

RISE

Retrofit information,
support & expertise

Neurodiversity and Retrofit - Residents

Supply chain advice pack

April, 2025

Funded by:



Department for
Energy Security
& Net Zero

www.riseretrofit.org.uk

Introduction

Neurodiversity refers to the natural variation in how people think, learn, and process information. In the UK, it is estimated that around 15–20% of the population are neurodivergent, equating to approximately 13 million people.¹ Within this group, employment rates are lower for neurodivergent individuals², which suggests that the proportion of residents eligible for Warm Homes-funded retrofit may be higher than the general 15–20% estimate.

Types of neurodivergence can include:

Applied	Clinical	Acquired
Dyslexia	Attention Deficit Hyper-Activity Disorder (ADHD)	Acquired or traumatic brain injury
Dyspraxia	Autism	Mental health conditions (e.g. depression, anxiety, OCD, PTSD etc.)
Dyscalculia	Tourette's	Multiple sclerosis
Dysgraphia	Learning disabilities	Long Covid

Table 1. Applied, clinical, and acquired neurodivergence

These are often invisible to others. Neurodivergent individuals often feel they need to hide their traits (masking) and behave in a way that is uncomfortable for them, to feel they can be accepted into society. This can be exhausting, and often their homes can become safe havens for them to recoup their energy and be comfortable to be themselves.

If their homes are their safe havens, we need to recognise the greater impact of retrofit upon their lives, than neurotypical residents.

This advice pack offers practical solutions for working with neurodivergent residents, to embed neuro-inclusive practices in your resident engagement.

This advice pack can sit alongside our 'Supporting neurodiversity in retrofit' advice pack ([see here](#))

Legal and delivery context

Retrofit programmes delivered under PAS 2035 require meaningful consultation with residents throughout the retrofit journey³. Organisations also have duties under the Equality Act 2010 to avoid discrimination and make reasonable adjustments, including for neurodivergent residents⁴. Adopting neuro-inclusive engagement

¹ [Neurodiversity Statistics & Research Data | 2026 Neurodiversity Statistics](#)

² [Employment prospects for neurodiverse people set to be boosted with launch of new expert panel - GOV.UK](#)

³ [BSI – PAS 2035:2023 overview, Retrofitting dwellings for improved energy efficiency](#)

⁴ [UK Government Legislation, Equality Act 2010 \(Sections 6, 20 and 21\)](#)

approaches supports compliance with these requirements while improving resident understanding, confidence and wellbeing.

Challenges

Every neurodivergent individual has different characteristics. Although some people may share common traits or behaviours, every person is different and brings their own strengths, challenges, and ways of navigating those traits.

Households with residents that are neurodivergent can struggle with retrofit measures being done in their homes for several reasons. How an individual resident manages their neurodivergence is different, some residents may struggle with some of the challenges below.

Understanding what is going to be happening

Retrofit can often have a huge amount of information to communicate to the resident. What works is happening, what does it mean to them living in their home, why it has to happen and the benefits. We can often deliver this information through letters, or advice pamphlets with large amounts of text or statistics. These can be challenging to engage with, and understand.

Feeling overwhelmed

Feeling overwhelmed with information, can lead to an almost paralysis and inability to process details and act upon them. This can lead to ignoring contact about the retrofit programme, not responding to communication and ignoring the work. Leading to refusals and lack of access for the work.

Limited short-term working memory

A resident may engage with the communication and be happy for the work to happen in their home. However, this may not translate into a diary entry happening, or another form for them to remember that they need to provide access for the work on a certain day. This can then lead to double/triple booking for that day.

Intrusion

As previously mentioned, residents who spend much of their day masking their natural behaviours to fit into society. Their home environment is where they feel they can be themselves. They may become reliant on their homes as a place of regulation and comfort, meaning that any changes or intrusions can feel distressing. Most elements of retrofit work are intrusive, and even minimal disruption, such as external noise, can have a significant impact on residents.

Sensory overwhelming

Retrofit can be noisy, loud and can create strong smells that can be difficult to cope with. Retrofit measures, that neurotypical residents may not even really

notice can create an environment that can be really overwhelming for neurodivergent residents.

What can we do to help?

If we follow good practice for neurodivergent residents across our resident engagement processes. The Housing Quality Network (HQN) highlights that neuro-inclusive approaches improve engagement, wellbeing and service outcomes for all tenants, not only those who are neurodivergent, by moving away from 'one-size-fits-all' engagement methods⁵.

Communication

Across all elements of resident engagement, careful consideration should be given to the clarity of language used. Information should be concise, avoid unnecessary text, use clear bullet points where possible, and incorporate visual aids such as diagrams and process flowcharts to support understanding.

Residents should be given multiple opportunities to receive information in a range of formats. Any written communication should be supported by alternative methods of information sharing. For example, attaching a simple flowchart to a letter can communicate the same information visually, allowing residents to choose the format that works best for them. Providing video clips that explain the proposed works and their benefits can also add value and improve understanding for residents.

Working alongside key community stakeholders who have established, trusted relationships with residents can strengthen engagement. For example, organisations like Your Own Place support neurodivergent residents through



Figure 1. A workshop from Your Own Place covering housing pathways, tenant rights, and financial wellbeing

⁵ HQN, [Embracing neurodiversity in social housing](#)

practical housing and money-focused workshops, helping residents better understand their rights, build confidence and engage more effectively with changes to their home, including retrofit works⁶.

Explain the process

In addition to explaining the measures being installed, it is important to clearly outline the process of what will happen, how long the work is expected to take, and whether access to the home is required, including which areas will be affected and any restrictions on the residents during this period. This will help residents prepare themselves for the upcoming work.

Give the opportunities to ask questions, and a point of contact to be able to follow up on for clarifications.

Provide respite areas

HQN guidance encourages housing providers to consider whether physical environments or activities may overwhelm neurodivergent individuals and to make reasonable accommodations to reduce distress. One way to support this is by identifying calm or untouched spaces within the home⁷.

Some residents may need opportunities to step away from retrofit works during the project. Where possible, this can be supported by agreeing in advance on designated “no-go” areas within the home. These are spaces where no retrofit activity will take place and where staff will not enter, helping residents feel reassured that they have a safe place to retreat from disruption.

For particularly intrusive works, it may be necessary to provide alternative respite spaces nearby, such as access to a vacant property or a local community space. Providing these options can help reduce stress and support residents’ wellbeing throughout the retrofit process.



Figure 2. Cardo Group employee speaking with a resident

⁶ [Inside Housing, How a neurodiversity-friendly workshop aims to help tenants avoid homelessness](#)

⁷ [HQN, Embracing neurodiversity in social housing](#)

Some organisations are already adapting delivery approaches to better support neurodivergent residents. For example, Cardo Group offer “quiet installations”, reducing noise, limiting the number of operatives on site, and adjusting working practices to minimise sensory overload⁸.

Stick to planned delivery timelines

Agreeing delivery dates and times in advance, wherever possible, is highly beneficial in supporting residents. For example, if a household includes a neurodivergent child, delaying accessing the home until the child has left for school can significantly reduce disruption and stress for the family. Planning work around established routines helps minimise the challenges associated with accessing the home.

While delays can sometimes occur, it is essential that any changes to the agreed schedule are communicated to residents as early as possible. Clear and timely communication helps residents manage expectations, prepare for changes, and reduces anxiety associated with uncertainty.

Create an end point

It is important to clearly explain to residents what will happen once the works are complete, and how they will know that the process has ended. Providing this clarity helps reduce uncertainty and reassures residents that disruption is temporary.

For example:

“Once the cavity wall insulation has been installed, all drilling will be complete. Any holes will be filled and colour-matched to the existing wall. When the work is finished and we have left the property, you will receive a postcard through your door confirming that all works are complete.”

Explaining the final steps in this way helps residents understand when the work has concluded and allows them to relax, knowing that no further disruption is expected.

Clear face to face handovers

Helping the resident to understand any new technology, or changes in how they need to use their homes needs clear explanation. With simple verbal instructions and clear instructions for the future.

Providing a face-to-face handover is essential, but it is equally important to leave residents with clear, accessible information to refer back to. This information should be supported with photographs, diagrams, and visual images to reinforce understanding and provide reassurance once the works have been completed.

Follow up

Creating opportunities for residents to get help in the future, for their new measures is really important. In some situations this could be through an ongoing

⁸ [Cardo Group, Why Cardo Group Believes Housing Retrofit Is About People, Not Just Property](#)

maintenance contract or through training up local community members or staff to be retrofit champions. That they can be available to meet up with the resident and help them manage their new technology.

This can also help the resident sign up for Smart Export Guarantees (SEG), understand how to use any apps associated with the technology and how to use the heating controls.

Take advice from your staff

Recognising that an estimated 15–20% of the workforce may be neurodivergent, it is valuable to engage in conversations with staff members or trusted colleagues about how they would prefer to be supported within their own homes. These individuals may be able to offer useful insights that can help shape more inclusive and considerate approaches.

Summary

Neuro-inclusive resident engagement helps residents better understand what is happening in their home, reduces anxiety associated with disruption, and supports informed consent to retrofit works. While especially beneficial for neurodivergent residents, these approaches improve clarity, confidence and comfort for all households, while supporting successful, on-time delivery.

These approaches are consistent with PAS-compliant engagement, Warm Homes Fund delivery expectations, and wider equality and inclusion duties.

Resources



Podcast: All RISE podcasts are available [here](#).

EDI podcast: “Building equality in social housing retrofit” available [here](#).



Masterclass: All RISE masterclasses are available [here](#).

EDI masterclass
“Delivering EDI in the retrofit supply chain” available [here](#).



Advice pack: All RISE advice packs available [here](#).

EDI Advice pack:
“Supporting neurodiversity in retrofit” available [here](#).

