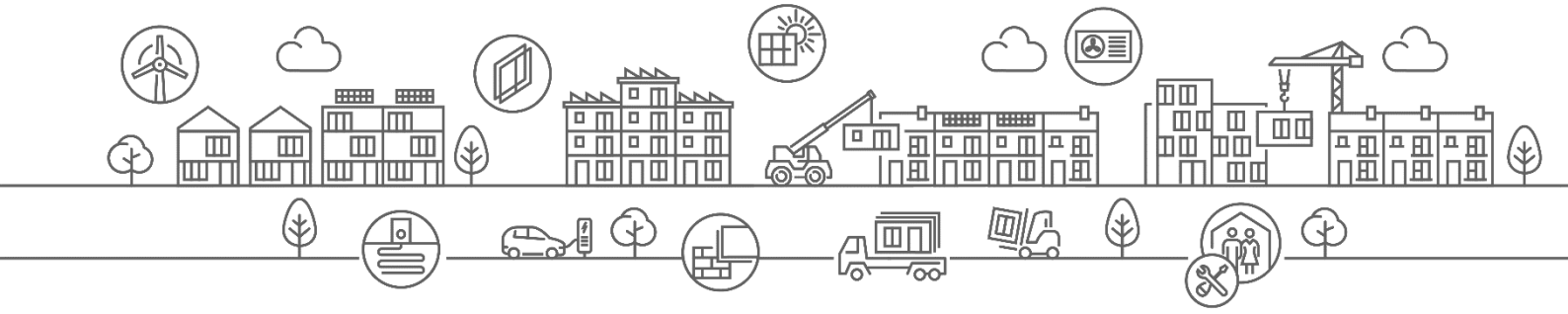
SOCIAL HOUSING RETROFIT ACCELERATOR

Team forming and skills

Toolkit

30th March 2022



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Summary

Social housing retrofit projects involving tenants in residence are complex and require the coordination of many different areas of expertise. This toolkit describes the main skills and competencies needed to develop and deliver large-scale social housing retrofit projects.

Who should use the toolkit?

The intended audience is individuals and teams engaged in the design and development of social housing retrofit programmes and who will be involved in putting together bids for retrofit focused funding streams.

When should you use the toolkit?

This toolkit should be used as early as possible in the development of a retrofit project or funding application, so that any shortfall between the necessary skills and those already available to you can be identified. Plugging any gaps, through recruitment, training, or outsourcing, takes a significant amount of time and effort.

How should you use the toolkit?

The toolkit has three levels of increasing detail:

- Level 1 – a brief introduction
- Level 2 – a framework for understanding the required skills and competencies to deliver social housing retrofit, putting together a suitable team, and managing the team during the project
- Level 3 – more detailed guidance on defining requirements, building and managing the team, and linking external supporting information and appropriate training.

Recommended process

1. Read the information in Levels 1 and 2 to understand the basics
2. Take the self-assessment questionnaire to get a picture of your current areas of strength and weakness and where you need to focus your attention
3. Use Level 3 to suggest key activities, identify gaps, and link to additional resources.

Level 1 – Introduction

To deliver a successful project you must have the right resources, with the right skills, available at the right time. Those resources must also be aligned to the same objectives, collaboratively driving the project forward, and be mutually supportive.

Putting together a team for a large-scale retrofit programme is challenging. These projects involve multiple functions, teams and individuals. Often, they will involve multiple partners, a complex supply chain and multiple locations.

Retrofit projects directly affect people's lives and must deal with many different stakeholders. Achieving the performance standards needed to upgrade the UK's housing stock to net-zero by 2050 requires new and unfamiliar technologies used in novel ways.

All of this puts demands on the skills and capabilities of the project teams that may be beyond what is readily available in most organisations.

This toolkit will help you to:

- **Build** a picture of the tasks to be completed and the skills and capabilities required
- **Map** the existing resources to the tasks and roles
- **Identify** gaps in coverage and prioritise the most significant
- **Develop** a realistic plan to bridge the gaps.

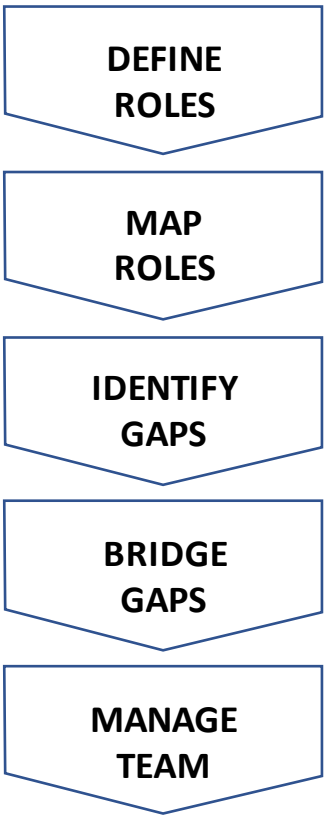
Once you have a team, you will need to manage it to keep all the individuals aligned, focused and delivering effectively. Clarity of roles and responsibilities and clear communication of the plan, progress and problems is key to maximising the contributions of everyone involved in the project.

The toolkit includes tools that can help you to promote clarity, improve communications and avoid the formation of silos that block efficient working:

- The Elevator Pitch
- The RACI chart (Responsible, Accountable, Consulted and Informed)
- Boundary Objects.

Level 2 – Framework

There are five steps in carrying out a skills audit and building a team for a retrofit project:



- **Define** the tasks, roles and skills required for your project
- **Map** the people you have available for the project to the tasks, roles and skills
- **Identify Gaps** in coverage. Where do you have tasks and roles with no one with the appropriate skills to cover them?
- How will you **Bridge** the gaps you have identified?
- Once you have a team, how will you **Manage** it to deliver a successful project?

Your options for bridging any gaps are limited. You can:

- Train existing staff to cover a new role
- Recruit additional people with the right skills
- Outsource the activity to a specialist provider.

There are additional complications when you are part of a consortium. You need to make sure that all the key roles are covered across the consortium. This means mapping the capabilities of all the consortium partners and working collectively to bridge any gaps. In addition, managing a consortium team requires extra focus.

Level 3 – Questions and Actions

Checklist:

- Make a list of all the key tasks in your project. Make sure you include the specific roles required in PAS 2035
- Map the resources you have already available to the task list. Include resources that may be in other consortium members or partners. How good is your coverage? Do the people you have identified have the necessary skills and capacity?
- Identify key gaps. What tasks and roles are not covered?
- Which gaps represent the biggest risks to the success of the project?
- What is your plan for covering the gaps in resource and capability? Will you:
    - Train existing staff?
    - Recruit new staff?
    - Outsource the task to a third party?
    - Not fill the gap?
- Have you built in the cost and time required to bridge the gaps?
- How will you make sure the team works well together?
    - Communications
    - Clarity on who does what.

Define Roles

Key question – Do you understand the specific roles required for the project?

Retrofit projects are large and complex. Multiple teams need to cooperate, and there is a complex mix of internal and external stakeholders.

The first step in forming the team is identifying the tasks, roles and skills required to deliver the project.

Start by making a list of the different tasks that need to be completed. There is a range of resources you can call on:

- Internal procedures, experiences, and project management methods
- Requirements of any funding agencies
- Guidance from consortium or supply chain partners
- Appendix 1 provides an outline list of tasks and roles
- PAS 2035.

PAS 2035 is a standard that all publicly funded retrofit projects must follow. It specifies several required roles. The standard includes the required skills, qualifications, and certifications. These roles are listed here because they are new and will be unfamiliar to anyone not already working to PAS 2035. The roles are:

Retrofit Assessor	Carry out dwelling assessment and supply data to the Retrofit Coordinator. This role is essential for ensuring high-quality data is collected before any work is committed and work can be specified appropriately.
Retrofit Coordinator	A person with overall responsibility for each stage of the project, sometimes also fulfilling other project roles under PAS2035, where they hold the correct qualifications. This role helps manage the contract with a focus on a quality retrofit and meeting the occupant's needs.
Retrofit Designer	A person qualified to prepare a retrofit design. E.g. an architect. The role is highly technical and will ensure the risks are designed out of the installation.
Retrofit Installer	A person or organisation undertaking the physical installation of energy efficiency measures in an existing building.
Retrofit Evaluator	A person qualified to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of a project and provide feedback. This role will benefit your organisation by assuring a high-quality retrofit before handover is completed.

The most important role is the Retrofit Coordinator. They are accountable for delivering the overall project.

You must ensure that the retrofit project team covers all these roles, either internally, through outsourcing, or through project partners. Multiple roles can be fulfilled by the same individual, providing they are properly qualified and have no conflicts of interest.

Map Roles

Key question – How much of the task and role list can be filled with existing staff?

Review the list of tasks and roles, and ask which team or individual will deliver them?

- If you are part of a consortium, try to look across the entire consortium membership for the required skills
- Can supply chain partners carry out some of the tasks?
- Think about the teams and the individuals you have identified:
    - Do they have the skills?
    - Do they have the capacity to undertake the project?
- Be honest and realistic about how much of the list you can cover with the available resources.

Identify Gaps

Key question – Where do you have gaps in your capability?

Review the gaps in your list.

- Which gaps represent the biggest risk to the project?
- Which tasks need hard to acquire skills?
- When do those gaps need to be filled? Not every role needs to be covered from day one, but you must have a plan to have the right skills available at the right time.

Prioritise your list of gaps, both in terms of the critical roles and when they need to be filled.

Bridge Gaps

Key question – What is your plan for filling any gaps?

The options for filling gaps in your team are limited:

- Redeploy staff with the right skills who are currently working on other projects
- Provide training for existing staff to upgrade their skills
- Recruit additional staff
- Outsource the task to a third party.

Opportunities to redeploy staff may be limited, even if they have the right skills. In most organisations, if they are not already available for your project, they are actively working on something else. You will need a strong business case to transfer them. However, if people with the right skills do exist, this can be a relatively quick solution to fill the gaps.

If you are a member of a consortium, look across the whole group for people who can fill some of the gaps.

Some of the roles require specific qualifications and certifications, particularly the PAS 2035 roles. If you have staff with some of the skills, it may be possible to bring them up to the required standard with additional training. For example, Home Energy Assessors can upgrade to Retrofit Coordinators through external courses.

Training takes time, so it is essential to spot the gaps as early as possible.

Recruiting additional staff is always possible, but there are two challenges:

- Recruiting specialist skills can be both time-consuming and costly
- With increasing focus on retrofit projects, some skills and roles are in short supply. For example, recruiting qualified and experienced Retrofit Coordinators on the open market is proving difficult.

As with training, early identification of critical gaps is important.

Finally, gaps can be filled by outsourcing tasks to third parties. If the resource is readily available, this can be an attractive route. By choosing specialist suppliers, you can guarantee the appropriate skill level and avoid disruption to your own teams and long-term commitments to staff. However:

- It may be a relatively costly solution
- Unless you have an existing relationship, setting up the contract may take time
- It increases management complexity
- You wouldn't gain the skills and experience in-house
- It can suffer the same problem of supply and demand as recruiting. Supply chains are not very elastic, and because you are looking for specialist skills, you can find yourself in a tight market.

Whatever your situation, you need a plan for the gaps because, in most cases, it will take time and resources to fill them. In some cases, you may decide that it is impossible to fill all the roles, and you will have to live without or spread your existing team more thinly.

If that is your plan, make sure the additional risk is recorded in your risk register, and you have alternative options to mitigate the risk.

Managing your Team

Key question – How do I keep the team working effectively throughout the project and head off any problems?

Now that you have assembled a team, you need to deliver the project. A key management challenge is keeping the team operating effectively in such a complex and fast-moving project.

Most of the day-to-day planning can be carried out with standard project management approaches and tools. If your organisation has any standard methods, you should use them. People will work more effectively with tools they know and are comfortable with. There are good resources available if you need further advice on general project management of complex and multi-partner projects (see 3.6).

An area that needs constant attention in large projects is communications. All the different departments, teams and individuals need to know what the plan is, who is doing what, and what needs to be done by when. If the team has clarity on the project plan and key activities, it is easier to deal with the inevitable problems. You cannot swerve to avoid a pothole if you don't know that the pothole is there or even that potholes are a possibility.

The rest of the section describes three tools that can be useful in keeping a complex team aligned and informed. They do not replace conventional project management methods; they are additional tools that help with large and multi-partner projects:

- The Elevator Pitch
- The RACI Chart
- Boundary Objects

Elevator Pitch

A successful team is constantly exchanging information about the project. As a project leader, it is part of your role to facilitate the flow of project information. To encourage open conversation. You will constantly tell the project 'story' to team members, partners and stakeholders. Highlighting the priority tasks, preparing people for what comes next, spotting deviations from the project plan, helping people identify risks and to take corrective action. A good tool for telling the story is the Elevator Pitch.

An Elevator Pitch is a brief description of an idea, product or project that gets the key messages across quickly.

Imagine you have just bumped into the CEO in the elevator. You have 30 seconds between floors to put across your new idea or sell your project. What are the points that you must get across? The elevator pitch is about grabbing attention and getting permission to go into more detail later. So the story must be stripped back to the bare bones. What is the project, why is it important, and how you will deliver it?

If you have the key details at your fingertips, you can quickly adapt the story to any audience, making it short or long as required.

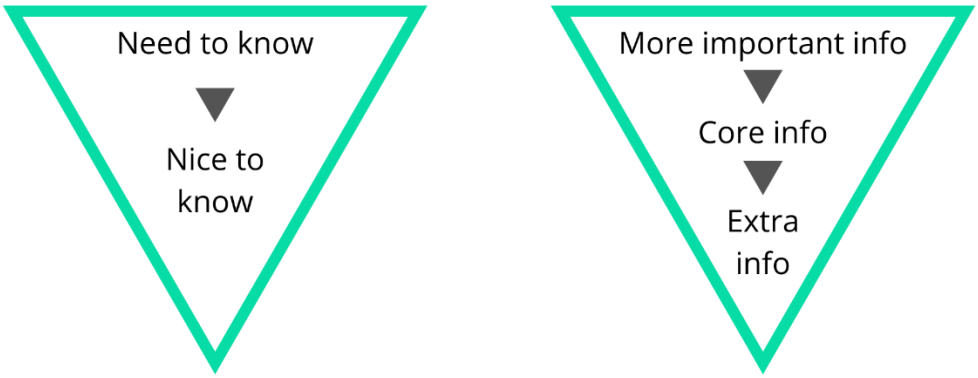
A good way to strip back the story to its essentials is to use the Inverted Pyramid. This approach to structuring stories is widely used in print journalism and web-writing.

You start with the critical points you want to get across. In this case, the project plan's what, why, and how. Simple, direct language and the minimum number of words.

Then you add the main story, providing the core argument. Finally, there is other related information—specific details of plans, costings, risk assessment, etc.

The great strength of the inverted pyramid is that you can adapt it to any length of time available to tell the story. If you have a short time, you make sure you get the key points across. With a bit more time, you can cover more of the story, but you still hit the important points at the beginning.

It is a technique worth looking at because it is not the way most of us were taught to write reports or prepare presentations. That is why it is so common to sit through presentations where so much time is spent setting out the context and history that the really important information is lost or rushed at the very end. Invert your pyramid!



The RACI Chart

Keeping a large and complex team aligned to deliver large and complex projects is not easy. A handy tool is the RACI chart or matrix. This simple tool clarifies the roles and responsibilities so that tasks do not fall down the cracks between teams and specialisms.

RACI is an acronym for **R**esponsible, **A**ccountable, **C**onsulted and **I**nformed.

For each activity and task, it identifies all the people connected to that task and what their responsibilities are:

- **Responsible** – the person who actions the task or deliverable. Responsible for doing the work or making the decision. It can be more than one person, but responsibility assigned to a large group evaporates
- **Accountable** – the person who owns the task. Making sure the work gets done and for signing off completion—the place where the buck stops. Should always be a single named person to avoid confusion
- **Consulted** – the people who need to be consulted before making a decision or executing a task. These may be stakeholders or subject matter experts. Their role is to help those **responsible** for a task and are involved in two-way communication
- **Informed** – the people who need to be kept up to date but are not involved in advising or decision making. One-way communication.

You can show who is responsible, accountable, or consulted and informed, for each task using a simple matrix. You can make a RACI chart for the overall project, and the more detailed ones for each core activity.

	Task 1	Task 2	Task 3	Task 4	Task 5	Task 6
Responsible						
Accountable						
Consulted						
Informed						

It seems a simple tool, but it is common for people to be unclear who is responsible for delivering a task and accountable for ensuring it is done. And people with their heads down getting on with a project activity often forget to consult with people who will be directly affected by their actions, or don't inform people that changes have been made or a task delivered.

The RACI chart helps clarify the project and makes it much easier to keep everyone up to speed.

Boundary Objects

The third tool addresses the problem of silos. This is a classic difficulty of multi-function and multi-partner projects:

- Teams follow their own priorities
- Information does not flow between teams
- There is suspicion and 'not invented here' problems
- The project gradually bogs down.

So, where do the problems come from, and what can we do about them? The origin lies in the shared skills and experiences of the different groups. Any group of people who work together regularly will share a set of beliefs, a set of assumptions and a language. The subtleties and nuances of these are unique to each group.

Each group has different accountabilities and measures success differently. When discussing the project, they use words and concepts that may be private to that particular group or might have unique meanings.

A solution to this problem is the Boundary Object. This is something that sits between different groups and helps neutral communications. It can be:

- The shared project plan
- A mathematical model
- A process map
- A roadmap, etc.

Anything that promotes shared knowledge and understanding and can be jointly created. But there are rules about what can be a boundary object:

- It must be co-invented and collectively owned. All the relevant groups must be involved. A boundary object cannot be created by one team and passed to another. That triggers misunderstanding and 'not invented here' thinking
- If it is going to be collectively owned it should be created in 'neutral' territory. If one group hosts the work, it subtly and progressively becomes theirs. Find a workspace outside the participants
- Choose objects that are persistent. Boundary objects need regular use. They should be poked and prodded, revised and appealed to
- Make sure they have real meaning to all the participating groups. Something only important to one team is still important, but it is not a boundary object.

Genuine boundary objects – pieces of shared and co-created knowledge – are powerful tools in keeping multi-function, multi-partner and multi-location teams aligned.

External Resources

- On-Demand Masterclasses:
  - Team Forming/Skills Mapping
  - Understanding PAS 2030/2035
  - Gaining Senior Management Buy-In
- Report – Project management for large, complex projects
- Website – Skills Audit
- Website – Crafting an Elevator Pitch
- Website – How to Structure an Article: The Inverted Pyramid
- Website – Inverted Pyramid: Writing for Comprehension
- Website – How to Make a RACI Chart for a Project
- Website – Boundary Objects

Appendix 1 – Lists of Roles and Skills

The three tables in this appendix give different views of the roles, skills and capabilities required for retrofit projects. They are not a comprehensive list of every activity that may be required for your project. They are a starting point. You should create a unique list of tasks and roles based on the specific requirements of your retrofit programme, your organisational structure (and that of any partners), and your current practices in project management and delivery.

- **Table 1** covers the roles specified in the PAS 2035 standard. These are mandatory for retrofit projects receiving public funding. You must ensure that the retrofit project team covers all these roles, either internally, through outsourcing, or through project partners.
- **Table 2** is a general list of the tasks and activities for a retrofit project and the individuals, teams, or departments involved in delivering them.
- **Table 3** presents the same information from the other perspective. Who are the teams and individuals who help deliver a retrofit project, and which tasks are they involved in?

Table 1: Roles Required by PAS2035

Retrofit Assessor	Carry out dwelling assessment and supply data to the Retrofit Coordinator. This role is essential for making sure high-quality data is collected before any work is committed and work can be specified appropriately.
Retrofit Coordinator	A person with overall responsibility for each stage of the project, sometimes also fulfilling other project roles under PAS2035, where they hold the correct qualifications. This role helps manage the contract with a focus on a quality retrofit and meeting the occupant's needs.
Retrofit Designer	A person qualified to prepare a retrofit design. E.g., an architect. The role is highly technical and will ensure the risks are designed out of the installation.
Retrofit Installer	A person or organisation undertaking the physical placement of energy efficiency measures in an existing building.
Retrofit Evaluator	A person qualified to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of a project and provide feedback. This role will benefit your organisation by assuring a high-quality retrofit before handover is completed.

Table 2: Tasks and Activities: Who is Involved in Delivery

Tasks and activities	Departments, teams or roles with involvement
Project sponsorship	– Cabinet / Leadership Team
Make key project decisions	– Project lead – Retrofit coordinator – Project working group
Manage and analyse energy data in asset management system	– Data lead – Asset management team
Monitor and update changes on the information system when retrofits are carried out	– Data lead – Asset management team – Maintenance department
Generate retrofit update reports	– Project lead – Data lead – Retrofit coordinator
Generate retrofit outcome reports	– Project lead – Data lead – Retrofit coordinator – Tenant Engagement lead – Maintenance department
Write resident engagement plan	– Tenant Engagement lead – Customer services department
Explain retrofit plans to residents and support throughout the project	– Tenant Engagement Team
Support residents at the handover stage	– Tenant Engagement Team – Maintenance department
Manage queries and complaints	– Customer services department – Tenant Engagement Team
Decide procurement route and write the specification	– Procurement team – Finance team – Project lead
Identify funding and finance opportunities	– Energy and/or sustainability lead – Finance team – Legal team
Write and input to bids	– Asset management team – Data team – Energy and sustainability lead – Finance team – Legal team
Monitor compliance with PAS2035	– Retrofit coordinator – Project lead – Compliance team
Disseminate retrofit messages throughout the organisation	– Energy and sustainability lead – Communications department
Legal reviews of contracts and funding arrangements	– Legal and Procurement teams – Finance team – Project lead
Manage maintenance contracts for new equipment	– Compliance team – Maintenance department
Collate and store the new suite of certificates and warranties	– Compliance team – Data team
Carry out post-occupancy monitoring and verification	– Compliance team – Project lead – Data team – Tenant Engagement Team

Table 3: Roles and Their Responsibilities

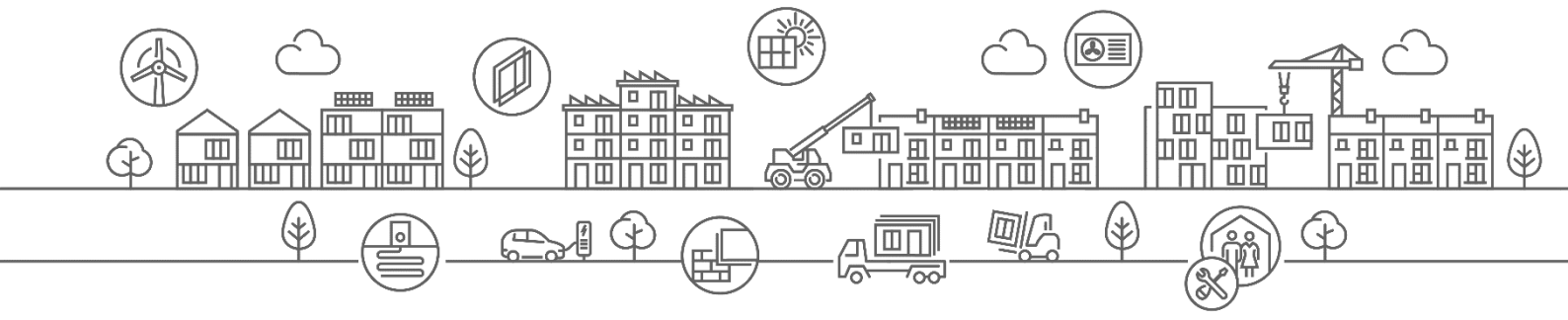
Teams/ Roles		Capacity and responsibility required for retrofit
Programme Board		- Project sponsor at executive and director level. - Overall responsibility for the project. - Attend regular programme meetings with the planning and delivery team. - Includes permission to proceed or pull back from certain stages of the programme
Data manager		Preparation – - Absorb energy efficiency data as a (new) data workstream. - Create an internal asset management system that is compatible with this data. For example, an RdSAP module, to avoid competing sources of energy data. Delivery – - Update internal systems with information regularly (e.g., a change in insulation levels). This will help projects run smoothly and not be delayed by bulk data refreshes. Post-retrofit – - Analysis and reporting to build business intelligence on retrofit targets and progress. This includes updating stock data and providing reports to senior management. - Reporting evidence of retrofit to funders and investors.
Resident Engagement team		Preparation – - Produce and implement a resident engagement plan. - Support residents in the planning stage of retrofit. Delivery – - Respond to day-to-day queries from scheduling appointments, responding to complaints, and managing expectations. - Representation at all programme meetings. Post-retrofit – - Support the residents after the retrofit is handed over, checking that the home responds well to the retrofit and that the residents understand their new equipment and heating requirements. This can be over a period of 6-18 months.
Procurement and/or finance team		Preparation – - Liaise with and advise the project team on the preferred route for procuring your retrofit programme. Delivery – - Monitoring of budgets throughout delivery and attending periodic meetings. - Support budget management with respect to external funding
Retrofit programme team	Project Manager	- Property and asset management specialist. - At the centre of delivery, offering technical support and contract management. - Depending on the programme's size, this will be a resource dedicated to retrofit. - Attending regular programme meetings with various departments and stakeholders. Responding to day-to-day queries from contractors and residents.

Teams/ Roles		Capacity and responsibility required for retrofit
	Retrofit Coordinator	- Overall responsibility for coordinating the areas described here, working with the contractors and liaising with residents. - Formal role to represent the interests of householders in terms of projects delivered in compliance with PAS2035.
Repairs and maintenance team		- Repairs and maintenance teams will have to be able to take on additional and potentially non-standard components. This will have an impact on gas safety records, heating contractors and DLO teams. - There will be contractual implications of adding items to maintenance programmes
Energy or sustainability team		- Keep up to date with overarching policy and legislation – disseminating this to programme board and programme team. - Engage with wider organisation on the importance of retrofit to help instigate cultural shift and secure ongoing support.
Legal team		- Support and advise on legal aspects of funding arrangements and programme contracts. This will be time consuming both during bid writing and once funding is awarded. - Monitor the legal implications of retrofit measures being installed in leasehold or shared ownership properties
Compliance team		- Capacity to monitor compliance with retrofit best practice at various stages of process (i.e., PAS2035). - Health and safety experts will be expected to attend periodic programme meetings and provide feedback on risk assessments and methodology. - Capacity to take on new equipment/systems that need maintenance post-retrofit. Includes certification, managing maintenance contracts and so on.

SHRA Toolkits available online

The full selection of SHRA Toolkits are available at:

www.socialhousingretrofit.org.uk/knowledge-hub



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