



RISE

Retrofit information,
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Warmer Homes Through Partnerships in Broadlands with Dodd Group

Case study

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Contents

Contents2

Retrofit success stories3

Introduction3

Building skills for the future.....3

Learning through SHDF Wave 14

Working in partnership4

Making a difference to residents5

A growing industry with long-term opportunities5

Resources6

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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.

Introduction

This Retrofit Success Stories case study showcases the experiences of **Ben Hopwood and Claire Wittkopp from the Dodd Group** working alongside **Saffron Housing Trust and Broadland District Council** to deliver energy efficiency improvements to 126 social housing properties across Norfolk, as part of the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) Wave 1 programme.

The **Dodd group** was formed in 1947 and provide building services offering electrical and mechanical design installation and maintenance services across many sectors:

- Electrical inspections and testing
- Smoke detector installations
- Electrical heating
- Solar PV

The project introduced low-carbon heating solutions, including air source heat pumps, alongside fabric improvements such as loft insulation, triple glazing, insulated doors and flooring. The project aimed to reduce energy use, lower carbon emissions and create warmer, more comfortable homes for residents.

Building skills for the future

Ben Hopwood the contract supervisor at the Dodd Group transitioned into heating and retrofit after leaving the armed forces. Ben initially started as a self-employed tradesman spending more than two decades developing his expertise within the sector.

Ben shares a similar story as other installers journey into the retrofit sector, leaving the armed forces and transferring skills to make an immediate impact. For Ben, this helped to showcase his belief that individuals from a wide range of backgrounds can build successful careers in retrofit, demonstrating that skills from other sectors are easily transferrable within retrofit. As there is a strengthened demand to create a skilled workforce, those from other sectors can apply previous knowledge and experiences to contribute to new roles.

Learning through SHDF Wave 1

The Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) main success relies on the skills gap being addressed. SHDF Wave 1 was launched to improve energy efficiency within social housing. Providing grants to local authorities and registered social housing providers. Introducing measures such as:

- Double or improved glazing
- Solar panels
- Low – carbon heating systems
- Ventilation improvements
- Wall insulation
- Energy efficient lighting

As one of the first SHDF programmes, Wave 1 introduced a range of new standards and requirements including PAS compliance, retrofit coordinators and assessors.

According to Claire Wittkopp branch manager at the Dodd Group, adapting to these new processes and requirements to commitment and collaboration from all involved. Despite the challenges, the overall experience **provided valuable learning opportunities** and helped to **strengthen the company's capability** to deliver future decarbonisation programmes.

Working alongside the Saffron group who were highly involved in what they did within Wave 1, support Dodd Group and allowed them to meet all PAS requirements as well as Trustmark. Dodd Group were able to insert themselves easily into the role as contractor for the heat pump delivery on this project.

Working in partnership

A vital factor in the success of the project was the **strong working relationship** between the Dodd Group and Saffron Housing Trust.

Both organisations worked closely together to **overcome challenges, share expertise and ensure the best outcomes for residents**. The collaborative approach created an environment where ideas and experiences could be openly shared, helping all parties to learn and improve throughout the delivery of the project.

Claire explained that the relationship felt less like a traditional client and contractor arrangement, and more like a partnership. This was down to:

- Ideas shared openly
- Contractor expertise valued
- Problems solved collaboratively
- Mutual learning opportunities

"We've just been very privileged to work with such good clients as Saffron, who have really taken our views in as well and they discuss it with us. It's like a partnership, as opposed to a client-contractor relationship." – Dodd Group

Making a difference to residents

The most rewarding aspect of the project for both Claire and Ben, at Dodd Group, was seeing the difference it made to residents. The improvements have helped homes retain heat more effectively, improve comfort and reduce energy costs. Through lowering energy demand and increasing efficiency. The upgrades have supported efforts to tackle fuel poverty across the community. This demonstrated how retrofit measures can provide social, environmental and financial benefits for residents.

Key resident benefits included:

- Lower energy bills
- Greater home comforts
- Improved energy efficiency
- Reduced fuel poverty

Claire observed that improving homes had a direct and meaningful impact on people's everyday lives.

Ben reinforced this by explaining once a property becomes more efficient **"the heating you are paying for is staying in the house"**.

A growing industry with long-term opportunities

Both Claire and Ben see a bright future for the retrofit sector. With growing demand for air source heat pumps, renewable technologies, solar PV and battery storage. They believe the industry will continue to create significant employment opportunities over the coming years.

Retrofit is more than meeting carbon reduction targets. It is about creating skilled jobs, improving homes and delivering lasting benefits for communities across England. The Dodd Groups experience proves that decarbonisation can drive economic growth, support local employment, and make a meaningful difference to the lives of residents through warmer, healthier and more energy-efficient homes.



Figure 1 The Dodd Group: Claire Wittkopp and Ben Hopwood

Resources

Referenced resources

[Dodd Group](#)

[Broadland District Council](#)

[SHDF Programme](#)

RISE resources:

[Beyond Four Walls: The impact of area-based retrofit on communities](#)

[Warm Homes: Delivery - Need to Know](#)



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