

PRESS RELEASE

New report warns vital green housing upgrades fail to reach London's most vulnerable residents

- *Report from The Young Foundation and the London Sustainable Development Commission calls for urgent action to ensure the capital's push toward net zero through home retrofitting leaves no one behind.*
- *Nearly 53% of London's homes need energy-efficiency improvements by 2030. It is estimated that housing stock currently accounts for 32% of London's total CO₂ emissions.*
- *Despite strong public motivation for change, with 89% of Londoners wanting climate action, retrofit currently happens at just one-tenth of the pace required.*
- *The research found that those who most need home retrofit often struggle to access it, including vulnerable groups such as disabled people, older adults, low-income households and ethnic minorities.*
- *Report outlines widespread barriers to public participation in retrofits, including affordability concerns, distrust and lack of accessible information.*

London, 8 May 2025: A new report produced by [The Young Foundation](#), commissioned by the [London Sustainable Development Commission \(LSDC\)](#), calls for urgent action to ensure that London's push toward net-zero carbon emissions through home retrofits leaves no one behind.

A just transition in London's retrofits highlights the urgent action needed to make energy efficiency improvements to nearly 53% of London's homes by 2030 — a crucial step in cutting the city's residential CO₂ emissions, as it is estimated that housing stock currently accounts for 32% of its total. However, the report warns that current retrofit initiatives risk excluding the very communities most affected by poor housing, including older adults, disabled people, ethnic minority groups, and low-income renters.

Despite strong public motivation for change, with 89% of Londoners wanting climate action, retrofitting in London is occurring at just one-tenth of the pace required. The report draws on extensive participatory research with Londoners from across the city and finds widespread barriers to retrofit participation, including affordability concerns, distrust in providers, and lack of accessible information.

Key findings include:

- **Retrofit progress is far too slow.** London is retrofitting homes at only 10% of the pace needed to meet its climate targets. Systemic barriers— including underfunding, a fragmented workforce, and low consumer confidence—are holding progress back.
- **Those who need retrofits most are often excluded.** Vulnerable groups such as disabled people, older adults, people from ethnic minority backgrounds, renters, and low-income households face the greatest housing-related risks, but are also the least likely to benefit from current schemes.

- **Residents want to engage—but face major obstacles.** Londoners are motivated to act on climate and want healthier, warmer homes, but are often let down by inaccessible information, lack of support, and a sense of disempowerment in a complex and technical system.
- **Quality and experience vary dramatically.** Residents report inconsistent retrofit outcomes. Communication breakdowns, disruption during works, and a lack of agency over decisions undermine trust and satisfaction.
- **Trust is critical.** Successful retrofit programmes depend on trust between residents and providers, which is often lacking—particularly in communities that have been historically marginalised or poorly served.
- **One-size-fits-all models don't work.** Standardised programmes often miss the mark for residents with specific needs. Tailored, community-led approaches are essential for uptake and equity.
- **Integrated, cross-sector solutions are possible—but underused.** There are missed opportunities to coordinate retrofit efforts with healthcare, housing safety, and social services, which could lead to more efficient delivery and better outcomes.

Key recommendations include:

1. **Flexible, long-term government funding** to support the engagement of underrepresented communities, especially where standard funding caps are restrictive.
2. **Early and meaningful involvement of diverse communities** in programme design and delivery to ensure retrofit plans reflect the full range of lived experiences and local needs.
3. **Clear, consistent communication** of the retrofit journey and its benefits using trusted messengers, community-specific materials, and continuous engagement. The report's recommended approach is detailed in a supporting toolkit.
4. **Inclusion of 'soft skills' in retrofit training**, such as communication and cultural sensitivity, to improve resident experiences and build trust.
5. **Knowledge and best practice must be shared among stakeholders** to make retrofit programmes more relatable, inclusive, and accessible across boroughs and stakeholders.
6. **Residents' feedback should inform ongoing monitoring and evaluation**, including feedback on social, financial, and health outcomes, to improve retrofit effectiveness and equity.

Additionally, the report identifies innovation opportunities such as integrated health-retrofit assessments, transparent energy billing for students and renters, and small post-retrofit grants to support household adaptation — especially for people with limited mobility or long-term illness.

Mete Coban, London's Deputy Mayor for Environment and Energy, says: "Tackling the climate emergency must go hand in hand with tackling inequality. Retrofitting our homes not only cuts carbon emissions but also helps Londoners reduce their bills, which is more important than ever given the rising cost of living. This report is a timely reminder that we must listen to and work with communities across the capital to build a fairer, greener London for everyone."

Helen Goulden OBE, Chief Executive at The Young Foundation, says: "We're seeing significant shifts in policy aimed at increasing access to retrofit and green technologies in people's homes, and giving

families more choice over home upgrades – but these will only significantly shift the dial if they reach every household and every community. This vital work is a call to all those engaged in retrofit in London, offering direct support via its toolkit, to understand the lived realities of making home upgrades, and to recognise the additional challenges many people with protected characteristics face.”

Syed Ahmed, London Sustainable Development Commissioner and Chair of Community Energy London, adds: “This report comes at a critical time- not only because energy prices are once again increasing and the cost of living crisis is still acutely felt by many households across the city, but also because the government has pledged to allocate significant levels of funding, with details to be set out later this year in their Warm Homes Plan. There is much to do over the coming months to help ensure that this future funding is effectively spent and directed to those Londoners most in need.

The report calls on local and national governments, housing providers, and retrofit professionals to work together with communities to design retrofit programmes that are not only technically sound but socially just.

To download the full report and toolkit, visit: www.youngfoundation.org/our-work/publications/a-just-transition-in-retrofits

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Notes to editors

For more information or to arrange an interview about the report, please contact Sarah Hogg on sarah.hogg@youngfoundation.org or via 07940 281470.

Methodology

The report is based on extensive participatory research methods, including:

- **Community-led research:** The Young Foundation collaborated with six London-based community organisations. These groups led local engagement with residents who are often excluded from decision-making, including disabled people, social housing tenants, private renters, ethnic minority groups, older adults, and young people.
- **Peer researchers:** Local peer researchers were trained and employed to carry out interviews, workshops, and outreach in their communities. This helped build trust and gather richer insights from participants.
- **Workshops and focus groups:** The project conducted multiple community workshops and thematic focus groups to explore residents’ experiences, concerns, motivations, and ideas around home retrofits.
- **Stakeholder engagement:** Interviews and roundtables were held with key stakeholders across the retrofit sector — including policymakers, delivery bodies, community energy groups, and housing providers — to understand systemic challenges and innovation opportunities.

- **Desk research and data analysis:** The team also reviewed existing policy documents, funding mechanisms, and technical literature to contextualise findings and triangulate insights with resident experiences.

This inclusive, multi-method approach ensured that the findings and recommendations reflect both lived experience and systemic insight — with an emphasis on equity, trust, and meaningful participation.

Case studies

Available to interview about their experience of retrofitting in London:

- Jennifer Ukachukwu Amarachi, from Barking and Dagenham, who has personal experience of making home renovations and implementing energy-saving measures such as using smart meters and energy-efficient lightbulbs, and who, as part of the research, spoke to her peers in her local community about their understanding of retrofitting, the barriers they face, and how their circumstances shape their approach to this climate solution.
- Alison Hendry, from Haringey, who, as part of the research, spoke to her peers in her local community about their understanding of retrofitting, the barriers they face, and how their circumstances shape their approach to this climate solution.

See Annex 1 in the report for more information about their experiences.

Additional quote

“A just transition in retrofits is essential to ensure that housing adaptation does not deepen existing inequalities and instead creates fair and inclusive conditions for all,” **said Julie McLaren, Interim Director of Sustainability and Just Transition at The Young Foundation.** “In London, this challenge translates to a considerable task of retrofit upwards of 2m homes by 2030. Getting this right won’t just make our homes more sustainable, it could also bring additional benefits, such as reducing energy bills and enhancing the comfort and health of occupants. This is about more than insulation and solar panels. It’s about ensuring London’s transition to a greener future is fair, inclusive, and responsive to people’s real lives.

About The Young Foundation

The Young Foundation is a not-for-profit organisation driving community research and social innovation. We bring communities, organisations and policymakers together to understand the issues people care about and support collective action to improve lives. We involve communities in research and innovate together to inspire positive change. We deliver distinctive initiatives and programmes to shape a fairer future. We also power the Institute for Community Studies.

Website: www.youngfoundation.org

About the London Sustainable Development Commission (LSDC)

The LSDC was established in 2002 to provide independent advice to the Mayor of London on ways to make London a sustainable, world-class city. The Commission works to promote sustainable development, embed sustainability into London-wide strategies and help make sustainability a meaningful and understandable concept for all Londoners.

Website: www.london.gov.uk/who-we-are/city-halls-partners/london-sustainable-development-commission-lsdc