

RISE

Retrofit information,
support & expertise

Retrofit Success Stories: Improving comfort and energy efficiency for homes in South Yorkshire

Case study

April 2026

Funded by:



Department for
Energy Security
& Net Zero

www.riseretrofit.org.uk

Contents

Contents	2
Retrofit Success Stories	3
Introduction	3
Background	3
Improving Housing Quality in South Yorkshire	3
Warmer homes and improved comfort	4
Ventilation systems and healthy indoor environments	5
Energy bill savings	5
Resident engagement and communication	6
Conclusion	6
Recommending retrofit to others	6
Delivering real benefits for residents.....	6

Retrofit Success Stories

This series explores the real-life experiences of residents, practitioners, and delivery partners involved in housing retrofit projects across the UK. By highlighting individual perspectives, these case studies demonstrate how retrofit programmes improve home comfort, reduce energy bills, and support the transition to low-carbon housing. They also reveal how residents experience the process of retrofit – from initial uncertainty through to long-term benefits.

Readers that would like this document in a more accessible format should contact rise@turntown.co.uk.

Introduction

This Retrofit Success Stories case study focuses on Steve, a social housing resident in Maltby, near Rotherham, who benefitted from energy efficiency improvements delivered under the **Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) Wave 1** programme. His experience provides insight into how retrofit measures can transform everyday living conditions, particularly in regions where fuel poverty and poor housing quality remain persistent challenges.

Background

Improving Housing Quality in South Yorkshire

South Yorkshire faces significant challenges related to housing quality and energy affordability. Approximately **19% of households in the region experience fuel poverty**, with the highest rates occurring in privately rented housing. Poorly insulated homes contribute to higher heating costs and can lead to damp, mould, and wider health impacts.

Government programmes such as the **Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF)** aim to address these challenges by improving the energy performance of social housing. Under Wave 1 of the scheme:

- **Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council** upgraded 64 homes to EPC C.
- **City of Doncaster Council** treated 271 homes.
- **Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council** improved 124 homes.

These projects focus on measures such as insulation upgrades, improved glazing, ventilation systems, and building fabric improvements. Together, these interventions aim to reduce carbon emissions while ensuring homes are warmer, healthier, and more affordable to heat.

Steve's home in Maltby is one of the properties that benefitted from this programme, receiving a series of upgrades designed to improve energy efficiency and comfort. These included **new windows and doors, cavity wall insulation, improved roof insulation, upgraded guttering, and a modern ventilation system.**

Initially unsure about the planned works, Steve explained that his perspective changed once he understood the potential benefits:

"I wasn't so sure about it... I had only just moved here and the letter was already here saying that they were going to start something."

However, conversations with neighbours and learning more about the improvements quickly shifted his outlook:

"When I found out more about it... I thought I can't wait until it's all done now and to find out what it all looks like."

Steve's experience reflects a common pattern within retrofit programmes: early uncertainty followed by strong resident satisfaction once improvements are completed.

Warmer homes and improved comfort

One of the most immediate benefits Steve noticed after the retrofit works were completed was the improvement in the warmth and comfort of his home. Before the upgrades, the property struggled to retain heat, meaning that the heating system had to work harder and for longer periods to maintain a comfortable indoor temperature. Like many older homes across South Yorkshire, the property had relatively poor thermal performance, which contributed to higher energy use and less stable indoor temperatures.

Following the installation of **new windows and doors, cavity wall insulation, and improved loft insulation**, Steve described a noticeable difference in how quickly the home now warms up and how well it holds that heat throughout the night.

"10 minutes in here, when you put the heating on – you are up to temperature and it stays like that all night."

For residents, the benefits go beyond energy efficiency metrics. Warmer homes contribute to improved health and wellbeing, particularly during colder months when poorly insulated homes can exacerbate respiratory illnesses and other health conditions.

Ventilation systems and healthy indoor environments

Alongside insulation improvements, Steve's home was also fitted with a **modern ventilation system** designed to improve indoor air quality and prevent problems such as condensation, damp, and mould. While insulation reduces heat loss, adequate ventilation is essential to ensure that moisture and pollutants do not become trapped inside increasingly airtight buildings.

Steve was particularly enthusiastic about the **automatic extractor fans**, which operates continuously at a low level but automatically increases its airflow during activities such as cooking. This type of demand-controlled ventilation helps maintain healthy indoor conditions without requiring residents to manually adjust settings.

“These vents are absolutely fantastic. Honestly they’re on all the time, but if you’re cooking they turn themselves up so it’s stronger.”

Steve also described the system using a simple analogy that reflects a growing awareness among residents about how **insulation and ventilation** work together:

“You’ve warmed the property outside – it’s like a jumper isn’t it. You don’t want to get sweaty inside.”

This comparison highlights an important principle in retrofit design. Improving insulation without addressing ventilation can sometimes lead to moisture problems, particularly in older housing stock. Modern retrofit programmes therefore take a **whole-house approach**, ensuring that ventilation systems complement insulation upgrades to maintain healthy living environments.

Energy bill savings

Perhaps the most tangible impact of the retrofit for Steve has been the reduction in his monthly energy bills.

Before the upgrades, Steve was paying **£143 per month for energy**. After the improvements were completed, his bill dropped to **£73 per month** – almost half of what he previously paid.

“When I moved in here, I was paying £143 a month, and it’s just gone down to £73.”

These savings illustrate how energy efficiency measures can help households manage the rising cost of living. Lower heating costs mean residents can maintain comfortable indoor temperatures without worrying about excessive energy bills.

Resident engagement and communication

A critical element of successful retrofit delivery is **effective communication** with residents throughout the process. For many people, retrofit works can initially feel disruptive or uncertain, particularly if they involve changes to familiar systems or temporary construction activity within the home.

Steve explained that when he first received the letter informing him about the planned works, he was unsure about what to expect. Having only recently moved into the property, he initially questioned why the upgrades were necessary and what the process would involve. However, the situation improved once he had the opportunity to learn more about the project and speak with other residents who were also receiving upgrades. This exchange of information helped reassure him about the benefits of the work and the improvements it would bring.

Residents were also given **advance notice** of the planned works, including details about the schedule and the specific upgrades being carried out.

“We were given notice like two weeks before – what they were going to do, when they were going to do it, and everything.”

Transparent communication can help build trust and reduce uncertainty during retrofit programmes. Residents are more likely to support the works when they understand the process and the expected benefits.

Conclusion

Recommending retrofit to others

By the end of the conversation, Steve’s initial hesitation had been replaced by strong advocacy for retrofit improvements. When asked whether he would recommend the upgrades to others, his response was clear:

“Get it done! Honestly... your energy bills will be coming down and that’s on everybody’s minds at the minute.”

His experience illustrates how retrofit programmes can transform residents’ perceptions once the benefits become visible. In this way, positive resident experiences can help build wider support for retrofit initiatives and contribute to the broader transition toward more energy-efficient housing.

Delivering real benefits for residents

Steve’s story demonstrates the real-world impact of social housing retrofit programmes. Through improvements such as insulation, new windows, and smart ventilation systems, homes become warmer, healthier, and cheaper to heat.

Beyond the technical upgrades, his experience highlights an important lesson for retrofit delivery: **resident engagement matters**. Clear communication, transparency, and visible benefits help build trust and ensure residents feel part of the process.

In regions like South Yorkshire – where fuel poverty and ageing housing stock remain significant challenges – programmes such as the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund play a critical role in improving both living conditions and environmental performance.



For residents like Steve, retrofit is not simply about energy efficiency targets. It is about **comfort, affordability, and quality of life**.

 www.riseretrofit.org.uk

 RISE – Retrofit information, support & expertise