July 2024 | Issue 2

platform housing group

Retrofit newsletter

Welcome to issue 2 of our Retrofit newsletter

Improving the energy efficiency of our homes through a fabric-first, whole-house retrofit approach aims to lower your energy bills and improve comfort levels and s crucial in reducing our carbon footprint.

What is Retrofit?

Retrofit is simply the process of making changes to existing buildings so that energy consumption and emissions are reduced. These changes should also provide the benefit of a healthier and more comfortable home with lower energy consumption, which also means lower bills.

It is different from renovation or refurbishment, which means upgrading a house but not necessarily reducing its energy use.

Meet the Retrofit team

Richard Milward
Retrofit Programme Manager

Nadine Hall
Retrofit Customer Advisor

Mandeep Johal
Retrofit Customer Advisor

Ian Townsend
Retrofit Energy Assessor

Cathie Archer
Retrofit Energy Assessor

Please be assured that Platform Housing Group will support you throughout this process. If you have any questions, require more information, or need any assistance please don't hesitate to contact the **Retrofit Team**
Email: **SHDF.retrofit@plaformhg.com**
Tel: **0121 803 0380**

platformplanet

Latest news

Retrofit works are well underway, we have started installations on 140 homes 15% of the total homes to be completed by mid-2025.

Your home has been identified and the process has begun.

You may have lots of questions you want to ask so we thought it would be useful to share what happens next, together with an explanation of some of the measures we may install:

1. You receive a letter from the Retrofit Team saying your home has been identified.
2. Meet the contractor Osmosis ACD who will be carrying out the retrofit assessment on your property.
3. Meet the Contractor Customer Liaison Officer to discuss the works and carry out a customer induction.
4. Retrofit assessment – Osmosis conducts a 2-hour survey of your home and an Air pressure Test to see how airtight the fabric of your home is.
5. Asbestos Survey and safe removal should any be found.
6. A Switchee smart thermostat is installed in your home.
7. Technical surveys and Retrofit Design outline of works to be completed.
8. Works commence.
9. Customer satisfaction Survey on completions of all works.
10, Follow up on works and performance of home survey 12 months on.

The first stage of the retrofit process is the Retrofit Assessment that works out the current level of energy efficiency, what ventilation is in place, and if there are any ongoing issues such as damp, mould, and condensation.

The assessment also includes collecting data and images of the current energy performance of your home.

Top tip: Change your halogen lightbulbs to LED bulbs. Halogen bulbs use 50 watts of energy, this is enough energy to power 10 LED light bulbs!

osmosis ACD

Contact us

If you need to contact us about the Retrofit works taking place in your home, please email **SHDF.retrofit@platformhg.com** or call: **0121 803 0380**, if we are unavailable, please leave a message and we'll get back to you as soon as we can.

For all queries not related to Retrofit the easiest way to contact us about a non-urgent repair or housing matter is via:

- Your Platform - Customer Portal
- You can click the blue icon in the bottom right of each web page to talk to our Live chat advisors or Chatbot.
- By completing an online enquiry form.
- By phone on **0333 200 7304**.
- **www.platformhg.com**.

Insulation

Insulation is key to keeping heat inside, there are a variety of insulation measures that can be installed, and these make up the main part of the fabric-first approach.

Depending on what sort of house your home is and the construction of the building, different types of insulation will be applicable.

Types of insulation for walls

Cavity wall insulation

Cavity walls can be insulated by injecting insulation material into the cavity from the outside.

A specialist company we employ will drill holes in the outside walls, inject insulation through the holes, and then seal them with cement.

The insulation material is usually polystyrene beads, but polyurethane foam may sometimes be used instead.

External wall insulation

If your home was built before the 1920s, its external walls are solid walls rather than cavity walls and can be insulated from the outside.

External wall insulation involves fixing a layer of insulation material to the wall and then covering it with a special type of render (plasterwork) or cladding.

Depending on local planning regulations the finish can be smooth, textured, painted, tiled, panelled, pebble-dashed, or finished with brick-effect tiles known as brick slips.

Types of insulation for a roof

Loft insulation

A quarter of heat is lost through the roof in an uninsulated home.

Insulating your loft, attic or flat roof is an effective way to reduce heat loss and reduce your heating bills.

Rolls of mineral wool insulation are laid between the joists – the horizontal beams that make up the floor of the loft – then another layer is laid at right angles to cover the joists and make the insulation up to the required depth, currently recommended at 300mm.

Please remember you are not permitted to store belongings of any kind in the loft area as noted in your tenancy agreement.

Most homes do not have adequate insulation to keep residents warm and comfortable. Adding insulation to solid walls and cavity walls will improve the energy efficiency of the home.

You can find out more about Retrofit on our website
https://www.platformhg.com/retrofit

A retrofit case study:

Property: 2-bedroom semi-detached house built in 1959, there is no mains gas to the area so they had to rely on other forms of heating, in this case a solid fuel back boiler connected to radiators throughout the house.

Windows and doors had been replaced with Upvc type but were approaching the age where they would be replaced. Loft insulation was only 100mm and this was topped up to 300mm.

Solution: Adopt a fabric-first whole house retrofit approach to improve air quality, heating, and lower energy bills to improve home comfort levels.

Works included:

- Smart thermostat
- External wall insulation
- Cavity wall insulation
- Loft insulation
- Solar PV panels
- Windows
- Air sourced heat pump

Time scale: **Approx. 8 weeks**

Customer feedback:

I was at first sceptical about the work being carried out at my property, especially the expense of a heat pump, like everyone I did my own research and based on what I had read online I was having doubts. However, once everything was explained to me clearly and the work started, I was no longer worried or sceptical.

Throughout the process the communication was great, I was kept up to date regarding planned works and communication by the workforce, especially Zaro was great, he was very approachable during the whole process start to finish and any concerns I had I could approach him.

I am so pleased I no longer need to purchase expensive coal, which usually would cost me £22.00 a fortnight for 25kg bag.

The new heat pump is so cost-effective and more efficient all year round which is great. When me and my partner enter our front door it's a great feeling, the heat is wonderful, and we now don't have to worry about heating our home, getting the coal ready, and waiting ages for the house to warm up. It's less of a chore now, as before we would have to clean out the fire, which was such a long and messy process.

What I really liked about whole process, was that I was listened to and that I had a voice, and if there was an issue, there was a compromise on both sides and the fact that this house is still my home.

"The Switchee device was also stalled in my property, the controller is so easy to use, the Switchee team are very helpful, and if in any doubt on how to use the device or if there is any technical problems, they are quick to respond and solve issues quickly."

"Overall, I have no regrets, I am so pleased and delighted with the overall outcome of all the work, which was carried out in my property, including the heat pump."

Thank You.

How do heat pumps work?

An **Air Source Heat Pump** works by extracting heat energy from the air. It is fitted to the outside of the property and looks a bit like an air conditioning unit. Heat pumps absorb warmth from the outdoor air (even when it's cold). They work in the same way as a fridge or freezer, only in reverse, with the refrigerant and a compressor providing useful heat rather than cooling. They use this warmth to heat your home and hot water.

They are a low flow temperature system that maintains a constant temperature as set on your thermostat, rather than heating the home to the set temperature and then turning off until the temperature falls and telling the boiler to fire up again.

This means setting the desired temperature for either all the time or, one for the day eg 20 degrees and one for the nighttime eg 18 degrees to keep your home warm and work at optimum efficiency. This is the cheapest way to run a heat pump.

Combining this system with a Switchee thermostat means that you can either set your own temperature or you can ask Switchee to set everything up remotely and then you can get on with the more important things in life.

Heat pumps are not a new technology, and millions are already heating homes very effectively across Europe. They are particularly common in the colder Nordic countries and in France and Italy.

The more insulated and efficient your home's fabric (walls, roof, floor, windows), the less heat it needs to stay warm. This means it is easier to deliver this heat at a low flow temperature, which means a more efficient heat pump and lower bills.

This is why we only install heat pumps into homes that are 'heat pump ready', meaning the insulation has been improved first so the warmth is kept inside the house for as long as possible. Also, we combine heat pumps with Solar panels.

These reduce your bills during daylight hours, especially in the summer. Any solar generated electricity you don't use is diverted to your hot water cylinder to provide free water heating, instead of going back to the grid. We will also replace your electric shower with a mixer tap where possible, so you can make the most out of your solar heated water.

Solar Panels

As part of the retrofit work, your home may have solar panels installed. Also called Solar Photovoltaic, or PV, these work by converting sunlight into electricity. These are not the same as Solar Thermal panels, which heat water only.

Solar panels work during daylight hours and work best when it is bright or sunny. Any electricity generated is first used to power your home and any that is not used is diverted to your hot water cylinder if you have one, so it heats your water for free.

Any other surplus electricity goes back into the National Grid, so it is not lost or wasted. See the 'Guide to Solar PV Panels for Residents' in your handover pack for more details.

For some older systems installed before 2019, Platform receives a repayment called the Feed-in-Tariff (FIT) from Ofgem. This scheme has now been replaced by the Smart Export Guarantee, but Platform customers cannot apply for this or the FIT.

The best way you can benefit from your solar panels is by using your heavy load appliances, such as an electric shower, washing machine or dishwasher, during daylight hours.Your energy supplier may ask about the MCS certificate.

You do not need to provide this certificate, or any other documentation related to the solar PV system. This is kept by Platform Housing Group along with all other important documentation.

We Value Your Feedback!

Do you have any feedback on this newsletter? Did you find it interesting and useful?

Are there details of the retrofit work you'd like to learn more about? We'd love to hear from you!

Please get in touch with us:
Contact: **The Retrofit Team**
Email: **SHDF.retrofit@platformhg.com**
Phone: **0121 803 0308**

Need help?

We can help you - Are you struggling with money issues due to rising costs?
Our **Successful Tenancies Team** is here for you.

The team will work with you to help you sustain your tenancy by offering advice and support.

You can contact them at **successfultenancies@platformhg.com**

Cost-of-living advice is also available on our website: **www.platformhg.com**

The **Successful Tenancies Team**

platformplanet

platform housing group