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Resident Engagement With Oxfordshire City Council

Case Study

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Introduction

Resident engagement is an important area of focus for local authorities seeking to understand community needs and improve retrofit delivery. This case study outlines Oxfordshire City Council's approach to engagement, the methods used to gather and respond to feedback, and selected testimonials that reflect how these efforts have been experienced by those involved.

This publication aims to share insights, good practices, and lessons learned from relevant retrofit, sustainability and warm homes projects. It is intended for informational purposes only and does not constitute recommendations or endorsements of specific suppliers, products, or services within the sector.

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

Understanding the need for resident engagement

Resident engagement matters, as it is crucial for the successful implementation of a retrofit project as retrofit projects that deliver large reductions in carbon emissions are often complex. The works that are conducted are often invasive and disruptive to the residents. By being proactive, and engaging residents it can result in identifying where data is missing, aiding in the most cost-effect surveying.

When should they be engaged?

The figure below shows the various stages of retrofit, alongside when and suggestions of how to engage. It is an example of how to embed engagement within retrofit delivery creating a resident focused approach rather than a one-off activity. This approach helps to build trust thus improving uptake of measures and striving to get long-term satisfaction.

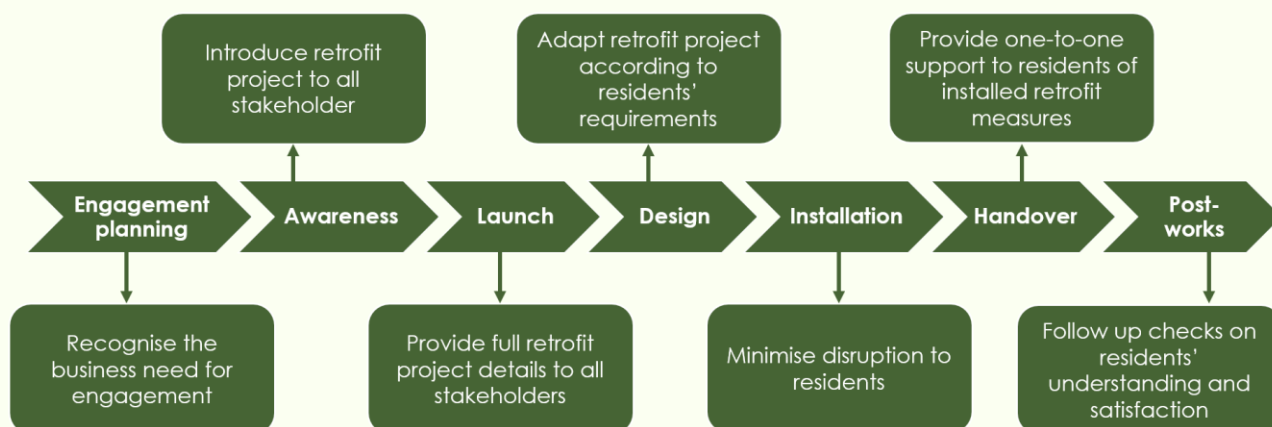


Figure 1: Resident focused retrofit delivery (RISE).

Not only does it build trust with residents, Warm Homes funded schemes must comply with the **Publicly Available Specification (PAS) 2035:2023**. To be compliant:

- PAS Requires retrofit contractors to ensure that the wellbeing of residents is central to the planning and delivery of the installation works.
- PAS requires handover advice to be given to the resident.
- Example clause: "12.1.3 All retrofit advice shall be delivered in a form that can be understood by the occupants, i.e. taking account of language, the age of the occupants, any hearing or sight difficulties, etc."

Examples of resident engagement

When deciding how to share a message, it is important to use a mix of digital, printed and face to face methods so it can reach residents in ways that suit them.

This helps make communication more accessible and inclusive, recognising that not everyone engages in the same way or has the same level of access. Using more than one approach also helps reinforce messages and gives residents more opportunities to ask questions and stay informed.

What did Oxfordshire County Council do?

OCC took an approach to focus initial communications and engagement activity with applicants that were previously unable to access funding through previous retrofit schemes (Such as Home Upgrade Grant 2 (HUG2)), as well as applicants from a certain postcode. This section explores some of the resident's experiences.

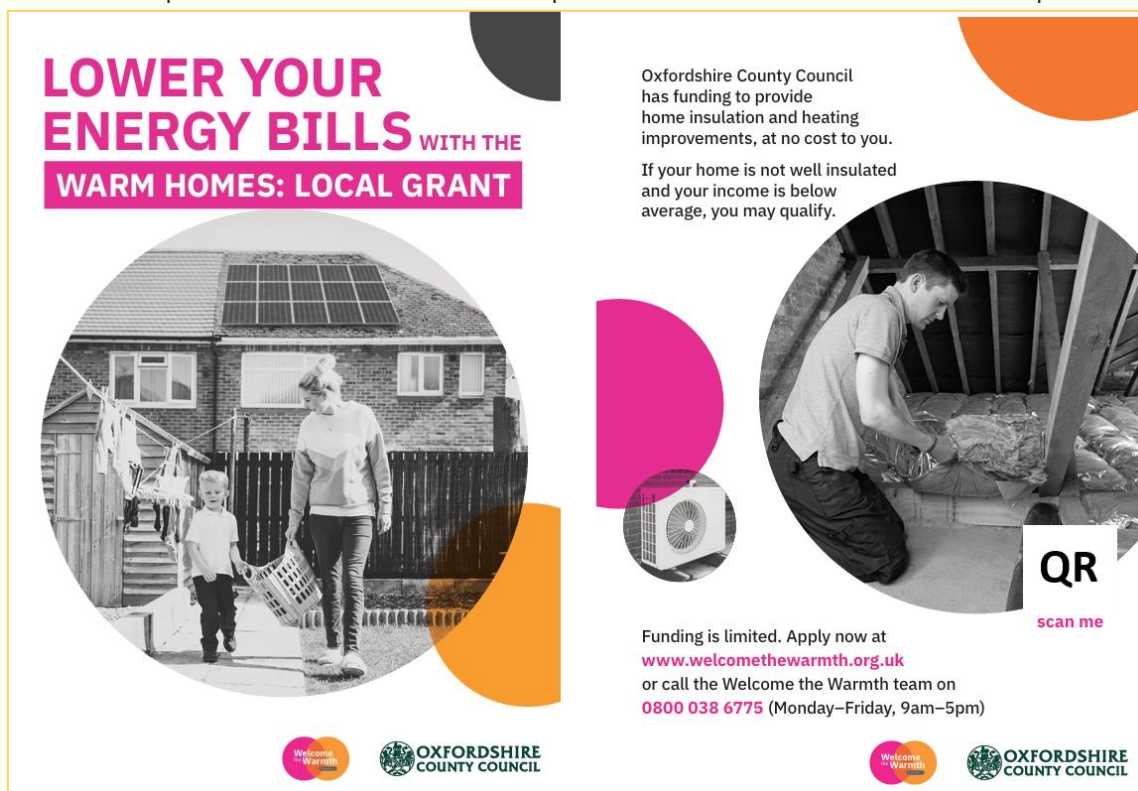


Figure 2: Flyer given to residents. (Source: OCC)

Katie's story

Initially, Katie had been struggling with rising energy bills due to the cost of living crisis and had found out about the scheme through Oxfordshire County Council whilst distributing the Warm Home Local Grant flyers on behalf of the council. She remarks that the scheme team responded promptly, clearly explained the requirements and carried out a straightforward home energy survey.

Katie describes the scheme and improvements as a “massive gift” that will make a lasting difference to her household's comfort, energy costs and future.

For Katie, OCC's printed materials were instrumental in helping her discover the scheme. More broadly, a mix of engagement methods can help reach a wider audience and provide support throughout different stages of the resident journey. Some examples are below:

- **Printed materials (flyers/leaflets)**
Used to introduce the scheme and raise awareness. This provides key information in a simple and accessible format.
- **Door-to-door outreach / in-person visits**
Enables direct interaction with residents, allowing questions to be answered and concerns to be addressed.
- **Home assessment and information pack.**
Surveyors/Retrofit Assessors act as an additional touchpoint when visiting the property, explaining proposed measures and helping residents understand what installation would involve. To help aid the resident's understanding a “Welcome the Warmth Information pack” and info sheets for each measure installed are given to them.
- **Ongoing, staged contact across the journey**
Engagement did not occur as a single interaction but was maintained across awareness, sign-up, and delivery stages, ensuring continued support and clarity. In addition, once installation was completed resident are given a handover pack that includes relevant important information such as warranties, manuals and emergency contact details.

Together, these methods created multiple opportunities for engagement, helping the resident move from initial awareness through to active participation in the scheme.



Figure 3: Installation of measures to Pauline's home (Source: OCC)

Pauline's experience

For Pauline, the scheme came to her attention through a combination of printed communications and word-of-mouth recommendation. After seeing the difference the grant made to her grandson's home, having first heard about it through a leaflet, she felt confident applying herself. Her experience shows how raising awareness through printed materials can be reinforced by positive experiences shared within families and communities.

Pauline's experience highlights the importance of delivering a smooth and customer-focused journey once a resident engages with the scheme. She found the application process straightforward, appreciated the clear and responsive communication throughout, and valued the flexibility to select measures that were appropriate for her home. The improvements made to her property are expected to enhance comfort and reduce energy costs, while the professionalism of the installation teams and support staff helped build trust and confidence in the process. **As a result, Pauline became a strong advocate for the scheme, actively recommending it to others who may be eligible.**

In both instances, the residents were visited by a Surveyor/Retrofit Assessor who assessed the property and discussed the measures that appeared feasible at the initial review stage. Following the survey, the findings were reviewed against the relevant measure matrix and any required calculations to determine the most appropriate measure package, which was then discussed with the resident before approval for installation was confirmed.

Residents were also informed verbally by the installation team about any potential disruption, with further information available through web-hosted FAQs, customer services. To further support resident understanding, OCC have developed a set of visual guidance materials such as infographics and fact sheets.

Overall, the case demonstrates that well-delivered schemes not only improve homes but also strengthen resident engagement that allows a building of trust, encouraging participation through peer influence, and turning beneficiaries into advocates within their communities.

Key takeaways

Oxfordshire County Council's approach demonstrates that effective resident engagement is critical to successful retrofit delivery.

Through a combination of printed communications, face-to-face support, home assessments and ongoing contact, the council has helped residents to understand the process, make informed decisions and feel supported throughout the retrofit journey. The positive experiences of residents such as Katie and Pauline show how strong engagement can build trust, encourage participation and even generate word-of-mouth referrals, helping to extend the reach of the scheme beyond those initially targeted.

Ultimately, the case highlights that good resident engagement not only improves the customer experience but can also increase uptake and create advocates for future programmes.

Linked below are resources from the RISE Knowledge Hub to support in resident engagement.

Resources:

[Accessible Resident Engagement – RISE Masterclass](#)

[Developing a communications and engagement plan – RISE Masterclass](#)

[Retrofit resident engagement with Midlands Net Zero Hub – RISE Masterclass](#)



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