



Creating communities,
empowering lives

The Resident Journey for Improving Energy Standards to Existing Properties

Abri Resident Scrutiny Group

RSG PROJECT LEAD: EMMA WITHNELL

JULY 2024

April - July 2024

Introduction

The resident scrutiny group has been reviewing and improving the way that their reviews are carried out. This project is the first to create a new reporting way in which a video has been created to report this project and findings. This report formalises the recommendations and discussions highlighted in the video.

A total of 29 documents of letters, communications and feedback were shared and reviewed individually by the project group.

The video can be viewed here: [Abri RSG – Review 1 - Video](#)

Project members: Emma W (project lead), Sioux M, Noeline A, Dennis C, Debs A

Project findings and discussions

In reference to recommendation: IES0724.01

Discussion points:

Following the review of letters and communications regarding this project, it was noted that there was a lot of corporate phrases/jargon that were not easy to understand. Projects like this can be very disruptive for residents and sometimes communications can be very emotive. Ensuring that we use the most appropriate tone of voice and use of language will help to provide more reassurance to residents.

Alongside this Abri had made an assumption that residents would be 'unhappy' to not have efficiency works carried out. One of the examples given was around the letter following the survey, Abri used the term *"we regret to inform you that you are not eligible for the works to be carried out"* however, from feedback and the group's discussion, this negative approach could be written in a more positive manner such as *"Good news! Your home is already at a high energy efficiency standard so we don't need to disturb / disrupt you to carry out work right now"*. This is an example of how a small change in language could have a very large impact.

Why:

Having residents involved when creating communications and letters could prove invaluable to Abri. Not only does it show Abri's continued dedication to resident voice but could change the impact of the project with residents who may be reserved in having works carried out.

Recommendation:

To involve the resident when reviewing or creating communications to be sent to residents, from any area of Abri, not just the retrofit project.

Impact:

This recommendation would help Abri in getting things right first time, and helps residents understand projects better and the positive impact it could have on them in their home. Language can be very emotive and could give the wrong impression instantly, asking our residents in the first instance will allow Abri to understand if they are 'hitting the mark'.

In reference to recommendation: IES0724.02

Discussion points:

The term retrofit does not sound positive, nor does it help residents understand the teams, projects or work carried out in relation to it. Meaning that the initial impact on a resident when hearing from the team could be negative too.

Why:

Having a term that is not easily recognisable could be misunderstood with our residents, leaving hesitation or negativity when engaging with Abri.

Recommendation:

Changing the name to Energy Efficiency Works & Team would give residents further understanding of the team and proposed project from the offset, giving a positive impression from the start.

Impact: Having a name that would describe the team and potential projects would give an understanding from the start, using the term 'energy efficiency' shows that Abri are working towards making a positive change to the property, which will have an positive impact on their home and potentially bills too.

In reference to recommendation: IES0724.03

Discussion points:

The group noted with this project that all communications used the term 'customer', a term that we debated at length, not only as a project group but widely with the full RSG. We discussed when Abri residents could have last been consulted on this topic or whether they even had been.

Why:

The term 'customer' would imply that the individual has a choice, we feel that this is not always the case for our residents and especially regarding the retro-fit programme. There is no choice in the works, suppliers or upgrades carried out, therefor does not seem suitable to use this.

Recommendation:

Although we are aware that one term would not always be appropriate for all we feel strongly that residents should be given a choice or voice how they'd like to be known. Therefor considering a consultation to ask us what term they would like Abri to use would be really beneficial, and show Abri's constant willingness to listen to the voice of the resident.

Impact:

The impact we see would be a positive one, it's giving residents the opportunity to decide a term they feel most appropriate for Abri to use when referencing them.

In reference to recommendation: IES0724.04

Discussion points:

We discussed with Rowena what happens during the project, the sessions arranged and how it affects the communities involved. There are many aspects and colleagues involved with this but not as much support with teams internally.

Why:

For some residents this process could be an extremely difficult experience to them. Meeting different people, trades and contractors could become overwhelming. Having the extra support of a familiar face in the community could be hugely beneficial for residents. Having the Housing Partner team being more involved and aware that works are being carried out on their patch will continue to build the community feel, and being able to have an Abri face in their community.

Recommendation:

The group believes that teams working closer together, using knowledge and experience of their respective areas to aid the project for the benefit of the resident. From this the RSG recommends collaborative working between the Housing Partner (Field) team and retrofit team supporting residents during the entire project process

Impact:

Being able to see a familiar face regularly throughout the process could help residents feel more at ease, giving them the opportunity to talk to someone they feel more confident in speaking with, whilst continuing to keep a community spirit.

In reference to recommendation: IES0724.05

Discussion points:

As a project group we reviewed multiple, letters and communications regarding the project. These all contained important information for residents throughout all stages of the process. What was noted was that there wasn't a dedicated complete guide available to residents. As a group we also discussed some of the day to day and longer term impact for residents (i.e. what happens with electricity contract/bills after solar panels are installed?, Who is responsible for contacting energy suppliers? How will this realistically help me?)

Why:

Sometimes having multiple documents can be overwhelming or frustrating when needing to find certain information in a timely manner or when you might need them. Given how much is needed to be communicated having one supporting 'guide' that also includes some day to day, or realistic information for residents would be really helpful.

Recommendation:

The RSG recommends the creation of a FAQ document to support residents going through the programme with further understanding of the works taking place ensuring the tone of voice used in all communications are appropriate for the resident

Impact:

Having a 'one stop' flyer/document that encompasses not only the themes of the works being carried out but inclusion of any extra themes that may be more meaningful to the resident to help understand what it really means to be having the work completed. This would inevitably be a positive thing.

Conclusion

This review has been a very positive one for the RSG, there has been high levels of engagement with colleagues in Abri and it has made the experience more enjoyable. The RSG are proud to work alongside Abri to improve the services we deliver to our residents. Overall Abri's approach is a positive one, the RSG can see the positive impact the team and project have to residents, however believe that these recommendations can turn what is great resident experience to an excellent one. The RSG acknowledge that changes have already been made and look forward to working with Abri in the future to help develop further and support the implementation of the recommendations. The RSG thank the board for their continued support and commitment to the resident scrutiny group.

Recommendations

Reference Number	Recommendation	Delivery Officer	Responsible Executive	Target Implementation Date
IES0724.01	The RSG recommends bringing the resident in at the start of projects as they feel this would be very beneficial to Abri and the residents.	Rowena Claydon-Smith	Rose Bean	31 January 2025 (site specific projects/engagement strategy) Phase 2: Longer commitment with new company strategy date TBC
IES0724.02	The RSG recommends using the term 'Energy Efficiency Works' instead of Retrofit	Rowena Claydon-Smith	Rose Bean	30 November 2024
IES0724.03	The RSG recommends the Abri group considers a consultation with Abri colleagues and residents to gain understanding on preference over the term resident/customer/tenant/consumer	All Teams across Abri	Rose Bean / All Exec Team	31 January 2025 (for decision on consultation) – Separate action & follow up - following Abri's decision
IES0724.04	The RSG recommends collaborative working between the Housing Partner (Field) team and retrofit team supporting residents during the entire project process.	Rowena Claydon-Smith / HP Manager	Rose Bean	31 January 2025
IES0724.05	The RSG recommends the creation of a FAQ document to support residents going through the programme with further understanding of the works taking place ensuring the tone of voice used in all communications are appropriate for the resident.	Rebecca Fisher	Rose Bean	30 November 2024