

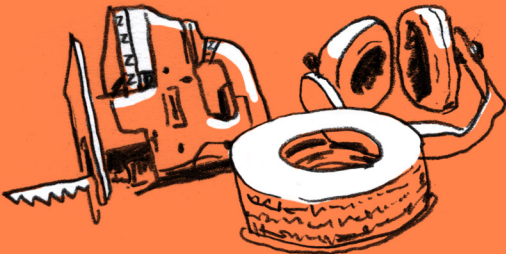
Retrofit Zine #2

Meet the team doing
retrofit on your street!

NEIGHBOURHOOD

TRADE

CREW



What's happening on Andover Road

Over the past two years, Andover Road residents have collaborated with WeCanMake and Knowle West Media Centre to understand Knowle West homes. Working with researchers, we've been monitoring homes to see how they work, and find ways to fix problems like damp and mould.

We've worked with 6 households where they've made decisions on what they need and would like to see in their homes. Through this 'co-creation' process we've come up with a recipe that uses natural materials and sustainable methods to make homes warmer, less damp, and better suited to residents' needs. This is known as 'retrofit'. Works include things like loft insulation, floor insulation and kitchen upgrades.



Here at Knowle West Media Centre and WeCanMake, we have a long history of working in Knowle West and being led by the community. We believe everyone deserves the same opportunities to live in a warm, comfortable home. We're building on what's already good in the community and asking, 'What if we upgraded and maintained our current homes so they met people's needs now and in the future?'

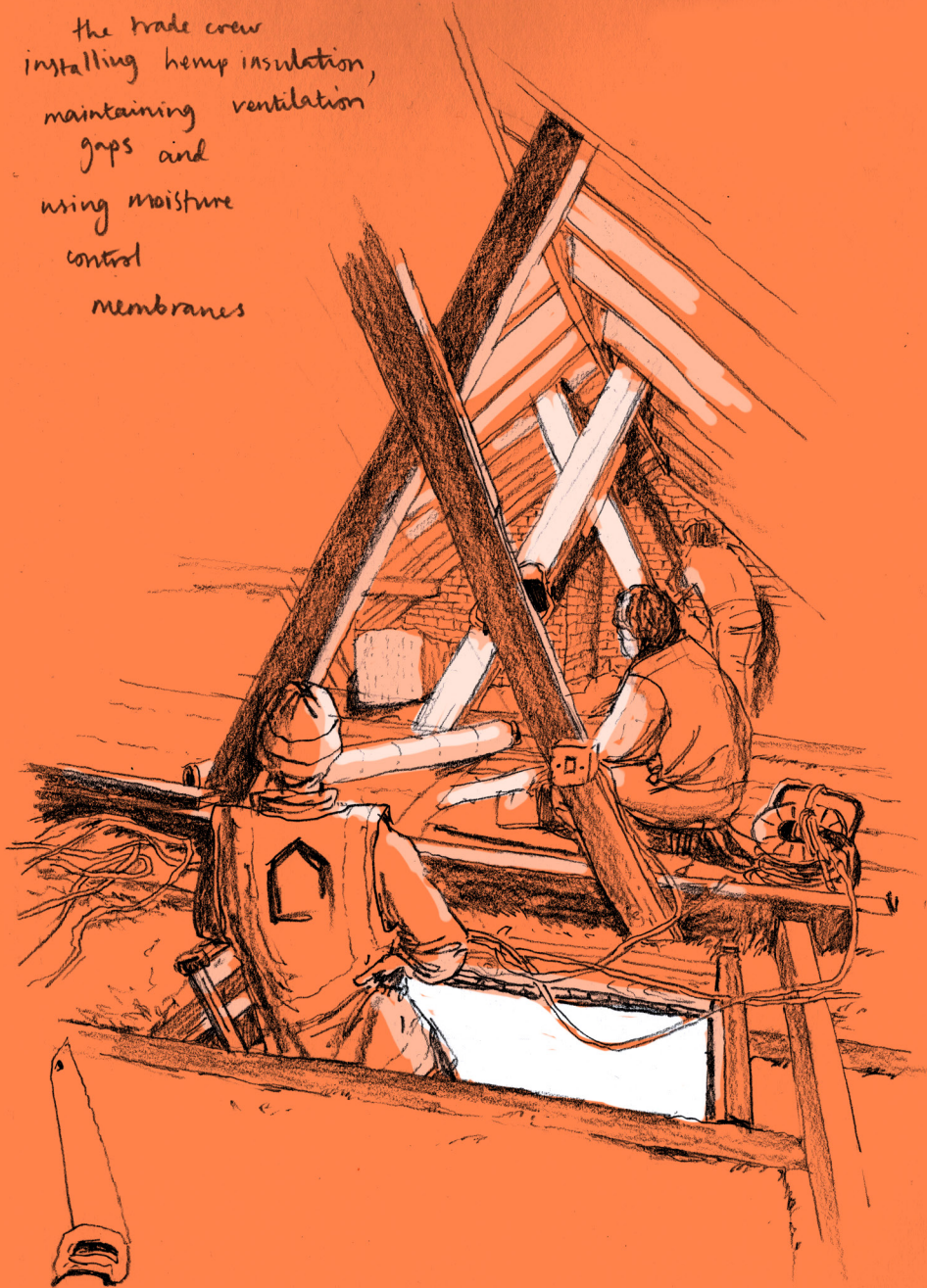
The UK must retrofit 29 million homes by 2050, but retrofit contracts often go to bigger companies, meaning the value of the work doesn't benefit the local workforce. What if, across the UK, each community was home to a skilled local trade team with deep knowledge of how to repair and retrofit homes using sustainable materials and methods that are better for people and the planet?

What if these trade crews were centred around wellbeing, inclusion, and mutual support so that people could bring their whole selves to work and thrive together?



And what if local people could learn retrofit skills where they live, gaining meaningful, future-proof work right in their own neighbourhoods?

the trade crew
installing hemp insulation,
maintaining ventilation
gaps and
using moisture
control
membranes



To carry out this retrofit work, we've recruited a Neighbourhood Trade Crew, made up of local tradespeople and Andover Road residents, who are learning about using sustainable building materials and methods.

The trade crew is for people of all ages, ranging from those with no prior experience in construction to those who run their own businesses.



Meet the
Neighbourhood
Trade crew

Through the trade crew, we're also exploring the question, 'What would an inclusive site culture mean?'

With this in mind, we've particularly recruited people from backgrounds that are under-represented in construction. We've built in practices like shared lunches, daily check-ins, and peer-to-peer learning to support a culture where all feel welcome and empowered.



I haven't stopped
running around all morning
I'm chief gopher
Popping up in every loft asking
"do you need anything?"

CAROLINE

Site supervisor she/her



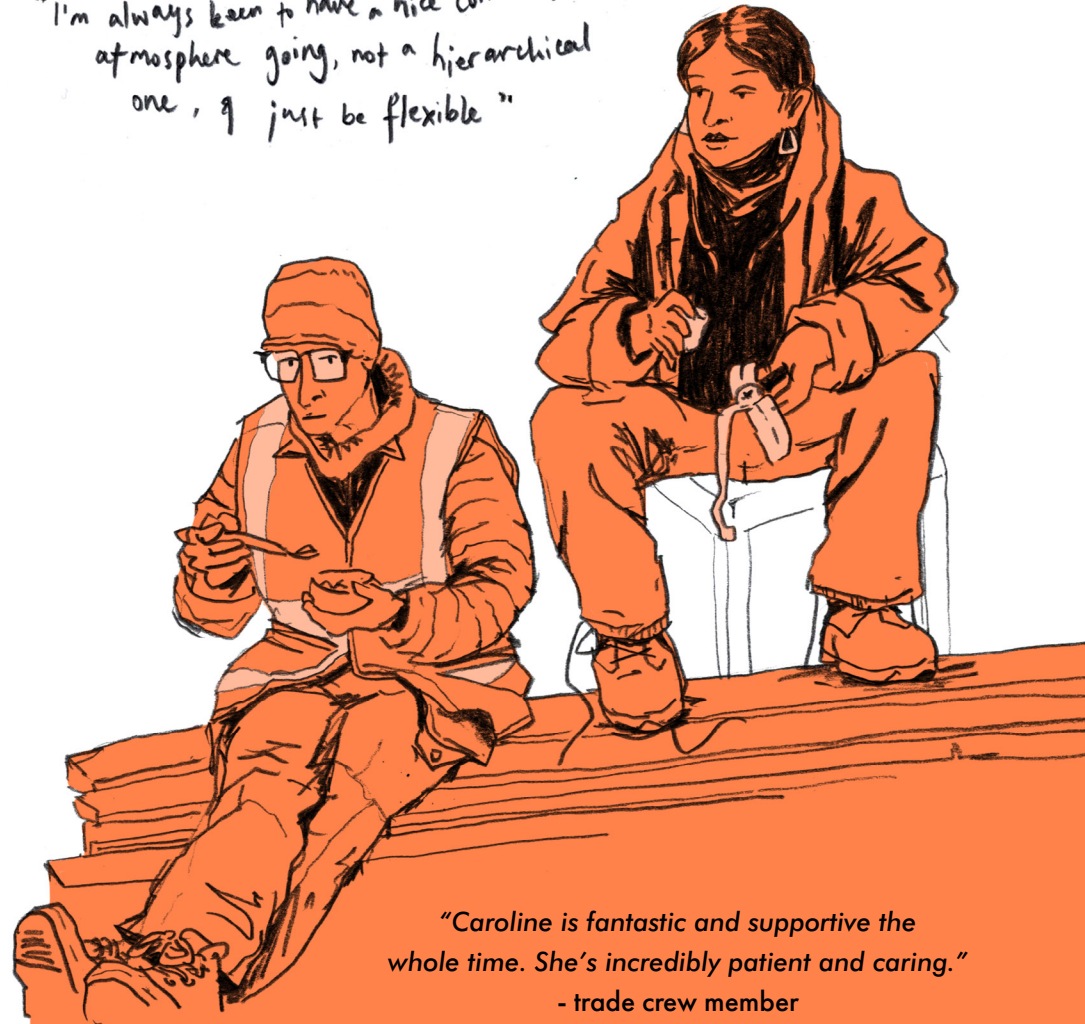
"We're trying to get everybody skilled up in all the different skillsets, but it's also been about getting everyone to problem solve - I didn't want to be too prescriptive.

"It's important to empower people to run with stuff themselves, as we're using new products and nobody has the right answer. We're drawing on our own experiences. When there's suggestions, we don't ignore them because even if the idea doesn't work, it might lead to something else that does.



"I want the team to work really well together. There's a good level of quality control going on within the team - not in a blame culture kind of way but a nice cooperative way. We're learning and we all make mistakes but that's okay. Nobody on the project fits into your archetypal building project persona, they don't tick the boxes for what they're doing, so naturally there's imposter syndrome at play."

"I'm always keen to have a nice collaborative atmosphere going, not a hierarchical one, I just be flexible"



"Caroline is fantastic and supportive the whole time. She's incredibly patient and caring."
- trade crew member

CHLOE

Project lead she / they

"I have a background in queer organising and making people feel included. The point is that you can turn up to work and bring more of yourself to work. Especially in a trade crew site, the statistics are really bad for inclusivity - how can we make work a nice place to be, where people don't have to deal with prejudices?"

"The crew and residents' wellbeing is really important - if they're not having a good time, Caroline or I will pick it up and work out what to do. Starting the day with a check-in, asking people's pronouns, being inclusive for people who have kids. It's basic stuff that isn't often done."

"During planning, we didn't want to take the top-down approach of just getting in the cheapest contractor to do the retrofit on people's homes. Instead, we thought, 'People live in these homes. Some are builders. Would they like to learn about retrofit?'"

"Everyone on the trade crew is a resident on Andover Road, or they live locally, or they're underrepresented in construction. It's a holistic view where many different people feel the benefits, but the skills, learning and wealth goes to local people - so they know how to fix Knowle West homes."

"It's really inspiring being around so many capable queer people"



Values

- Abundance - doing extra bits wherever we can
- There are no silly questions or suggestions!
- Everyone is on a learning journey - some people might be new to materials, others new to construction, but everyone's got something to learn and something to teach
- Non-hierarchical (as much as possible)
- Treating residents' homes as if they were your own - with care

Rhythms of Practices

- Starting and finishing every week with a wellbeing check-in and check-out
- Working hours 9am - 4pm, to accommodate the school pick up/drop off
- Shared lunches to bring everyone together for social time
- Keeping a weekly Trade Crew Diary to reflect on site culture, the work being done and resident engagement



ASH

tradesperson

they / them

"I'm very used to just working on my own, but I was interested in working in this team because it's a different culture."

I've really settled in now

and I like not having to hold everything myself — working in a team, we can bounce questions, things like that

"I've never wanted to work on a construction site. I hate even going to a Builders Merchant and having to prove that you know stuff, because you don't look like the kind of person who would. I've been laughed at for knowing stuff. If you go in looking like a woman, the assumption is that you're not gonna know. You can never make a mistake or admit you don't know something. Yeah. I don't love that dynamic."

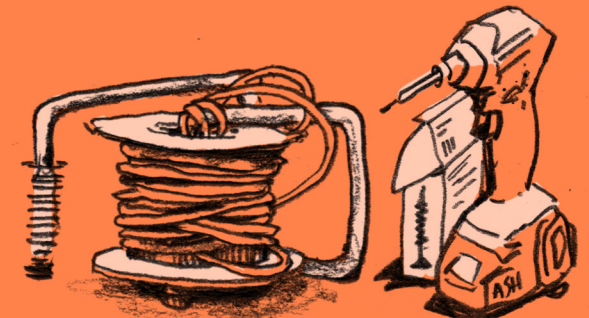
"Here, it doesn't feel like we have to prove ourselves to each other. It's nice to be on a predominantly AFAB (assigned female at birth) team."

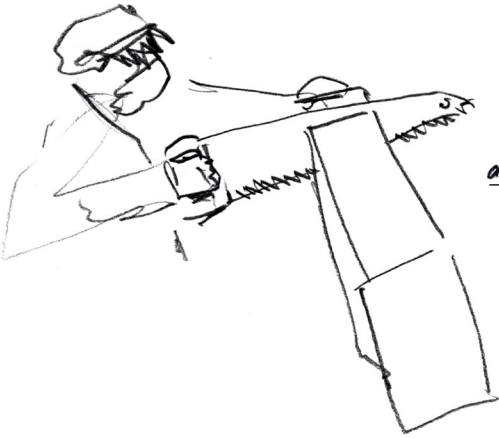
"I'm in awe of Ash. They're so quietly good at what they do. Such a fantastic role model."

- Caroline

"I was in academia before, I did a PhD in Bee Ecology, but one of the main things I liked was the manual labour - I love mixing brain stuff with practical stuff. I learned how to do DIY on the flat that I was living in. And I got really obsessed with it! I learned through a combination of things: from YouTube to a builder who was just the nicest man and he taught me loads."

"I did do a plumbing course for women and it was so bad. They expected you to not actually be doing any plumbing, so the whole time we were learning to solder to make coat hooks out of copper pipe so we could have beautiful copper coat hooks in our houses. When I asked how to check that water wouldn't get through, they said "Oh, don't worry, we're not putting water through this." And I thought, "Oh my God, I'm not on this course to hang my coat up". It was very much assumed that we weren't actually going to be doing any actual plumbing. There's a lot of stuff like that for 'women in construction' that's kind of just reinforcing the stereotype."

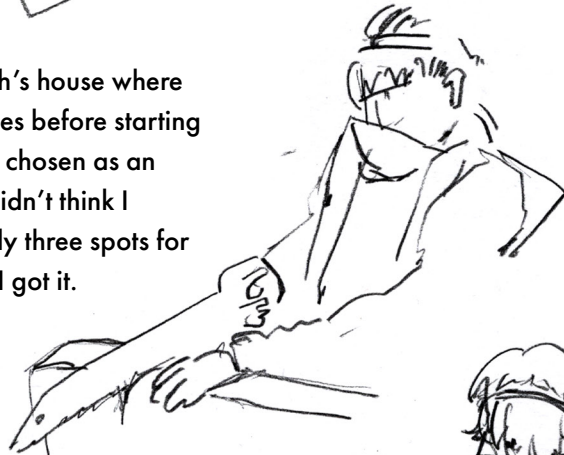




MARSHALL.

apprentice /
resident / he/him
4th generation
Knowle-Wester

"I got to take part in the trade crew training at Hannah's house where we practiced retrofit techniques before starting on Andover Road, and I was chosen as an apprentice for the project. I didn't think I would get it as there were only three spots for apprentices but I was happy I got it.



"It was very busy at Hannah's but I really enjoyed the plastering.

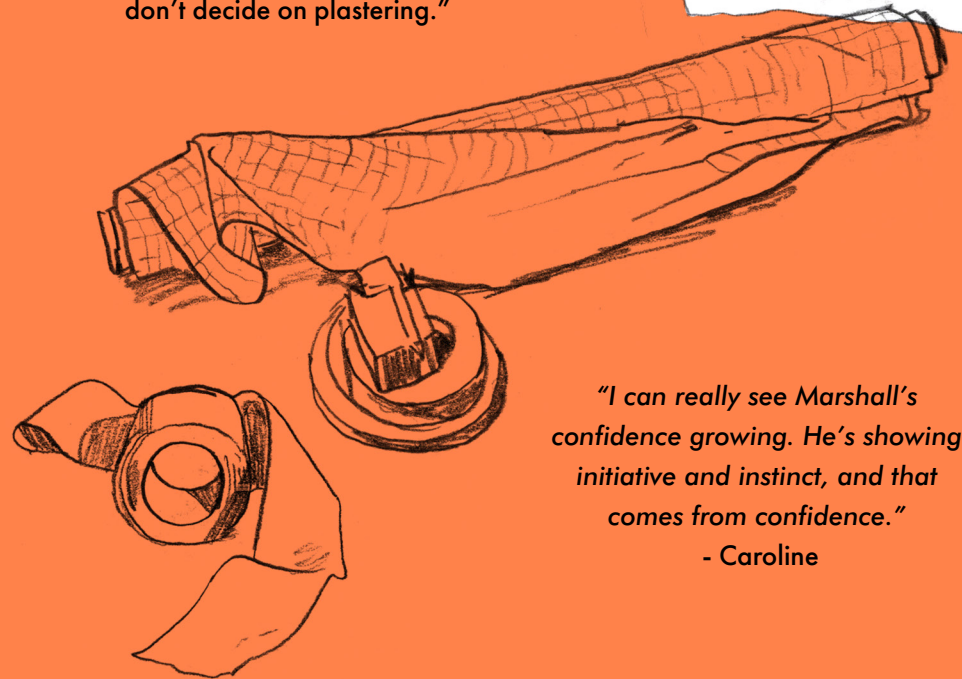
"I hadn't done any construction or anything because I was military-based before, so the most I'd put up was a basha. I spent two years at a military college, before that I did sea cadets and army cadets. My uncle encouraged me to do it and I really enjoyed it so I wanted to join the army, but I got deferred so I couldn't get in. I was like, "What am I supposed to do now?". So finding this, it's been great.



"I can't just sit, I can't do writing and stuff, so finding this and doing something really hands-on has been great."

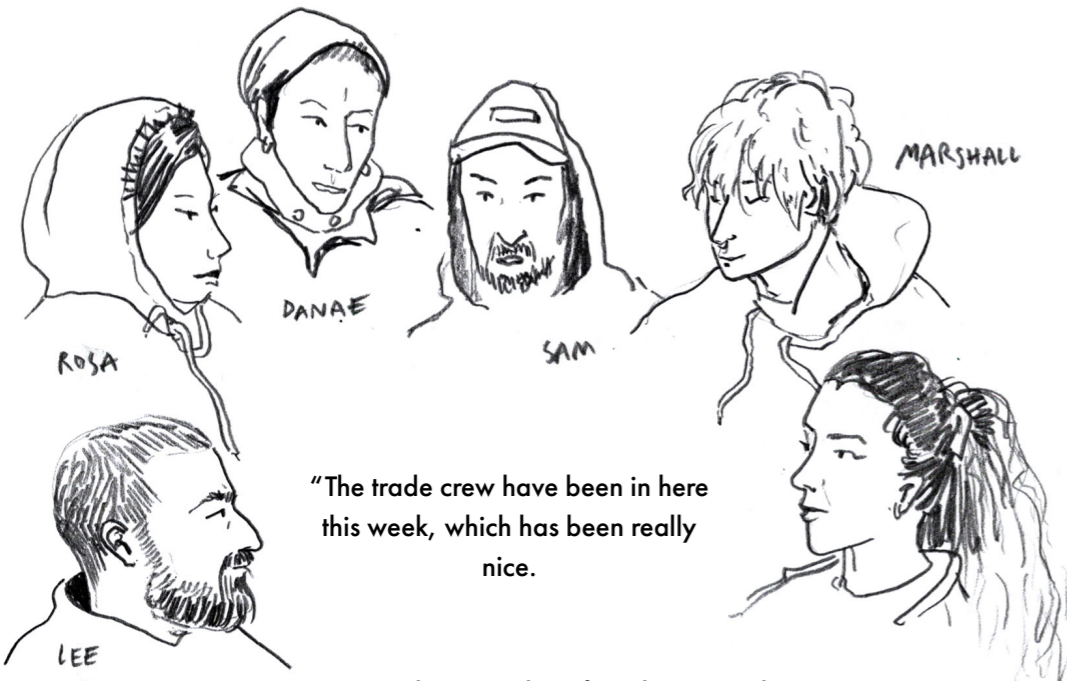
"If I'm shown something I can get the hang of it quite quickly. I just like doing anything that's hands-on. I did a power tool workshop with Caroline before I started, to make sure I got the hang of it - she's a really good teacher.

"It's cool to get to work on all the different things we're doing, different skills, so I can decide what area I want to go into if I don't decide on plastering."



"I can really see Marshall's confidence growing. He's showing initiative and instinct, and that comes from confidence."

- Caroline



"The trade crew have been in here this week, which has been really nice."

"I've been working from home, and considering what they had to do, it wasn't that loud, and they've been so good at communicating and cleaning up at the end of the day."

"I feel like we've been really fortunate with this trade crew, because all of them seem so nice. I must remember them if ever I need any works done, because from what I've seen, they've done really good work. And they care, I think that's what it is, they just care."

- Emile, resident



IMAGINE IF EVERY NEIGHBOURHOOD HAD A TRADE CREW...

- Where local people had the opportunity to learn new skills and be upskilled in retrofit
- The crew knew in-depth about how to fix local homes with more sustainable materials
- Where inclusion and wellbeing were prioritised in the crew
- To make peoples homes more healthy, warm and ready for the future

"I'd just like to say how good it feels to be doing this work on a community level, using more eco-friendly materials, with such an inclusive team. I really hope this is just the start for me."

- Danae, tradesperson

As I was leaving the house in my white PPE suit, a neighbour asked if I was travelling to the moon



we then got into a conversation about the trade crew & what we were doing on the street

IN THE UK CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY:

Women make up 15% of the UK construction industry, with approximately 2% working on-site.

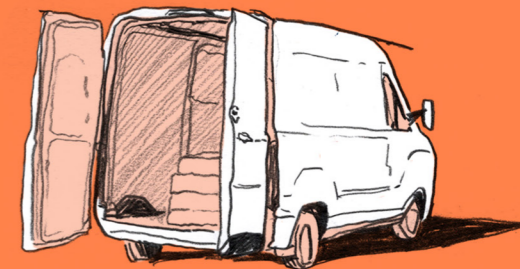
Global majority employees make up 6% of the workforce.

Disabled employees make up 6% of the workforce.

60% of LGBTQ+ employees have experienced homophobic and derogatory terms at work.

Improving mental health of construction workers is vital - with the workforce facing a significantly elevated risk of suicide, with rates estimated at 3.7 times the national average.

*statistics from CIOB.org



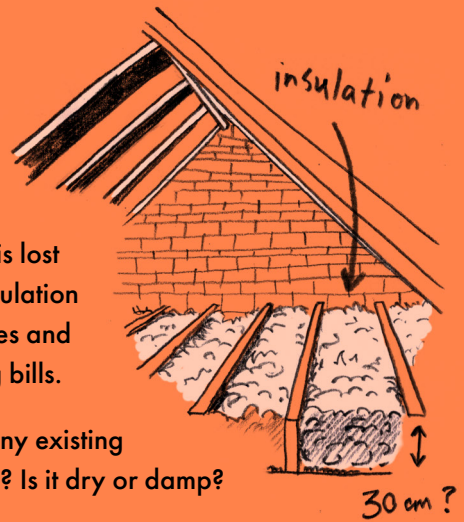
DIY TIPS #2

HAVE A LOOK AT YOUR LOFT!

Did you know that 25% of warmth in homes is lost through the roof? Having good, deep loft insulation that isn't compacted is one of the simplest fixes and can make the most difference to your heating bills.

Familiarise yourself with your loft – is there any existing insulation? Do you know what it's made from? Is it dry or damp?

Is the thickness of your loft insulation even? Is it at least 30cm thick? Are there sections that are patchy, trodden down, or even missing? (Wear gloves when you check your insulation, as some materials can be harmful to touch.)



"Now the loft is insulated, when I'm in bed and I'm feeling warm I go "Who's put the heating on!" but nobody has."
- Jas, resident

If your loft isn't insulated well, you might want to think about getting it insulated.

Consider using hemp insulation over glassfiber or rockwool. It's much more environmentally-friendly, easier to work with, and breathable for your loft.

Scan here to find
out more!

wecanmake.notion.site/retrofit-street



Keep an eye out for the next retrofit zine - all about the Andover Road residents involved in retrofit

Retrofit
Reimagined

Innovate
UK

Zine by Mereida Fajardo

mereida.co.uk [instagram.com/m.ereida](https://www.instagram.com/m.ereida)

TRANSFORMING
HOUSES



UNIVERSITY OF
BATH

Knowle
West
Media
Centre

