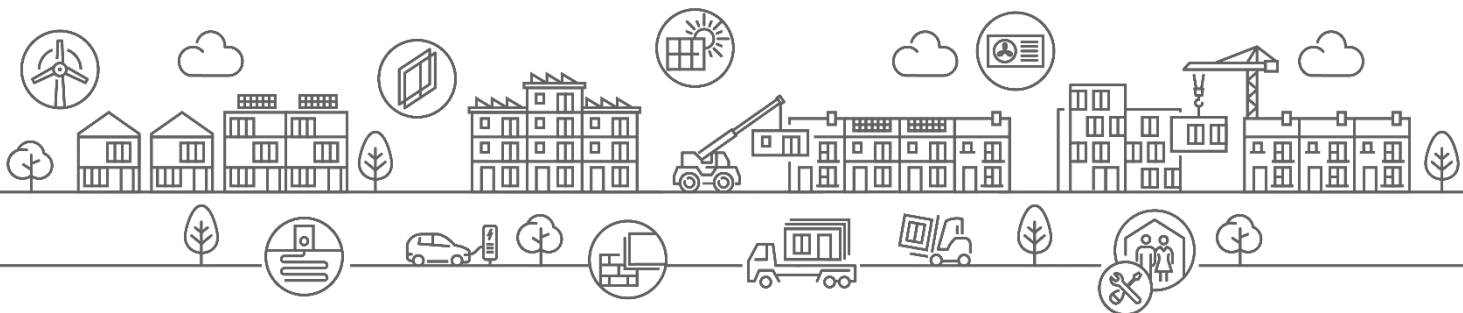


# Resident engagement

## Toolkit

30<sup>th</sup> March 2022



HM Government

SUPPORTED BY

**MAYOR OF LONDON**

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## 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 for effective resident engagement to deliver the best retrofit outcomes.

### Who should use the toolkit?

The toolkit aims to help the lead for the retrofit project. Those responsible for monitoring the end results of the retrofit project will get the most value from the toolkit.

### When should you use the toolkit?

Use this toolkit whilst developing the retrofit project, securing support and funding. It should also be used during project delivery and after the retrofit is completed.

Including the resident engagement plan within any contract specification can highlight to contractors that resident engagement is a fundamental part of their job.

Start early and update and refine your resident engagement plan as new information becomes available. This toolkit can be used for both long retrofit projects and short term 'one off' retrofit projects.

### How should you use the toolkit?

The toolkit has three levels of increasing detail:

- **Level 1** – a brief introduction
- **Level 2** – a framework for coordinating effective resident engagement during retrofit works, organised into seven 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 and guides and a final 'Summary of Recommendations'.

### Recommended process

1. Read the information in Levels 1 and 2 to understand the toolkit basics
2. Take the self-assessment questionnaire to get a picture of your current areas of strengths and weaknesses in developing your resident engagement plan
3. 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. Well planned and resident engagement can help to:

- **Improve no or low access rates** – Encourage people to participate so you don't have low take up.
- **Address residents' concerns** – Residents' concerns vary with the demographic and type of households – there are concerns about disruption, new 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 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. Hard-to-reach residents 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. Good resident engagement may also improve the relationship between residents, contractors and landlords.
- **Save your organisation cost and time** – Recontacting residents who will not engage is timely and costly. Getting people bought-in to the programme early on saves time and reduces the delivery risk.
- **Reduce risk of long-term maintenance failures or residents not understanding how to use their new system** – Reduce the risk of retrofit projects by providing behaviour change advice and guidance on the operation of new systems to residents.
- **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 to financial capital, social capital and/or market share.

### Why do we need a retrofit resident engagement toolkit?

A different approach to resident engagement is required for retrofit works compared to the usual planned programme of works, as retrofit can sometimes be more disruptive and will often be less familiar to residents.

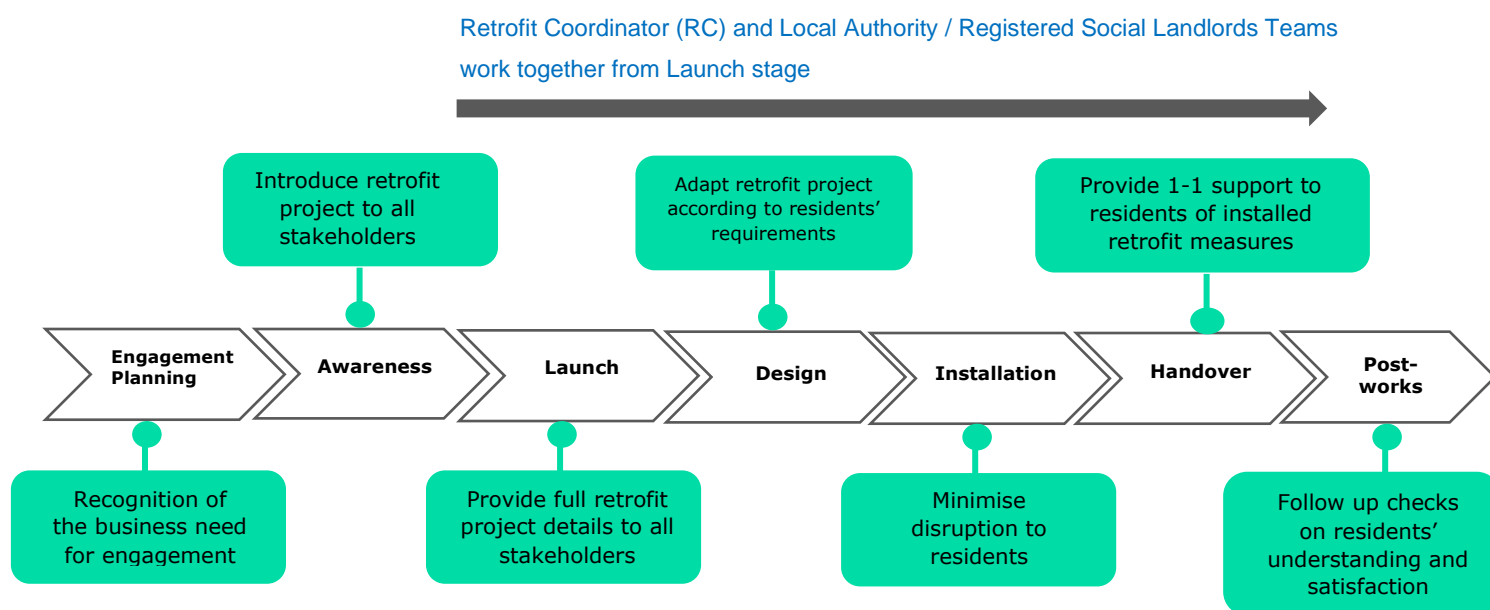
Useful documents are available highlighting the importance of resident engagement. This toolkit has selected the most relevant information to retrofit plans from existing resident engagement good practice documents.

This toolkit can also help support your future applications for retrofit grant funding.

## Level 2 – Framework

### The seven stages of resident engagement during a retrofit plan

This graphic outlines 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.



#### 1. Engagement Planning

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

#### 2. Awareness

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

#### 3. Launch

- Present the full details of the project 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 in 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 providing additional support to the hard-to-reach groups.

## 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. Continue to 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.

## Self-assessment questionnaire

After reviewing the framework for resident engagement, we recommend that you take the Resident Engagement self-assessment questionnaire. This simple tool looks at each stage of resident engagement during a retrofit project and asks you to score how well prepared you are. You can then decide where your areas of relative weakness are, and where to focus your attention by digging deeper into this toolkit's guidance.

## 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
- any additional useful resources.

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

### 1. Engagement Planning stage

**Approximate timing: 6-12 months before 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 from the organisation for the retrofit project. There are 4 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 cost and time (e.g. by not having to re-contact residents who do not engage)
- Allowing residents space to talk about their priorities so they can be factored into the retrofit project
- Identifying issues or opportunities with the homes which might not be evident from the data alone
- Reduce the no access rate, increasing resident participation and satisfaction
- Improving the relationship between residents, contractors and landlords
- Evidencing 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 local authorities, housing associations and other trusted community partners can be an effective approach to delivering resident engagement for area-based and multi-tenure schemes
- Resident facing staff delivering community programmes could provide useful insight into the challenges faced by the community
- They could also provide access to community advocates to help engage harder-to-reach residents
- 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:
  - a) access to your residents' demographic information to understand how to tailor their engagement to the different needs of residents
  - b) strong processes in place for data sharing and data security
  - c) good interpersonal skills to engage well with residents
  - d) experience of engaging with residents with complex needs and the correct processes in place to do so

**N.B.** 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 have access to the same demographic information of your residents, 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: To provide day to day engagement with residents
- In-home energy advisors: To provide in-home advice once the work has completed (behaviour, ventilation, tariff switching, operation of new systems)
- Installation contractor: Resident Liaison Officer's (RLOs) 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
- Energy advice contractors: To provide additional domestic energy grants and funding information to reduce overall annual energy costs.

## Checklist for Engagement Planning stage

- 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
- Liaise with other teams, including resident groups, to help plan your resident engagement

## Additional Useful Resources

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

## 2. Awareness stage

**Approximate timing: 6-12 months before programme starts**

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

**Key Outcomes of this stage:** Create culture change 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 in the retrofit process. 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.

## How to communicate with residents:

### **Action: Plan your communication methods**

Consider how you communicate with residents, addressing the needs of different customer groups (particularly the hard-to-reach groups):

- Act on any previous 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
  - Workshop sessions with residents (ensure you have a reserve list of residents in case others drop out, are uncontactable or uninterested).

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

Provide training 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 any queries from residents.

- Liaise with the correct teams:

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)	

- Provide workshops, short training sessions or briefings about the retrofit project
- Provide a project summary document to these teams
- Emphasise the key messages to share with residents.

### **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 for free
- 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
- 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: 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.

**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 Comms 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 addressed directly to residents (not a generic ‘Dear Resident’ address), providing retrofit project details, letting residents know when and how you will recontact them. If 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
  - 3) Telephone call
  - 4) Face-to-face visit - leave a ‘Missed visit’ card with clear details on 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
- Allow residents 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

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
<b>Elderly</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide larger print guidance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Always provide a written summary of what has occurred on any face-to-face visit and what to expect next</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More face-to-face support is required for this group</li> <li>• Some older people may not be active online</li> <li>• Be aware of hard of hearing issues</li> <li>• Ensure that all retrofit measures are easy to understand</li> <li>• Use useful diagrams to aid understanding wherever possible</li> </ul>
<b>Language and/or literacy considerations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Translate guidance into residents' native languages</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Slow down speech if required</li> <li>• Use bilingual staff or a family member for translations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use more visual aids to explain things</li> </ul>
<b>Families with young children</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide concise messaging using visuals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Involve the whole family when providing guidance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with families around their time schedules (considering school times and school holidays)</li> <li>• Link the retrofit project to sustainability lessons at school</li> </ul>
<b>Hearing Accessibility</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide written information well in advance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use a British Sign Language translator if needed</li> <li>• Use Speech to Text Reporters</li> <li>• Provide a written summary of any face-to-face visit</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carry out observed user testing to ensure your website works for people with disabilities</li> </ul>

Customer Group	How to engage in written format	How to engage face to face	Other considerations
<b>Sight Accessibility</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use transcription services</li> <li>• Print in Braille if required</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage a family member to accompany the visit</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carry out observed user testing to ensure your website works for people with disabilities</li> <li>• Ensure that all images and diagrams have alt. text</li> </ul>
<b>Physical Accessibility</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that enough time is left to answer the door</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure community events are accessible</li> </ul>
<b>Learning Accessibility</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use an Easy Read format document</li> <li>• Use an easier to read font</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage a family member to accompany the visit</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People with learning difficulties may need more time than usual to understand information and be able to respond</li> <li>• Use more visual aids to explain things</li> </ul>
<b>Different cultures, ethnicities or religions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be conscious of cultural, ethical or religious differences in your written and visual materials</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be aware of any cultural, ethnic or religious etiquette e.g. not wearing shoes in the household</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use more visual aids to explain things</li> </ul>



## **What to communicate with 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 TPAs, 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 social housing tenants on retrofit. Some of their concerns include:

- How mess and disruption will be kept to a minimum
- How residents will be supported 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 how many days will contractors 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 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.

**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.

**Action: Engage with residents based on their motivations**

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

- 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 CO<sub>2</sub> savings easy to understand by comparing them to something they will relate to, such as the equivalent CO<sub>2</sub> 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 each lease's wording 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 social tenants have as mentioned earlier, such as costs, privacy, on-going maintenance, reliability, disruption and aesthetics
- Promote benefits to leaseholders and the value in energy improvements:
  - financial incentives - free partial grant funding to improve their property (including possible free full grant for low income leaseholders)
  - increased thermal comfort
  - improved home marketability
  - reduced home running costs
  - improved EPC rating of their property
- 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 RC to find a shared solution.

## Checklist for Awareness stage

- **How to communicate with residents:**
  - Plan your communication methods
  - 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 in homes 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  
[GuidetogoodEngagementV2.pdf \(barnet.gov.uk\)](#)
- Free Guides, Plain English Campaign, [Free guides \(plainenglish.co.uk\)](#)
- Private rental sector and home energy retrofit investment – scoping report, Climate Xchange, 2018, <https://www.climateexchange.org.uk/media/3259/private-rental-sector-and-home-energy-retrofit-investment.pdf>
- Residents' voices in the UK's Net Zero Carbon journey, Placeshapers and TPAs, [Placeshapers - Residents Voices in Net-Zero Carbon journey](#)
- The Social Housing Tenants' Climate Jury Report, Northern Housing Consortium, 2021  
<https://www.northern-consortium.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Tenants-Climate-Jury-Report.pdf>

### 3. 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 in-house RLO team.

Your internal or external RC will be in place at this stage and 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 was a time restraint on your retrofit project and Stage 2 Awareness was 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
- Adhere to any Covid regulations
- 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.

### Checklist for Launch stage

- 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

## 4. 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 have to 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 any visits - send a reminder text or email, or call them the day before any 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 to 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 EPC and 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.

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

- Any residents' mobility or dexterity issues must be 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

## Checklist for Design stage

- 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 residents



## 5. Installation Stage

**Approximate timing: During installation**

**Key Questions** – Are the residents satisfied with the number of contractor visits, cleanliness and quality of works?

**Key Outcomes of this stage:** To keep residents happy during the installation process by minimising the number of visits and disruption to the home.

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 the hard-to-reach groups to ensure their concerns are responded to
- Keep number of visits from contractors to a minimum.

## 6. 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 Outcomes 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.

**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
- 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
- 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 EEMs
  - any applicable quality assurance regime (e.g. TrustMark, including the Consumer Charter)
  - how to complain 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 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 EEMs that have been installed
- Provide links for videos explaining EEMs that are clear and use non-technical language
- 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: Provide new systems information to internal teams and repairs and maintenance contractors**

- Update any teams who deal with new residents moving in, so that they can pass on system manuals and advice. Include information on:
  - what the systems are in their new homes
  - how to use the systems
  - who to go to if there are any repair or maintenance issues
- Undertake basic awareness training for these staff to provide them with a general understanding of the systems
- Update any Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems for the retrofitted properties with any unique system or contractor details
- Update any housing asset data management systems
- Ensure that your contact centre and repairs and maintenance contractors are:
  - aware of which properties have been retrofitted
  - aware of the new systems installed
  - trained on how to repair and maintain the new systems.

**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.

## Checklist for Handover stage

- 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.

## Additional Useful Resources

- Toolkit Guide, BEIS, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/best-practice-guidance-for-the-delivery-of-energy-efficiency-advice-to-households-during-smart-meter-installation-visits>

## 7. 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.

### **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 [LINK TO BE PROVIDED]

**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, and when new residents move in.

**Action: Prepare for any future changes to tenants or contractors**

- Ensure that any teams dealing with any new tenants that may move into the retrofitted property are provided with:
  - a manual on how to use the systems in their home efficiently
  - contact details in case of future issues
- Train any new long-term maintenance and/or repairs contractors on how to repair the systems in place
- Ensure that long term maintenance and repairs are included in your long-term planned works programmes.

**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.

## Checklist for Post works stage

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

## Additional Useful Resources

- UK Social Value Bank, HACT, [UK Social Value Bank | HACT](#)

## Summary of Recommendations

1. Link resident engagement with retrofit to your business policies & strategies
2. Create culture change 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 how you'd 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 hard-to-reach groups:
  - 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:

- Who their key point of contact is?
  - 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 when a new tenant moves in to the teams that deal with new tenants (e.g. lettings team)
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  
[GuidetogoodEngagementV2.pdf \(barnet.gov.uk\)](#)
- Climate Active Neighbourhoods brochure, Climate Alliance,  
[https://www.nweurope.eu/media/6311/can\\_brochure\\_english.pdf](https://www.nweurope.eu/media/6311/can_brochure_english.pdf)
- Climate Change Behavioural Insights Final Report, Hampshire County Council,  
<https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/Appendix%203%20Behavioural%20Insights%20Report%20Cabinet%20July%202020%20%281%29.pdf>
- Engaging and empowering tenants in council-owned housing, Local Government Association and TPas, 2019,  
[https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/5.48%20Engaging%20and%20empowering%20tenants%20in%20council-owned%20housing\\_05.pdf](https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/5.48%20Engaging%20and%20empowering%20tenants%20in%20council-owned%20housing_05.pdf)
- Managing the Human Factors in Retrofit Process, Salford University, 2020  
[D5.2-Managing-the-human-factors-in-retrofit-process.pdf \(salford.ac.uk\)](#)
- Private rental sector and home energy retrofit investment – scoping report, Climate Xchange, 2018, <https://www.climateexchange.org.uk/media/3259/private-rental-sector-and-home-energy-retrofit-investment.pdf>
- Residents' voices in the UK's Net Zero Carbon journey, Placeshapers and Tpas, [Placeshapers - Residents Voices in Net-Zero Carbon journey](#)
- Retrofit for All toolkit, Carbon Co-op, <https://carbon.coop/portfolio/warm-homes-for-all/>
- Retrofit for the Future, Technology Strategy Board,  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/669113/Retrofit\\_for\\_the\\_future\\_-\\_A\\_guide\\_to\\_making\\_retrofit\\_work\\_-\\_2014.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/669113/Retrofit_for_the_future_-_A_guide_to_making_retrofit_work_-_2014.pdf)
- Social Housing Retrofit Accelerator Masterclass on Resident Engagement, Turner and Townsend, 2022 [Masterclasses on-demand - SHRA \(socialhousingretrofit.org.uk\)](#)
- The Social Housing Tenants' Climate Jury Report, Northern Housing Consortium, 2021  
<https://www.northern-consortium.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Tenants-Climate-Jury-Report.pdf>
- Toolkit Guide, BEIS, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/best-practice-guidance-for-the-delivery-of-energy-efficiency-advice-to-households-during-smart-meter-installation-visits>
- UK Social Value Bank, HACT, [UK Social Value Bank | HACT](#)
- Websites and apps, RNIB, <https://www.rnib.org.uk/rnib-business/website-and-apps>
- What are the Barriers to Retrofit in Social Housing? BEIS,  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/787361/Barrier\\_to\\_Retrofit\\_in\\_Social\\_Housing.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/787361/Barrier_to_Retrofit_in_Social_Housing.pdf)
- Working with customers to make net zero carbon a reality, Chartered Institute of Housing,  
<https://www.cih.org/media/ui3pcmu5/working-with-customers-to-make-net-zero-carbon-a-reality-orbit-and-cih-september-2021.pdf>

## SHRA Toolkits available online

The full selection of SHRA Toolkits are available at:

[www.socialhousingretrofit.org.uk/knowledge-hub](http://www.socialhousingretrofit.org.uk/knowledge-hub)

