



RETROFIT
ACADEMY CIC



local energy
north west hub

CONTRACTING FOR PAS 2035 COMPLIANT RETROFIT

PHASE TWO – A LIVE TEST AT ST HELENS CEMENT CITY
BRIEFING 3: MEDIUM TERM IMPROVEMENT PLANS AND
RETROFIT COORDINATOR TASKS



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1. Introduction

This is Briefing 3 of a series of five that captures lessons learnt from a live test of PAS 2035 compliant assessment (and coordination) undertaken by The Retrofit Academy CIC on behalf of the Local Energy North West Hub (LENW Hub).

This piece of work follows on from Phase 1, which consisted of a desktop study entitled; “Contracting for PAS 2035 Compliant Retrofit – A Guide for Local Authorities” [Retrofit Academy]. The Hub wanted to consider factors relevant to procurement and contracting of Retrofit Assessors (RA/RAs) and Retrofit Coordinators (RC/RCs). Within Phase 1, four delivery models were described in response to discussions around PAS 2035 delivery for local authority led retrofit programmes.

There will be five key areas covered in a series of briefing notes that describe learnings from the live test, which investigate the PAS 2035 compliant retrofit from inception up to the lodgement of the Medium Term Improvement Plan (MTIP) as outlined below:

1. Pre-programme Activities
2. Retrofit Assessment
- 3. Medium Term Improvement Plans and Retrofit Coordinator Tasks**
4. The Customer Interface – Assessment and Coordination (Up to Design)
5. How to Ensure an Effective Handover

2. Further Information

Further information on this pilot project, including background information, methodology and the site is contained in:

Briefing Note 1: “Pre-programme Activities” (which includes the contextual information about the project).

Briefing Note 2: “Retrofit Assessment”

Briefing Note 4: “The Customer Interface – Assessment and Coordination (Up to Design)”

Briefing Note 5: “How to Ensure an Effective Handover”

Briefing 3: Medium Term Improvement Plans and Research Coordinator Tasks

This is the third briefing in the series and will cover retrofit coordination tasks including Improvement Options Evaluation, Medium Term Improvement Plans and other RC tasks. There are six sub-sections to this briefing.

- A. Preliminaries: Advice and setting outcomes**
- B. Risk assessment**
- C. Dwelling assessment (air permeability, significance)**
- D. Improvement Options Evaluation**
- E. Medium Term Improvement Plans**
- F. Software and Lodgement / Handover**

A PRELIMINARIES: ADVICE AND SETTING OUTCOMES

1. The first task is to appoint a suitably qualified RC to a project. This was done by The Retrofit Academy via Osmosis ACD, a specialist assessment and coordination company. The current situation with assessors and coordinators is that most of them work as self-employed people who are subcontracted – that was the case for this pilot. A key observation at this stage is that employing the RC within the company may potentially be a better model in terms of ensuring consistency and accountability. That may also assist with insurance.



Key Observation – Contracting RCs: To ensure consistency and accountability, RCs that are employed within the company, as opposed to subcontracted, is potentially a better model.

2. Clarity around retrofit advice will help all stakeholders:
Who is the Retrofit Advisor (RAAd/RADs)?
What advice is (and is not) being given, by whom, how and when?
 Being clear around roles, responsibilities, timelines and methodologies will help to establish a smooth and consistent process. Ambiguity can create confusion and fractured (or even contradictory) messaging.

Retrofit advice did not form part of the contract within this pilot. It was observed by the assessors that many of the elderly owners did not have a full appreciation of the potential benefits of retrofit and the measures that may be appropriate. This may be because of energy efficiency measures having been carried out via many funding programmes over many years.

Ideally, the RC will coordinate between the Retrofit Advisor and the RAs to help to ensure appropriate, consistent and coherent messaging to Resident Clients.



Key Lesson – Retrofit Advice: Clarity around retrofit advice will help all stakeholders.

Key Learning – Advice Timing: Advice being dislocated in time and process from the assessment may cause confusion for residents. LAs need to consider how residents are receiving advice and how to ensure residents are informed.

Key Observation – Funding Timing: The stop-start nature of funding is unhelpful not only for the industry wishing to see a sustainable pipeline of work but also for local authorities trying to advise and engage residents on retrofit to get them to accept measures.

Key Observation – Advice Compliance: Good overall project management will help to ensure that retrofit advice remains PAS 2035 compliant. The split RC role and timing around assessment and delivery make this more challenging.

3. An initial set of outcomes should be defined by the Funding Client with guidance from the RC. The Client is responsible for setting out the outcomes. The initial outcomes should be reviewed (after assessment and after design and cost) as it may make sense to adapt or change outcomes in the course of the project.



Key Lesson – Setting Outcomes: Programme outcomes need to be agreed at the start of the process. Measures should not be determined before the assessments have taken place. Outcomes should be both discussed and recorded by the RC and the Lead Client for their own records. This is particularly important on a project where there is a second stage RC. The outcomes should be owned by the Client.

Key Note – Review Outcomes (and Measures): Initial outcomes and measures should be reviewed post-assessment and through design and consultation, to ensure that the initial thinking fits with the reality of the actual homes.

B RISK ASSESSMENT

1. The determination of the risk Path is the next stage. As identified in Briefing Note 1, the risk assessment in this pilot was delayed, but the assessors were appointed and carried out assessments to Path C requirements in order to make up for time lost at the beginning of the project.



Key Lesson – Identify Risk Path: As the risk Path can set some of the assessment requirements, it must be determined before assessments are undertaken. (Or assume the worst case to ensure elements are not missed due to selecting a risk path that is too low).

C DWELLING ASSESSMENT

1. Oversight of the assessments concluded that they were generally of a high quality and had been carried out to a high standard. However, some of the feedback from the RC on the assessment included suggestions that further details, not significant to the outcomes, could have been noted. These additional details could include:
 - enclosed porches which are excluded for the purposes of an EPC should be included in the whole dwelling assessment.
 - detailed external inspections could have been improved, e.g. by taking wide-angle photos to enable the RC to understand access to all homes when proposing measures.
 - describing hidden defects / areas that could not be accessed and the risks associated is just as important as noting what can be seen.
 - a Path C assessment requires a Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) standard assessment – this carries additional assessment requirements which need to be made clear to the assessor.



Key Lesson – Early Review: An early review of the first assessments between the RC and the RAs can confirm that assessments are fit for purpose and identify any tweaks/adaptations that could further improve the remaining assessments. This process could also include the Funding Client.

2. In this pilot, the commissioning of air permeability tests was delayed. There was some discussion as to whether all homes needed to be individually tested or whether one per archetype or one per block would suffice. As the homes in this project were pepper potted, it was concluded that best practice would be to perform the test on all of them. This created another visit for the resident and additional cost.

The Assessors in this pilot are now investing in in-house airtightness testing capacity to increase their ability to control and coordinate the delivery and timing of air permeability tests.



Key Learning – Air Permeability: As part of the pre-programming work, establish whether the properties are suitable for sample testing either one per semi or terrace or true archetype. This requires understanding the exact location of the homes.

3. Some homes will require significance assessments. This should be determined by the RC before any assessments are carried out. The concrete 'no-fines' homes in the pilot did not require any form of significance assessment.
4. The RC did not visit site on this project of 40 homes. That was made possible by the comprehensive assessments, video conferencing calls, the exchange of information by encrypted email and regular calls. This is reflected in the price of assessment and coordination, which is covered later. It is suggested that clients should normally expect (and contractually specify) RC visit[s] alongside assessments unless they are working with service providers they know and in whom they have strong confidence.



Key Learning – RC Attendance On-site: This needs to be assessed on each project based on numbers, condition and nature. If in doubt, adopt the precautionary principle and ensure the RC is resourced to ensure quality (with site visits). **Note:** We are only considering the need for RC visits here in conjunction with assessments. In the full project, RC visits would be expected.

5. The Retrofit Academy's PAS 2035 Process Map includes coordination (by the RC) between the Retrofit Designer (RD/RDs) and the RAs to ensure that the RD has everything they need. On this project, that was not possible due to the separation of the duties and the fact that the RD would be appointed later in the process.



Key Lesson – Defining Scope: Use The Retrofit Academy Process Map to define the work programme. This will help with clarity about things that cannot be done as well as around what is being done and by whom.

Key Lesson – Assessments before RDs: The Funding Client and the RC must consider the likely and potential needs of the (as yet not appointed) RD. This will reduce the risk of the need for additional work and visits later to collect anything required by the RD but 'missed' by the assessments.

6. Separating out assessments creates the potential for difference of opinion between the RCs and increased risk of knowledge not being transferred.

D IMPROVEMENT OPTIONS EVALUATION

1. Setting (and reviewing) outcomes will inform the RC in the process of undertaking their Improvement Options Evaluation (IOE) and the subsequent creation of the MTIP. The outcomes should effectively set the primary metric[s] by which measures are compared. Not forgetting that PAS sets out some of the elements to include in this process.



Key Lesson – IOE Metrics: The project outcomes will inform the IOE process.

2. An early review of some IOEs will help to ensure alignment between the Funding Client's needs and RC understanding. It is important to remember that other constraints (such as funding) may play a significant role in the practical selection of measures, measure specifications and packages of measures.



Key Lesson – IOE Alignment: Early confirmation of alignment will facilitate the most efficient process.

3. The RC looked at occupancy assessment, the EPR and the photos from the assessments to feed into their consideration of measures. From this, the RC can determine any simple and quick wins (such as LED lights or accessible virgin lofts), before moving on to larger more costly items.
4. In this pilot, IOEs may need to be reviewed with the 'second' RC later in the project. This might be necessary once designs are undertaken and specific costs become clear. The design stage may identify the need for some 'associated works' with reference to, for example, cold bridging. This might mean higher costs for a measure or that some measures can only be undertaken in conjunction with others – in either case this could take the initial measure[s] selected beyond the scope of available funding.



Key Lesson – Value of Early Assessments: Early assessments do create some potential risks. However, high quality early assessments, together with well informed IOEs, can create much more robust projects that are more likely to be deliverable.

E MEDIUM TERM IMPROVEMENT PLANS

1. If early assessments and IOEs are undertaken – it makes sense to create an MTIP. That is because this sets out a longer-term set of measures.
2. There is a significant chance that the package of measures that can be done in the actual project is significantly different from the package envisaged from the IOE process and entered as the immediate works in the MTIP. Hence there is a significant likelihood that the MTIP may need to be changed.



Key Lesson – MTIPs at the Time of Early Assessments: These may need to be adjusted if the initial package of measures changes by the time funding is clarified and ‘real’ projects become defined.

F SOFTWARE AND LODGEMENT / HANDOVER

1. At the time of writing, it is not possible for one RC to access TrustMark lodgements made by another RC. This means that the handover process of the assessment, the IOEs and MTIPs, etc needs to be outside of the TrustMark Data Warehouse. NB: Accessibility is set to be enhanced, so in future, the intent is that the TrustMark Data Warehouse will have much greater functionality for storing and accessing information.
2. Different certification scheme providers have different levels of interoperability. This includes some scheme providers not accepting the use of assessments done by Assessors who are not registered with them. It is suggested that this is resolved by ensuring that project RCs are registered with a scheme provider who does not have such restrictions. That could be achieved by an organisation registering with a second scheme provider.



Key Lesson – Accreditation Body: Consider including in the contract that any RC employed by the contractor should be accredited with a scheme that does allow them to use a retrofit assessment that is produced using any compliant methodology.

3. In the case of this pilot, the splitting of the RC role means that it is important to have a handover plan. In this case, the best way to do that was simply by the RA and RC storing their documentation in a filing system held by the Funding Client. This removed the need to transfer files after the event. In the pilot, the documentation set was relatively easy to agree as this is largely the documentation set required by TrustMark. The detail of the handover information is the subject of the 5th Briefing Note in this series. In this pilot, it was easier to appoint the initial RC to continue the role through the project than to effect a handover. That is because the RC within the installation partner was registered with an accreditation body with the restrictions described above. With more time available, it could be that a second registration for the second RC might be a practical approach – but delivery time constraints have worked against exploring this.



Key Lesson – Handover Plan: Establish the handover plan right at the start of the process (what information and documentation, and how).

Further information

Previous briefings

1. Pre-programme Activities
2. Retrofit Assessment

The next briefing in the series is 'The Customer Interface – Assessment and Coordination (Up to Design)', which covers:

- PAS 2035 customer interaction requirements
- Retrofit advice
- Retrofit design and the customer
- Key lessons from the project

Subsequent briefings cover: Handover.



For more information:

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