

Retrofit for All:

Enabling people-centred approaches in publicly funded retrofit schemes.

Impact report

Understanding the impact of tools and approaches piloted in our project.

February 2026



**Carbon
Co-op**

About this report

We would like to extend a huge thanks to everyone that has contributed to this project. From our dedicated Advisory Board members, to everyone who has attended a workshop or meeting, participated in research, responded to our emails, provided feedback or shared the reports and resources.

Thank you also to our funder, the Energy Redress Scheme.

This report is authored by Carbon Co-op.

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Carbon Co-op is the trading name of The Society for the Reduction of Carbon Ltd, registered under the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014.

This report is part of the two-year Energy Redress Scheme funded project “Retrofit for All,” and builds on Carbon Co-op’s original toolkit (Warm Homes for All). It follows the publication of several outputs, which are the culmination of research and a service design process looking at barriers and enablers to people-centred social housing retrofit.

This report is for us, our funder, and also the sector. By this, we mean broadly the retrofit services sector and registered providers of housing. This includes housing associations, local authorities, those providing professional services and contracting. It’s likely also of interest to those working in social and participatory research.

Carbon Co-op is a Manchester-based community benefit society and not-for-profit community energy organisation that helps people and communities to make the significant reductions in energy and carbon emissions we need to tackle climate change.

Acknowledgements:

The **Carbon Co-op** team:

Ellie Radcliffe, Aneaka Kellay, Natalie Merrick, Laura Williams, Lorenza Casini, Jonathan Atkinson, Joseph Cain, Helen Grimshaw.

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**Carbon
Co-op**

shortwork



**Housing and
Communities**

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We use the terms 'housing providers' and 'Registered Providers (RPs)' interchangeably in this report.

Our monitoring and evaluation framework

Impact (Change) - our long term contribution

Our monitoring and evaluation framework for this project established our desired impact. This is our ambition for our long term contribution to the field.

We have three overarching impact statements:

To enable the social housing sector to move towards using more people-centred approaches to retrofit.

To ensure all households engage in and benefit from retrofit, increasing environmental justice.

To enable shifts in policies and funding mechanisms that support people centred approaches.

These outcomes are big and ambitious, and important to state. They also link to Carbon Co-op's organisational Ends, vision and mission. However, they are not easy to measure and it is unrealistic to assume that they will all be achieved with this one project. This is why we're keen on the terminology of 'change,' as opposed to 'impact'. You can tell a story about change, whereas 'impact' is a much less tangible and measurable thing.



Our monitoring and evaluation framework

Outcomes - the changes we will make

With the limitations around impact in mind, we set eight ‘outcome’ statements. These are the measurable changes we wanted to make through this project.

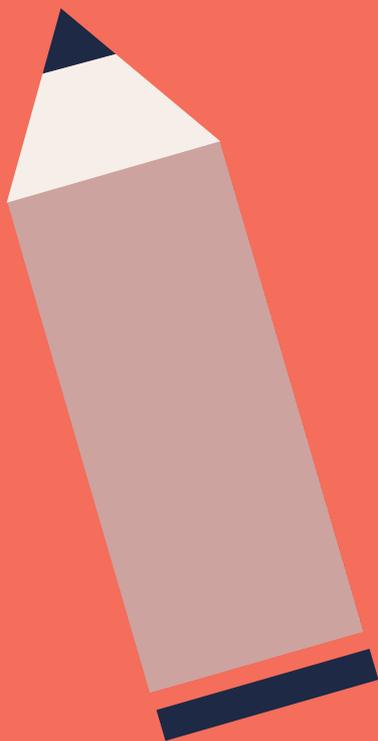
For clarity, these are displayed against the different audiences for the R4A work:

| Tenants | Registered Providers | Policymakers | Sectoral support organisations (e.g. Carbon Co-op) |
|--|---|---|---|
| Tenant champions increase their understanding of the retrofit experience of their peers. | Housing provider staff have a greater understanding of the experience of tenants on current retrofit schemes. | Policymakers are more aware of the need for, and challenges to, people centred approaches to retrofit faced by the housing sector, and consider how funding programmes can enable it. | Community organisations like Carbon Co-op are better able to develop services that meet the needs of housing providers and tenants in delivering people-centred retrofit. |
| Tenants have a greater understanding of the retrofit measures installed in their homes. | Housing providers have a greater understanding of people centred approaches and how to use them. | <p>Our methods for capturing feedback included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance lists • Write-ups and observer notes • Feedback surveys • Download forms, interactions with posts on social media etc. • Participatory exercises in workshop settings (such as ‘H forms,’ ‘continuums’, and ‘confidence rating’s). • Reflective exercises towards the end of the project across: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Tenant participants (researchers and Advisory Group members) ◦ Partners, Shortwork and LSE ◦ Carbon Co-op staff ◦ Advisory group members | |
| Tenant champions feel a core part of the project team. | Housing providers adopt people centred approaches in their policies and processes. | | |

Monitoring consists of capturing:

- Activities – what we have delivered on the project.
- Progress against each of the desired outcomes above.

What we achieved through project activities



What we achieved through project activities



Research

In September 2024 the first event for the project was held at the National Communities Resource Centre at Trafford Hall. This was led by the London School of Economics (LSE) Housing and Communities team, via the Housing Plus Academy. The event brought together housing providers, contractors, policymakers, and tenants to gain insights about their experience of people-centred approaches to retrofit through publicly funded schemes, and to review Carbon Co-op's first Retrofit for All Toolkit from 2021.

The event welcomed 22 attendees from 18 different organisations including:

- Five Registered Providers
- Five tenants from tenant and scrutiny panels at Together Housing, Cobalt Housing and L&Q
- Seven representatives from delivery partners including architects/retrofit designers, contractors and other consultants
- Two from Combined Authorities (Greater Manchester Combined Authority)
- Other sectoral support and advocacy organisations, such as National Energy Action

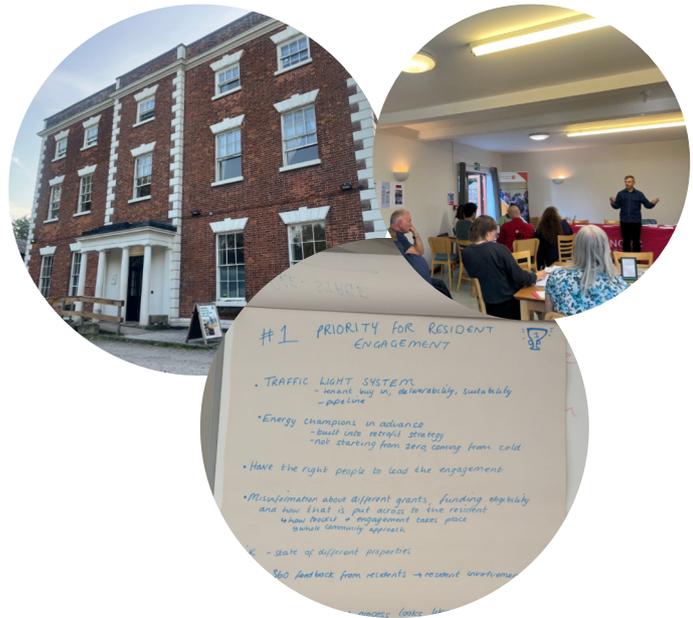
The event was facilitated (and participated in) by a further seven staff from LSE, Carbon Co-op and the National Communities Resource Centre (NCRC).

A blog about the event is available here:

carbon.coop/2024/10/housing-plus-academy-putting-people-at-the-heart-of-retrofit-approaches-in-social-housing/

“The discussions, and hearing from different organisations and case studies, created space for fruitful discussions and insights. When the tenants spoke as part of session one, the attendees seemed more engaged and were asking questions about how they feel as tenants etc.”

“There were a lot of discussions about the challenges housing associations face, especially during the early stages of applying for the SHDF grants. Time pressures were noted as a significant factor, often preventing a PCA from being applied from the outset when there was an urgency to submit a bid on time. It was also mentioned that sustainability teams within housing providers are often small, leading to heavy reliance on contractors for SHDF applications. This, in turn, drives the retrofit approach, which may or may not be as person-centred as it could be.”



Of the 15 respondents to the post-event survey, 14 said they had taken away new ideas. These included:

- The importance of clear, consistent, open communication and engagement with residents.
- To approach tenants in differing ways - group drop-ins or one-to-ones, they all react differently.
- Being more communicative with everyone to achieve your end goal.
- Considering different formats and content for the resources produced under this project.
- Further developing resident engagement/project development processes
- Being more proactive.
- Considering how to include tenants from the beginning of the project.
- Finding active tenants to have ongoing contact with.
- Learning on PAS 2035 delivery
- Making more use of community champions.
- Having a physical presence in the community.

What we achieved through project activities



Research

Shortwork undertook research with Community Researchers between October 2024 and February 2025, using a community-led action research approach.

This explored tenants' experiences and perspectives of retrofit for those living in properties owned by three Manchester based social housing providers.

"[A standout moment for me was] getting positive feedback from the tenants on the advisory group when we presented the results of the community research strand... It would have been good to have been part of the advisory group earlier so I could have been there to support the community researchers to be part of it."

Shortwork reflections

There was only one response to the feedback survey for this report. However, this person had forwarded the report on to approximately 20 others. Of the key recommendations, they were most excited by:

- Being responsive to tenants' needs at all stages – enhanced service quality
- Improving communication with tenants
- Understanding suitability, costs and benefits.

129 downloads of this research report
February 2026

The community-led action research involved:

- Training two community researchers, who took part in the project for five months in total. At the start of the project they took part in three in-person training days.
- The community researchers engaged with a total of 64 people across eight research sessions, that took place within community venues. Additionally one online session was delivered to capture the views of those who were unable to attend in person.
- Two in depth follow up interviews were also held with tenants who wanted to share more about their retrofit experiences.

Once the data collection was complete, community researchers returned to a workshop (facilitated by Shortwork) to collectively analyse the large quantity of data they had collected.

Together with Shortwork, they wrote up the findings into a key research report: **Retrofit For All: Understanding Tenant Experiences.**

Retrofit for All Understanding Tenant Experiences

What are the enablers and barriers to people-centred approaches to retrofit?



June 2025
By Liz Duffy, Rowena Hay, Mithila Ramagovilan, Sohrab Rezvani and Roger Newton



Left: the tenant research findings, co-authored by community researchers. These have been accessed by a wide range of stakeholders including Registered Providers and lots of organisations working around retrofit delivery and support - including third sector organisations.



Above: adverts for community researcher opportunities.

What we achieved through project activities



Research

A key output from the research stage was a report examining the experience of Registered Providers (RPs) and Delivery Partners (DPs) in retrofit planning and delivery.

This aimed to build on existing research by specifically looking at what is needed to enable successful people-centred retrofit within the social housing sector.

The research involved:

- Desk-based research, exploring existing research into the experience of RPs and DPs, and reviews of the existing toolkits available to support them.
- Qualitative interviews with eight RPs and delivery partners to identify key barriers and enablers to delivering people-centred retrofit.

Data analysis and write-up were structured around three key barriers, which were identified as:

- Structural
- Organisational
- Delivery-based.

The research was written up as: ***Retrofit For All: Understanding Registered Provider and Delivery Partner Experiences.***

“[A key learning moment for me was] that when we’re talking about ‘people-centred’ we’re also talking about approaches which don’t prioritise just getting the project done - it’s about the whole system working to prioritise people. That includes procurement, the funding structures, and the way delivery happens. Respect and culture are a massive part of that - and I think my ‘Aha’ was writing up the research findings in February and trying to articulate what qualities ‘people-centred’ retrofit has.”

“Having been exposed to, and observing, social housing retrofit scheme delivery in the past, I don’t think the research phase particularly presented any new learning for me. Sadly, a lot of the key barriers in particular felt very familiar.”

Carbon Co-op reflections

129 downloads
of this research
report

February 2026



Right: the housing provider and delivery partner research findings, co-authored with Shortwork. These have been accessed by a wide range of stakeholders including Registered Providers and lots of organisations working around retrofit delivery and support - including third sector organisations.

Retrofit for All

Understanding Registered
Provider and Delivery Partner
Experiences

What are the enablers and barriers to
people-centred approaches to retrofit?

September
2025

By Sabina
Dewfield,
Eleanor
Radcliffe and
Natalie Merrick

Carbon
Co-op

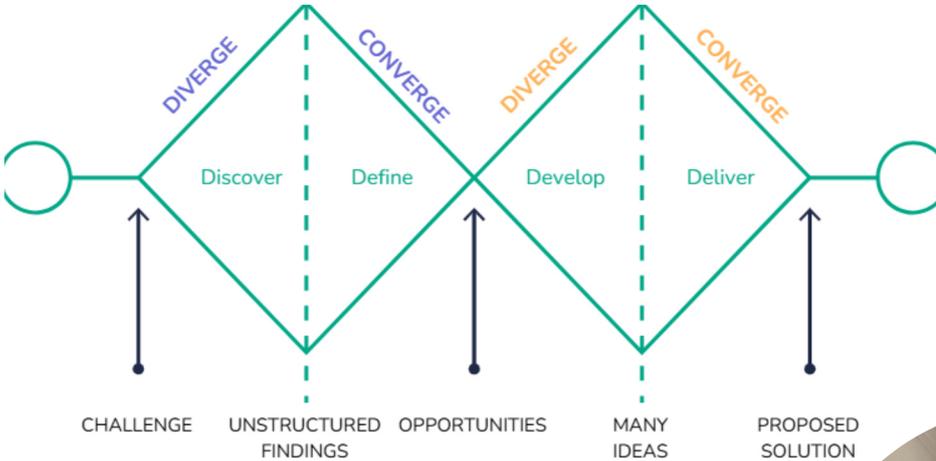


What we achieved through project activities



Service design

Using the double diamond framework, the service design work package built on the research findings. It used the key barriers identified as a springboard for generating ideas for resources that could be developed as part of the toolkit.



Co-creation and prototyping workshops

- Six workshops (a mix of in-person and online).
- 30 different stakeholders attended these - including tenants, housing providers and contractors.
- 286 ideas were generated in the co-creation workshops.
- Five themes were carried forward to prototyping:
 - Working with community groups
 - Easy Read guides
 - Valuing the resident liaison officer (RLO) role
 - Recruiting tenants into Registered Providers and retrofit roles
 - Retrofit Field Trips

The discussion at prototype testing stage was invaluable in crystallising the three themes to take forward to the next stage of resource development.

286 ideas generated by 30 stakeholders



“The value of applying the logic of people-centred approaches to our research/production methodology, i.e. the service design approach. So valuable both [in] understanding the issue, and in creating more targeted, meaningful and usable materials (we hope!) And giving stakeholders confidence in our understanding of the issue and the quality of materials produced.”

Carbon Co-op reflections on key highlights from the project.

What we achieved through project activities

Tenant-facing resources



Tenant-facing resources focused on Easy Read format materials, designed to support RPs and delivery partners in engagement work. The topics selected covered key themes identified in the workshops, representing issues both RPs and tenants were finding challenging. In addition to the suite of Easy Read guides, we also produced two Plain English guides.

Information about heat pumps

Heat pumps were a particularly popular topic for Easy Read guides, as voted by our participants in workshops. However, we found this a challenging topic to cover in this format due to the complex and multi-faceted issues – such as around affordability of continuous heating patterns.

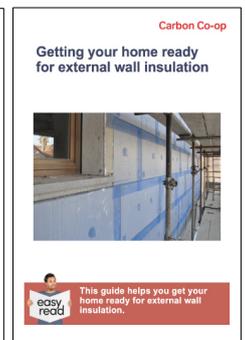
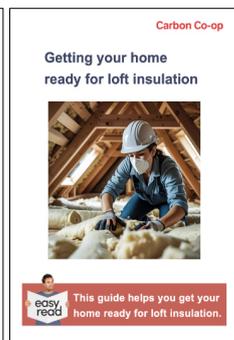
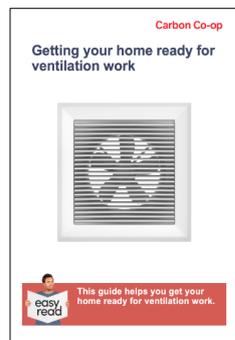
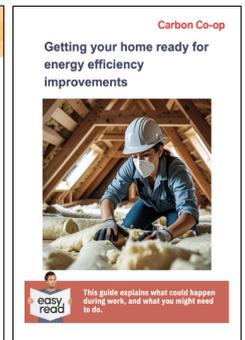
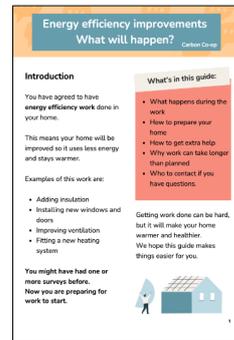
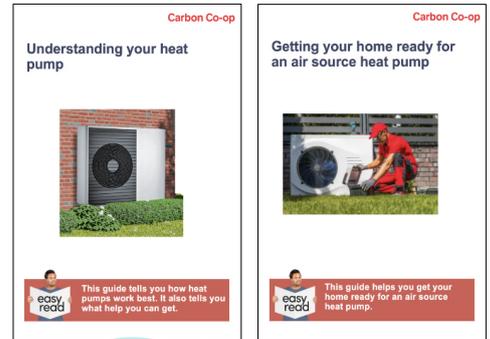
Stakeholders downloading spanned roles from organisational management through to resident engagement, showing wide interest in these resources.

The creation of Easy Read guides was more challenging than anticipated. Although an AI Easy Read tool was recommended to us, this proved difficult and required significant re-working. In future, an alternative is to explore the use of Easy Read consultants instead.

Given the technical nature of retrofit topics, quality checks need to cover:

- The Easy Read format – how well the sentences and images read.
- The technical content – to avoid misinterpretation of guidance, with the risk higher in a format where short sentences and simple language are required.
- Resident Liaison Officer review - bringing familiarity with what does/ doesn't work, identifying gaps or confusing content.

The testing of draft guides with user groups (a local Mencap group, and a local women's group) was very valuable, and it's important that organisations allow budget to support this testing work. We were able to support expenses, food, venue costs and translation, reducing barriers to participation.



"I think help with heat pumps is becoming critical in the light of the Warm Homes Plan."

Advisory group feedback on tenant resources

What we achieved through project activities



Registered Provider-facing resources

Resources developed to support Registered Providers and their delivery partners were focused on themes of valuing the Resident Liaison Officer role and enabling residents to enter retrofit skills and roles.

Valuing the Resident Liaison Officer role

These guides were developed in close collaboration with Broadacres Housing Association, who shared their work at the prototyping workshop during the service design phase. Following this, they participated in interviews and hosted the team for a filming day. This aligned with a visit from staff at the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ). This part of the toolkit comprises:

- A 'how-to' guide about valuing the RLO role
- Two written case studies about the Broadacres approach - one focused on the culture that enables the customer liaison team approach, and the other about how this impacts how they procure retrofit and other improvement works.
- A case study video of Broadacres

Over 65% of downloads of the RLO resources were by people in roles in organisational management, resident engagement or tenant representation roles within Registered Providers. Just over a third of downloads were from others within the sector (for example, academia, local authorities, and others delivering retrofit in partnership with social housing).

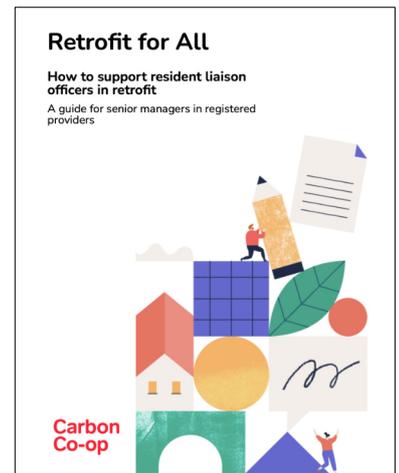


Enabling residents to enter retrofit skills and roles

The second part of the RP-facing resources was themed around recruiting tenants into retrofit delivery and skills. The case study was developed through working with the Lancaster West Neighbourhood Team, who also attended the prototyping workshops to share their work with participants. They went on to offer their time to interviews (both a sustainability manager, and a tenant employee), and also participated in a day of filming on the Lancaster West estate. This part of the toolkit comprises:

- A paper outlining the case for enabling residents to enter retrofit skills and roles, and inspiration for doing it.
- A written case study about how community employment has become a core part of retrofit delivery, and Lancaster West's overarching neighbourhood strategy.
- A case study video of Lancaster West.

44% of downloads for these resources were by people in organisational management, resident engagement or tenant representation roles within Registered Providers.



Outputs to outcomes



Working with tenants

Tenant champions increase their understanding of the retrofit experience of their peers.

Tenants have a greater understanding of the retrofit measures installed in their home.

Tenant champions feel a core part of project team.

Tenant researchers

Through the work of the tenant researchers, supported by Rowena Hay and Sabina Dewfield (Shortwork), the team produced a rich account of tenant experiences and perceptions of retrofit from across communities in Greater Manchester. This generated important findings that reinforce that of the parallel research strand with housing providers and delivery partners, particularly around issues of trust and culture. The tenant researchers produced tangible recommendations that were carried through to some of the resources produced.

An outcome that is perhaps not captured fully above, is that tenants contributed substantial analytical insight. For example, they were fundamental in communicating how critical the issues of trust, culture and relationships are. Their voice was powerful because it comes from a place of lived experience.

Tapping into skills in participatory action research external to Carbon Co-op had both strengths and weaknesses. While creating rigour and independence in the research, and harnessing the expertise of Shortwork in training community researchers, some felt that the staff team missed an opportunity. Had internal staff been more involved, it would have helped to develop skills within the team whilst also harnessing direct relationships with a large number of tenants. These contacts could have been incredibly valuable when it came to testing the resources in development - and as such, presented a missed opportunity. It also meant that the relationships with the two tenant researchers were also missing in the later stages of the project. Bringing Shortwork into the advisory group process earlier could also have enabled the tenant researchers to participate more fully.

"If we were to do another similar project, reaching out to tenant net zero groups would be a really valuable thing to do - to see how we can involve them from an earlier point."

Carbon Co-op staff reflections after hearing how tenants on the project advisory group intended to continue promoting this work.

"After I mentioned that DESNZ wanted RPs to include lots of engagement strategies in their WH:SHF submissions, [the tenant said] 'ah that's why there are tonnes of engagement buses going around the estate...' and how that kind of engagement technique didn't seem to have a lot of sway...there was still trust building (rather than communication) for the RP to work on."

Tenant participants - Advisory Board and service design workshops

The tenants who participated in service design workshops and the advisory group were integral to the project. They shared their time and insights generously and with a great amount of commitment - including travelling across the country to attend in-person workshops and events. Being able to remunerate tenants for their involvement was an important enabler for this.

With connections to the Housing Plus Academy, our tenant participants were confident at speaking up, with a degree of familiarity with doing this in settings with housing professionals. In many cases our tenants were also members of Scrutiny Committees, Resident Panels and Boards at their own housing providers. With ongoing commitments to improving processes for the benefit of tenants, they offered tangible examples of how they would continue to share this work within their own housing providers and networks. For example, two participants shared the project work and reports with their housing association's Net Zero group, using it as a template for future work. One participant explained their philosophy of ensuring they "re-communicate" information between the 11 and 12 on the communication clock to make sure the work "stays live".

The Carbon Co-op team reflected that if we were to nurture contacts with tenants in Manchester based RPs, we would need to think carefully about how to support their participation.

Working with tenants

Tenant champions increase their understanding of the retrofit experience of their peers.

Tenants have a greater understanding of the retrofit measures installed in their homes.

Tenant champions feel a core part of the project team.

What some of our tenant participants said about the project:

“Proud to be part of a team that makes the retrofit toolkit easy to understand in every respect. Keep it simple.”

“To feel part of a team, no ‘us vs them’. Everyone was of equal importance.”

“[My] confidence has been backed up by this work...never let them get away with poor practice.”

“The Retrofit Toolkit was easy to read and understand and contained no jargon that people couldn't understand.”

“We would have liked more in-person meetings, like for the advisory group gatherings.”

“If you take the time and trouble to read the information the tenant will get a better understanding, but I still think the vast majority of tenants will not take the time and trouble to read everything, primarily because they're having retrofit forced upon them.”



Working with Registered Providers

Housing provider staff have a greater understanding of the experience of tenants on current retrofit schemes.

Housing providers have a greater understanding of people-centred approaches and how to use them.

Housing providers adopt people-centred approaches in their policies and processes.

Partnering vs. a wider network of participants

Similar to the issue with tenant researchers, for Carbon Co-op staff not directly holding these relationships (e.g. by conducting interviews), it was harder to build a connection beyond the research phase.

Whilst initially the project envisaged working closely with three Greater Manchester-based RPs, the shift to bringing in others, alongside a mix of in-person and online workshops during the service design phase, worked well. This helped us build connections with a wider network and get a decent spread of attendees and voices contributing.

This also confirmed to us that many stakeholders didn't mind giving up a couple of hours of their time to be involved in the service design workshops - and that it was a lot easier to engage with them in this way (as opposed to the narrower partnering approach trialled at the beginning of the project). A key learning for similar follow-on work was the need to co-define with stakeholders what partnering means, and how it works in practice.

We know from the level of engagement with both research reports (including through downloads via the website) that these have been widely viewed - from small to large RPs, and in different parts of the country.

Making new connections

Attending events throughout the project proved to be important in making new connections and relationships with those in housing providers and delivery partners. This enabled us to extend the reach of resources published, and seek feedback from experts when it came to the development of resources - particularly in areas we did not have first-hand experience of delivering in (such as recruitment and skills).

"The people that engage the people, must be the right people - people, people!"

main contractor

"[A key learning for me was] that the more diverse perspectives that contribute, the better the results."

main contractor

On reflection, the expected outcomes above didn't sufficiently capture (explicitly at least) the involvement of delivery partners in the project. We had considerable engagement from several organisations who are not technically RPs, but are working as turnkey or major delivery partners to them. Through discussions with them we understand that our work has been valuable, in understanding more deeply why people centred approaches are needed, but also in actively integrating the principles into how they work. Where delivery partners fulfil engagement roles currently, we know that our work has influenced delivery practice already, and is leading to better outcomes in terms of lower refusal rates and higher tenant satisfaction.

"At Lovell Renew we are proud to have worked with the Carbon Co-op team to contribute to the Retrofit for All Toolkit. The people focused guides have helped us to achieve a more meaningful people focused engagement for retrofit projects across the central region that have made people's homes better, safer, warmer, and healthier. Understanding what a successful energy efficiency scheme looks like from the point of view of the resident has shaped our delivery and improved outcomes for residents, improved efficiency, and the customer experience."

Matt Hickman, Partnerships Director, Lovell Renew Central

Working with Registered Providers

The case studies, and especially the video format, were felt to be some of the most impactful resources produced. This was shared by the staff team at Carbon Co-op, but also external stakeholders, such as those on the advisory group.

These quotes from Carbon Co-op reflect the impact that working with Broadacres and Lancaster West had on the team's learning and development, and why we believe these were particularly effective mediums for communicating key components of people-centred approaches to retrofit.

"My real 'aha' moments came on the first film shoot day at Broadacres. Meeting their RLO, Catherine Mavin, I was struck by her warm, friendly and open manner – qualities that really come across vividly on film. When we visited the tenant, the relationship between RLO and tenant was equally friendly and relaxed, even though years had passed since the retrofit work."

"This brought to life the case study description of RLOs as 'local celebrities' in the community, with bonds formed during the retrofit work enduring over time. It made me reflect on how important pre-works engagement is for tenants: when a strong relationship is established beforehand, tenants are far more likely to trust in the process. Experiencing this directly made it much clearer why Broadacres' dropout rates were so low."

"On an emotional level the case study videos really had an effect on me! In particular, the Lancaster West one - because I sat in the interviews led by Shortwork – and the video just seemed to encapsulate it all, wrapping it up into one lovely package! I think they are also a real dose of sunshine - it can feel quite heavy at times, working in this sector, but the case studies showcase the possible. I think it's really important for us to keep sight of that across all our work, even when it's complex and challenging."

"[The] Lancaster West film shoot day [was a real highlight] – It was fascinating to see the wider community impact that a well-funded retrofit project can bring. The Lancaster West model acts as a bridging organisation: it identifies local people seeking employment, assesses and builds their capacity, creates placements with contractors working on the retrofit, and provides a space where residents can return to explore new opportunities. It's such an inspiring example of how people can transition into green jobs in a genuinely people-centred way."

"How effective video case studies have been in disseminating our learning and our advocacy/ recommendations. Far more effective than the equivalent knowledge in written format. In a way, the video outputs have been the initial 'hook' of interest and then with enough interest raised, engaged stakeholders will have hopefully read the written resources too."



Our case study videos had been viewed 228 times, with 168 of these for the Broadacres Customer Liaison Team video, and 60 for the Lancaster West video

(February 2026)

Working with policymakers

Policy makers are more aware of the need for, and challenges to people centred approaches to retrofit faced by the housing sector, and consider how funding programmes can enable it.

With the release of the policy paper occurring right at the end of the project, we do not yet have feedback and data to assess this outcome fully. However, the policy note itself reflects an intense nine-month journey which started with reviewing systemic barriers from the research papers, narrowing them down to three policy solutions.

Three briefing notes were developed and tested in one-to-one policy shaping sessions with groups like GMCA and Tpas, leading to one central issue for further refinement in a broader policy roundtable session. The final paper centres on the idea of developing a voluntary standard for the Resident Liaison Officer (RLO) role.

In the final advisory group meeting of this project, the group discussed how this work can be taken further, including seeking funding to co-produce the voluntary standard with stakeholders such as tenants, registered providers, local authorities, and national standards implementers like the BSI.

The concept paper provides a basis for future funding applications and engaging an advisory group to guide the process. Several participants expressed strong interest in remaining involved in the continued advocacy for the RLO standard, emphasising the role's importance in addressing distrust caused by a lack of centring residents in the process. This included strong commitments from tenant members of the advisory group, the LSE Housing and Communities team, and those connected to the Retrofit Standards Taskgroup. They have also given good feedback on the organisations and individuals that would be well placed to input and/or amplify this work.

Beyond the paper directed primarily at policymakers, we know from the resource distribution statistics that policymakers have engaged with outputs at all stages of the project – from the two research papers to the resources produced (including those designed primarily for tenants) We are reassured from this level of engagement that people-centred retrofit delivery in social housing is on the agenda – but that much more work needs to be done to ensure that it is explicitly recognised in policy, and then realised in delivery.

“[A highlight for me was the] Policy Roundtable – it was amazing to see how strongly the policy work resonated with high-profile figures in the sector. The offers of support at the end were particularly telling: offers to help design the pilot, [a Combined Authority] suggested their Local Grant programme could host it, and Citizens Advice offered advocacy and research support.”

– Carbon Co-op staff member

“My wish is for our work and the depth of what we learnt and co-created to reach policymakers directly and shape policy effectively so we truly see retrofit delivered person-centred.”

– Carbon Co-op staff member

Carbon Co-op

Community organisations like Carbon Co-op are better able to develop services that meet the needs of housing providers and tenants in delivering people-centred retrofit.

The Retrofit For All project has enabled Carbon Co-op to further deepen our understanding of retrofit delivery in social housing, and people-centred retrofit specifically. Through the combination of participatory action research with tenants, in-depth qualitative research with Registered Providers, the service design stage and the policy work – we have:

- Consolidated a position in the sector - further developing knowledge and expertise that can be used alongside policy positioning at a local and national level.
- Developed and strengthened exciting relationships with organisations such as Tpas, Broadacres, the Northern Housing Consortium, Citizens Advice and National Energy Action (NEA). All of these have the potential to turn into longer-term partnerships and collaborations in follow-on work.
- Reinforced our strengths as a community intermediary and advocate – in the surfacing of issues, encouraging open and honest discussion about these.
- Showcased examples of what is possible – something that builds on our organisational strengths, vision and mission in advocacy. The very positive feedback on the case study resources reinforces this.

With some adjustments to how we scope, resource and sequence work (particularly around quality assurance, communications and policy), this could help future projects to run even more smoothly, while maintaining the collaborative spirit that has been a real strength of the project.

In the service design process (moving from many ideas towards ones to take forward), we would be wise to do more detailed mapping of our in-house skills and expertise to ensure we are confident in the themes selected. For the guide around recruiting residents into employment and skills, while we are happy with the work produced and think it is a valuable contribution to further discussion in the sector, this was more challenging to produce than other resources.

“I hope this work will continue to help us be recognised as a leading community energy organisation and for our advocacy to reach far and deeply.”

“I think involving tenants at a meaningful level has been a real strength of this project – I'd like to see us continuing to do projects that build in lived experience, and householders' active involvement in research and shaping project outputs.”

All staff felt that their knowledge and understanding of people-centred approaches to retrofit had developed over the course of their involvement, with 5 out of 7 staff rating at the top end of the scale (my knowledge and understanding has hugely increased).

All staff rated Carbon Co-op's skills in delivering people-centred approaches as very high or high (with one rating as medium).

However, Carbon Co-op's organisational capacity to deliver existing or new services around people-centred retrofit was rated as medium to low, reflecting concerns over the current funding climate.

Another area that the team are keen to build on is as service design and participation expertise to the social housing sector. Ideas include working closely with housing providers to identify issues and design solutions. This blend of retrofit knowledge with service design and participation expertise is fairly unique.

As the detail around the Warm Homes Plan is further developed over the coming year, the team recognise the importance of understanding and engaging with this, including the context of devolved retrofit funding and delivery, to further identify where the tangible opportunities lie.

Reflections on monitoring and evaluation

Retrofit for All was an ambitious project in scope. The overarching objectives attempt to tackle some of the most important, structural, systemic and stubborn issues around housing quality, retrofit and householder experience. Nested under this were outcomes for multiple audiences – from tenants (at a household level) right through to policymakers at a national level.

The project also had many moving parts and interdependencies – ranging from relatively traditional research techniques such as desk-based research and interviews, through to Participatory Action Research, innovative service design workshops and resource development that required specialist skills and knowledge. These resource ranged from video production to Easy Read formats, requiring detailed knowledge around retrofit delivery, skills and roles.

All of these things created challenges for monitoring and evaluation in that the methods had to be numerous and flexible! While we hoped to gain more structured (and wider) feedback on research reports and the resources produced through surveys, it proved very difficult to secure engagement with these forms, despite repeat attempts.

The reality is that we have engaged more deeply with those close to the project, which has generated a rich and qualitative account of the impact (change) we feel that we have achieved. The relationships we have developed with particularly engaged tenants, RPs, delivery partners and other organisations have yielded insight that gives us confidence that what we state in this report is a true reflection of progress made.

Just as this project is not considered 'complete', in the sense that we intend for the work to continue, we know that our monitoring and evaluation will not finish either. We will continue to seek and gather feedback, to ensure that resources, tools and services can be iteratively improved, adapted or pivoted as required by stakeholders.

**We welcome feedback –
get in touch!**

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**Visit the project web page to find all our
resources and reports:**

carbon.coop/portfolio/retrofit-for-all-enabling-people-centred-approaches-in-publicly-funded-retrofit-schemes/

