

RISE

Retrofit information,
support & expertise

Retrofit Success Stories: Transforming warmth and affordability for long-term residents in Manchester

Case study

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Retrofit Success Stories

This series aims to explore the individual stories and experiences of successful retrofit projects from the perspective of key suppliers. This covers a range of themes from technology use through renewable energy and low carbon heating to the career progression and skill development that projects are enabling.

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

Introduction

This Retrofit Success Stories case study explores how whole home retrofit works have transformed warmth, comfort, and affordability for long-term residents in Manchester - delivered through the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) Wave 2.1. Through the experience of **Robert “Bobby” Calder**, a 72-year-old resident of Hamilton Lodge in Rusholme, it highlights the real-life impact of energy efficiency upgrades and low carbon heating on wellbeing, fuel poverty, and quality of life.

Bobby's story reflects the challenges many older residents face in cold, inefficient homes and demonstrates how retrofit programmes can deliver lasting social, environmental and financial benefits.

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Background

One Manchester

One Manchester is a registered provider of social housing which owns and manages over 12,000 homes in Central, South, and East Manchester. The organisation's purpose is to provide good quality homes, great services, and real opportunities for its customers and communities.

One Manchester received £550,000 - as part of Greater Manchester Combined Authority's (GMCA) £37m consortium bid - under the Government's Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) Wave 2.1.

This Government grant funding upgraded 164 homes with energy efficiency measures – including loft and cavity wall insulation, external wall insulation, energy-efficient windows and doors and renewable heating systems such as air source

heat pumps. The SHDF scheme was renamed to the Warm Homes: Social Housing Fund (WH:SHF) in September 2024.

Resident Case Study: Bobby Calder

About the Resident

Robert “Bobby” Calder, 72, is a retired Manchester City fan originally from Cheetham. He has lived in his flat at Hamilton Lodge, Rusholme, for 32 years. He shared his experience of the retrofit works and the difference they have made to his daily life.

Experience of a Cold Home Before Retrofit

For years, Bobby had struggled with a home that was increasingly cold, damp, and expensive to heat. The situation became so difficult that he eventually moved his bed into the front room, the only space he could afford to keep warm. *“My bedroom was that cold... it was freezing”* he recalled. *“I couldn’t afford to heat it, so I’ve had to move the bed into the front room, where I’m only paying for one room.”*

The cold brought with it persistent condensation. Bobby described water running down his wardrobes and furniture, damaging his belongings and clothing. *“In the end I couldn’t afford it... it ruined all my furniture and my clothes”* he said. The experience took a toll over nearly eight winters, each one harder than the last.

What he longed for was simple: *“To get up in the morning and not be afraid of condensation and being cold.”*

Positive Impact of the Energy Efficiency Upgrades

Once the energy efficiency measures and low carbon heating were installed, the change was immediate and profound. Bobby spoke with warmth and relief about the difference it made in his daily life. *“I’m so happy that this has happened”* he said. *“It’s such a blessing, such a perfect scenario for me in my latter life.”*

New windows and a new front door helped seal out draughts and improve safety. *“The new windows are a lot more draught-proof”* he explained. *“The front door is fireproof, and I feel a lot safer with what they’ve done.”* The prospect of reliable, affordable warmth was transformative: *“When this new heating kicks in, I’m going to be sunbathing in my front room... not worrying about money every week and the expense of living.”*

He could already see how the upgrades would reshape his quality of life. *“I can see very clearly how this is going to enhance my life and just make it so much better.”*

The Ground Source Heat Pump

Among all the improvements, the Ground Source Heat Pump (GSHP) installed by Kensa captured Bobby's imagination the most. He described the technology with a sense of wonder: *"They've drilled maybe 200 metres underground, put pipes down there... I think it's some form of anti-freeze they put in the tubes, and it heats up underground. That goes round through pipes and radiators in your house - providing warmth."*

He had seen similar systems on television but never imagined one would be installed in his own home. *"Heat return from the ground is mind-boggling"* he said. *"I didn't think it was going to happen here where I live. It's just a brilliant thing."*

Combined with the new windows and door, the GSHP created a home that finally held its heat. *"There's no draught coming through... there's a lot more heat there"* he said. More than comfort, it offered something deeper:

"It's a freedom not being tied to money. It's a freedom of not being tied to cold weather."

Experience with the Retrofit Team

Bobby spoke warmly about the contractors who carried out the work. Their professionalism and friendliness made a lasting impression. *"The guys who've been working have been so helpful"* he said. *"So polite and informing me... you couldn't ask for better."*

He admitted he would miss their presence once the work was complete. *"They've been a big part of my life for the past few months"* he reflected. The improvements they made, he believed, would benefit not just him but the whole building. *"There's going to be lots of good things coming our way for the whole flats... it's just going to be a better place altogether to live."*

Tackling Fuel Poverty

Bobby was clear about the importance of schemes like SHDF for older and vulnerable residents. *"We are talking about people 70 plus freezing in their own little house"* he said. *"Those people are freezing because they've not got this, and it's just not right."*

He spoke candidly about the physical toll of cold homes on older bodies: *"Your body doesn't really retain the heat... it just throws it out."* He described the painful contrast of stepping outside and realising the outdoor temperature felt warmer than inside his own flat.

For him, the moral case was clear:

“We need to look after people in that age group specifically... they’ve paid their way, and they should be looked after to keep warm.”

Recommendation to Others

When asked whether he would encourage others to accept similar upgrades, Bobby didn't hesitate. *“The majority of residents are very happy about it”* he said. *“Once they receive the rewards of all the hard work, they'll be over the moon.”*

He saw the retrofit not as a disruption but as a gift. *“It's a helpful kick start to life really”* he explained. Turning it down, he felt, would be a mistake: *“Not to have something like this done would be a big silly mistake... it's an absolute winner. 100% a winner!”*

Link to resources referenced:

[One Manchester](#)

[Kensa](#)

Links to relevant RISE resources:

[Supply Chain Advice Pack: Heat Pumps pre-installation steps](#)

[Understanding Heat Pumps](#)

[Retrofit in Action Strategies for Success with WECA](#)

 www.riseretrofit.org.uk

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