



RECTIFYING FAILED EXTERNAL WALL INSULATION - LESSONS FROM FISHWICK

National Energy Action, with project partners Aldrock and Seddon, have successfully removed failed external wall insulation (EWI) from 45 homes at Fishwick. Problems caused by the failed EWI were rectified, and a quality assured installation of new EWI undertaken.

This paper summarises learnings from that project to serve as a toolkit that can help ensure the success of any similar projects to rectify failed EWI. They are also likely to be effective in ensuring a quality installation in any circumstances, particularly where the properties being addressed are complex to deal with.



PROJECT FOCUS

1 Deliver the external wall insulation project through a place-based approach.

This allows for the quality of works to be overseen on an ongoing basis, for neighbouring buildings to be worked on as a cohesive whole, and for better community engagement.

2 The client should appoint a main contractor and another company to oversee design, quality assurance, and compliance.

This approach is common for non-domestic retrofit and, while it can be more costly, is appropriate for complex or large-scale projects.

3 Be willing (and budget) to carry out remedial work ahead of the replacement EWI.

In the original project at Fishwick, building structural defects had simply been covered over by the insulation.

4 Allow for the fact that any retrofit can have substantial and unknown additional costs.

Make sure that there is a contingency fund in place, and that detailed pre-retrofit surveys are carried out on all properties.

5 Take a duty of care throughout the project to find the best solution rather than the least cost.

This may include rewiring properties if necessary to safely install a ventilation system that will prevent further risk of condensation and mould post-works.

6 Adopt a whole-house approach where possible.

At Fishwick we replaced and upgraded windows alongside the EWI to avoid problems from cold bridging or potential damage to the EWI from future replacement.

7 Encourage third party oversight.

Independent periodical inspections to the works by building control officials and by those providing warranties, such as the EWI manufacturer, should be welcomed.



RESIDENT AND COMMUNITY FOCUS

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Implement extensive householder and community engagement to build trust:

- a) Prioritise relationship building and establishing trust in the community during the early stages of the project. This may include buy-in from trusted names, for example, the local MP or community leaders.
- b) Base client and project contractor offices within the community and accessible to local householders wanting to ask questions.
- c) Make resident engagement activity proactive, with regular community insight panels allowing local people to contribute to the way that the project is run.
- d) Appoint a community liaison officer from within the community. This means they will be more readily welcome in people's homes, aware of some of the cultural and community sensitivities, and can explain things to people in terms they will understand.

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Carry out works with respectful consideration of the householders:

- a) Provide a written record of works that will be carried out to avoid disappointment at later stages and manage expectations.
- b) Tailor building works to the support needs of householders, e.g. checking if vulnerable residents want to be present at home during the works or fitting work in around the routines of young families.
- c) Establish good communication between contractors and householders. Contact the householder in advance if contractors are unable to attend appointments, particularly paying consideration for those who work and have caring responsibilities.

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Focus on consumer protection. Residents should be left with a good practice guidance package that outlines the warranties and guarantees for the works, with detailed information on where to access help if anything goes wrong, and how to claim in that event.



NATIONAL ENERGY ACTION

National Energy Action (NEA) is the national fuel poverty charity. We've worked across England, Wales, and Northern Ireland for over 40 years, to ensure that everyone can afford to live in a warm, healthy home.

Together with frontline practitioners, companies, regulators and governments, National Energy Action works to support vulnerable clients, raise awareness and achieve enduring change.

Affordable Warmth Solutions and Centrica provided additional support to this project, despite neither they nor National Energy Action having had any involvement in the original failed works. We are extremely grateful for this support that has allowed us to complete two phases of work.

WHERE TO FIND US

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