

**RISE**

Retrofit information,  
support & expertise

# Retrofit Glossary for Warm Homes Delivery

Quick guide

February 2026

Funded by:



Department for  
Energy Security  
& Net Zero

[www.riseretrofit.org.uk](http://www.riseretrofit.org.uk)



# Contents

<b>Retrofit glossary for warm homes delivery .....</b>	<b>3</b>
Retrofit concepts & general terminology .....	3
Building fabric, heat loss & insulation .....	4
Retrofit assessment, design & compliance .....	5
Heating systems & technologies .....	5
Residents, engagement & behaviour .....	6
Funding, warm homes schemes & applicants .....	7
Project delivery, planning & management .....	7

# Retrofit glossary for Warm Homes delivery

Clear and accessible communication is essential in retrofit projects, where technical terms and acronyms can easily create barriers for residents and delivery teams. **This glossary has been developed to offer consistent, resident-friendly explanations of key terms used across the Warm Homes programme.** It provides simple definitions relating to energy performance, building fabric, heating systems, assessment processes, and project delivery, helping to strengthen understanding at every stage of the retrofit journey.

By using everyday language that focuses on comfort, cost savings and practical outcomes, the glossary makes it easier for residents to engage with proposed measures and supports clearer communication from project teams. **The aim is to reduce confusion, build trust and ensure the benefits of retrofit are understood by everyone involved.**

This glossary provides clear, accessible explanations of common retrofit terms to support effective communication with residents and project teams. Readers that would like this document in a more accessible format should contact [rise@turntown.co.uk](mailto:rise@turntown.co.uk).

## Retrofit concepts & general terminology

Term	Definition
Net zero	When the amount of greenhouse gas emissions produced equals the amount removed from the atmosphere.
Energy efficiency	Using less energy to achieve the same outcome (heating, lighting). Retrofit helps improve this.
Increase efficiency	The process of achieving high energy performance / delivering a successful retrofit project.
Housing retrofit	The process of retrofitting homes—use “housing”, not “domestic”.
Retrofit	Actions taken in a home to make it warmer and more affordable to heat; avoid assuming public familiarity with the term e.g. fabric upgrades, LED lighting replacement, low carbon heating etc.

Retrofit measures	The specific actions implemented in a retrofit project (insulation, ventilation, solar, heating solutions, etc.).
Novice / intermediate / expert	Levels of previous retrofit experience.

## Building fabric, heat loss & insulation

Term	Definition
Air tightness	Explain to residents as “keeping unwanted draughts out and warm air in”, combined with proper ventilation. Avoid using technical term alone.
Building fabric	Core parts of a building: walls, roof, floors, windows, and doors. Avoid using “fabric” alone with residents.
Fabric first	A retrofit approach focusing on improving building fabric (walls, roof, windows) before adding technologies like solar or heat pumps.
U-value	Measure of heat loss through a building element (e.g., roof). Lower U-values mean less heat loss.
K-value	Measure of how easily heat passes through a material. A lower K-value means better insulation.
Wall cavity	The gap between two layers of brick can be filled (or refilled) with insulation to retain heat and reduce bills.
Cold bridging	A ‘weak spot’ in insulation where heat escapes (e.g., steel beams, lintels). Can cause cold spots, condensation and mould.
Thermal bridging	Another term for cold bridging a gap in insulation allowing heat to escape.
External wall insulation (EWI)	Adding insulation to the outside of solid-walled homes to keep heat in and improve appearance.
Internal wall insulation (IWI)	Adding insulation to the inside of wall by insulation boards or stud-and-insulation systems to keep heat in.

## Retrofit assessment, design & compliance

Term	Definition
Current energy performance / energy performance following completion	Refer specifically to the EPC/energy performance of housing before and after works.
EPC	A snapshot of how well a home uses energy, how much it costs to run, and how it could be made cheaper and greener.
Retrofit assessment	A qualified retrofit professional checks all parts of a building's condition to find what needs improving to make it warmer, healthier and more energy efficient.
Design (retrofit design)	Planning changes so they work together with the building's age, structure and resident use. Helps avoid issues like damp or overheating.
PAS2035	PAS 2035 is a British Standards Institution (BSI) Publicly Available Specification that governs how energy-efficiency retrofits must be assessed, designed, delivered, and evaluated
SAP (Standard Assessment Procedure)	The UK methodology for producing EPCs—assesses insulation, heating, hot water, windows, ventilation and renewable systems.
RdSAP 10	RdSAP 10 specification, which includes technical points like: U-values, thermal bridging and insulation standards.
Microgeneration Certificate Scheme (MCS)	UK quality assurance scheme for small-scale low carbon technologies (solar PV, heat pumps, biomass). Required for funded programmes.
Quality assurance	Checking work is carried out to correct standards; issues can be identified early and resolved.

## Heating systems & technologies

Term	Definition
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Heat pumps	A heat pump transfers heat from a cold source to a warm sink using components such as a compressor, evaporator, condenser, and expansion valve. It moves heat opposite to natural flow and can be 300% more energy-efficient than usual heating appliances. They can also supply cooling in summer. There are a few types of heat pump.
Air Source Heat Pump (ASHP)	Absorbs heat from outdoor air and transfers it indoors. Easiest and cheapest type to install. Available as air-to-air or air-to-water systems and widely used for residential applications due to small size and easy instalment.
Ground Source Heat Pump (GSHPs)	Uses the ground or groundwater as a heat source/sink, benefiting from stable year-round temperatures. Systems may use horizontal loops (shallow trenches) or vertical boreholes (deep drilled shafts). GSHPs typically offer higher efficiency than, though installation costs are high due to drilling or excavation.
Water Source Heat Pump (WSHP)	Extracts or rejects heat to a water body (lake, river) or a shared water loop. WSHPs can increase efficiency by exchanging heat through a common loop and even provide simultaneous heating/cooling.
Passive house (Passivhaus)	A highly energy-efficient home requiring minimal energy to stay comfortable due to insulation and ventilation design.
Zero Direct Emissions Heating (ZDEH)	Heating that produces no emissions at point of use (e.g., heat pumps). Can have indirect emissions if powered by non-renewables.

## Residents, engagement & behaviour

Term	Definition
Behaviour change	Simple everyday actions (e.g., turning off lights, lowering thermostats) that help residents maximise the benefits of retrofit.
Fuel poverty	When a household must spend an unaffordable proportion of income on heating/electricity. Explain the financial benefits of retrofit instead.

Housing provider	Any organisation with eligible housing stock (including Local Authorities and providers) that can apply for WH:LG or WH:SHF.
Housing stock	All housing managed by a single potential applicant or grant recipient.
Resident	People whose homes are retrofitted through Warm Homes funded projects.
Resident engagement	Strategies/tactics for involving residents in a retrofit project; use “resident” or “community”, not “tenant”.
Resident needs	The considerations that need to be made to identify and adapt a retrofit project in line with residents needs and concerns.
Customer journey	The steps that residents/ customers take through a retrofit project: Planning – Awareness – Launch – Design – Installation – Handover – Post-works

## Funding, warm homes schemes & applicants

Term	Definition
Funding request	A general term covering both the Warm Homes: Local Grant Expression of Interest and Warm Homes: Social Housing Fund Application.
Grant recipient(s)	Organisations receiving government funding through Warm Homes schemes.
Potential applicant(s)	Housing providers or Local Authorities preparing to submit a funding request for Warm Homes schemes.
Warm Homes schemes	General term for both Warm Homes: Local Grant and Warm Homes: Social Housing Fund. Write full names initially, then WH:LG and WH:SHF.

## Project delivery, planning & management

Term	Definition
Lessons learnt from previous retrofit projects	Case studies based on prior retrofit delivery.

Monitoring and evaluation data	Data collected to measure the effectiveness of retrofit activities.
Planning	The UK's Planning Application Process; write out in full initially, then use "Planning" with capital P.
Procurement	Contracting a retrofit supply chain.
Programme of (events/activity/courses)	A series within RISE's learning offer.
Project planning / planning your retrofit project	Always include "project" to avoid confusion with UK Planning; relates to coordinating a retrofit project.
Project team	The potential applicant's internal team delivering the project.
Retrofit project	The potential applicant's current or future retrofit project (not programme).
Retrofit supply chain	Companies contracted to deliver retrofit works (solar, insulation, heating systems, ventilation, onsite renewables, storage). Be specific using this full term.