing problems, that they know who to contact if there are any issues in the future, and to support any new residents that may move into the property. Visits to validate that heat pumps are being used to best effect are required.

How to write case studies

Action: Undertake post-occupancy evaluation surveys

Occupancy surveys can be useful for residents to feedback on their satisfaction of the retrofit project, and in measuring the extent to which the retrofit works have benefitted the health and comfort needs for residents.

- Measure benefits to residents using a qualitative method e.g. a survey to measure comfort, health, and wellbeing
- Use installed monitoring equipment to collect and analyse quantitative data such as relative humidity, temperature, and energy consumption
- See the Monitoring and Evaluation toolkit for more details

Action: Report on resident engagement outcomes and adapt methods of engagement for future retrofit projects

- Consider how outcomes of your resident engagement should be tracked and monitored
- Outcomes could include:
 - Access rates
 - Levels of satisfaction of retrofit works
 - Social, economic and wellbeing results
- Monitor and analyse the outcomes from resident engagement and report consistently and regularly
- Wider social, economic value and wellbeing outcomes can be linked to the Housing Associations' Charitable Trust (HACT) report including the [Social Value Calculator](#)

Action: Repeat the retrofit information for residents in the different formats

- Provide face to face visits, digital communications and/or written communication when the first heating season happens

Action: Prepare for any future changes to tenants or contractors

- Ensure that landlords who may over time have turnover of tenants in the retrofitted property are provided with a manual on how to use the systems in the home efficiently
- Provide details of qualified maintenance providers to owner occupiers and landlords

Action: Celebrate and publicise achievements

- Ask residents who have had a positive retrofit experience to talk about future plans for retrofit to other residents (you can offer incentives to residents to promote projects for you)
- Train interested residents to be local Resident Champions
- Create case studies with residents to motivate future residents to be involved in retrofit projects

Post works stage checklist

- Undertake post-occupancy evaluation surveys
- Report on resident engagement outcomes and adapt methods of engagement for future retrofit plans
- Repeat the retrofit information for residents in the different formats
- Prepare for any future changes to tenants or contractors
- Celebrate and publicise achievements

Summary of recommendations

1. Link resident engagement with retrofit to your business policies and strategies
2. Instigate a positive culture throughout the organisation:
 - Internal training and communications campaigns are crucial
 - All teams need to be aware of the resident engagement plan and providing the same information
3. Consider retrofitting with Whole House Approach
4. Trusted and engaging staff with good interpersonal skills are key!

- Whether your engagement staff are internal or contracted they are the key point to engaging with residents. They must be able to talk to all different types of residents
 - Spend time shadowing staff to see if they're liaising with tenants in the manner you would expect
 - Train and employ trusted local members of the Community who already have a good understanding of the local area and/or a commitment to the area
5. Have one single point of contact for residents
 6. Use incentives if needed to encourage participation
 7. Consider the main concerns of the residents:
 - Time taken to do works (will I have to take time off work? how many days will you be here?)
 - Contractor cleanliness
 - Change in house appearance (house space taken up and redecoration requirements)
 - How much more might it cost me to use?
 - How to deal with pets
 - Will the work be completed to an excellent standard (checked by inspector at handover)?
 - Do I need to do anything to maintain the new installation?
 - Who do I contact if there is a problem?
 8. Highlight the main benefits of retrofit for the different types of residents, e.g.:
 - General needs
 - Leaseholder tenants
 - Families with young children
 - Elderly
 9. Consider how to engage all groups, but especially:
 - Elderly
 - Residents with language and/or literacy considerations
 - Families with young children
 - Residents with hearing, sight, physical, or learning difficulties
 - Different cultures, ethnicities or religions
 10. Keep the resident up to date with:
 - Their key point of contact
 - Timescales and duration of work – exactly what will happen and when

- Expectation of tenants inputs e.g. taking time off work, preparation for works
 - Any changes to the retrofit plan – amended timescales, changes in staff or measures
11. Communication materials need to be:
 - Clear, concise and non-technical
 - Easy to understand by all (ideally with diagrams of the same system that is being installed)
 - In varied formats e.g., websites, social media, using local Resident Champions, offline activities and local magazines and publications
 12. Develop case studies (videos, etc.), along with a mechanism for tenants to communicate across geographical areas e.g. a range of managed forums, to share stories
 13. Provide relevant materials for landlords with information for when a new tenant moves in
 14. Analyse and monitor other social, economic value and wellbeing outcomes from retrofit works

External links

- [A Guide to Good Engagement with Residents, London Borough of Barnet](#)
- [Climate Active Neighbourhoods brochure, Climate Alliance](#)
- [Climate Change Behavioural Insights Final Report, Hampshire County Council,](#)
- [Engaging and empowering tenants in council-owned housing, Local Government Association and Tpas, 2019](#)
- [Managing the Human Factors in Retrofit Process, Salford University, 2020](#)
- [Private rental sector and home energy retrofit investment – scoping report, Climate Xchange, 2018](#)
- [Residents' voices in the UK's Net Zero Carbon journey, Placeshapers and Tpas](#)
- [Retrofit for All toolkit, Carbon Co-op](#)
- [Retrofit for the Future, Technology Strategy Board](#)
- [The Social Housing Tenants' Climate Jury Report, Northern Housing Consortium, 2021](#)
- [Toolkit Guide, DESNZ](#)
- [UK Social Value Bank, HACT](#)
- [Websites and apps, RNIB](#)
- [What are the Barriers to Retrofit in Social Housing? DESNZ](#)
- [Working with customers to make net zero carbon a reality, Chartered Institute of Housing](#)

- The Retrofit Playbook, a resource for local and combined authorities, UK GBC (Pages 37-46)



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