

The Canopy Guide to Retrofit

Tenants

Contents

1. Welcome to Canopy	07
2. What is Retrofit?	11
3. Damp & Humidity	15
4. Ventilation	24
5. Overheating	29
6. Heating Your Home	32
7. Landlord Accountability & Tenants Unions	41
8. Gardens	45

1



Welcome to Canopy





Our trip to Scarborough 2025.

Canopy Housing is a community-led social housing charity that offers volunteering opportunities to local people, as well as self-help accommodation to those at risk of homelessness.

All tenants are able to access practical and emotional support from our support worker, Laura, and 'self-help' on their own property, working on site with volunteers and decorating their own houses with help from the volunteers and properties workers.

We offer free trips and meals out over summer and during the Christmas holidays, including a trip to Scarborough in the summer holidays. We also offer tenants full access to food cupboards in the office for when money is tight.

Useful Contacts

Housing Support Worker :

Housing Management Worker :

Emergency Repairs :

General Enquiries :

General Repairs :

2



What is Retrofit?





Left to right; Kathryn, Natalia and Emma.

Retrofit is making changes to houses that already exist that improving the energy efficiency of houses to make energy bills cheaper, make a house healthier for the people who live there, and reducing the risks of damp and mould.

We use wood fibre insulation and lime plaster to do this, meaning there are things that tenants in houses should and shouldn't do to keep things working in the way they should. These things are listed below:

- Only using white matt paint on the outside walls. Any point that has colour in it has plastic in it, meaning that the paint seals the external wall, and the improvements to the indoor air quality stop working – not good!
- Not attaching things to external walls without specific plugs. If you want to attach anything to the external walls they have to be attached with specific plugs so please ask Canopy to come and help with any fixings you want!

3



Damp & Humidity





A recently retrofitted Canopy house.

There can be issues with damp and mould in older houses, particularly with back-to-backs as they are hard to ventilate! Damp can be caused by leaks in the bricks, roof or chimney of your house, or from too much humidity in the house and cold walls. The damp warm air created during cooking and bathing hit the cold walls and turn back into water (condensation). Over time this condensation can lead to black mould which is bad for our health.

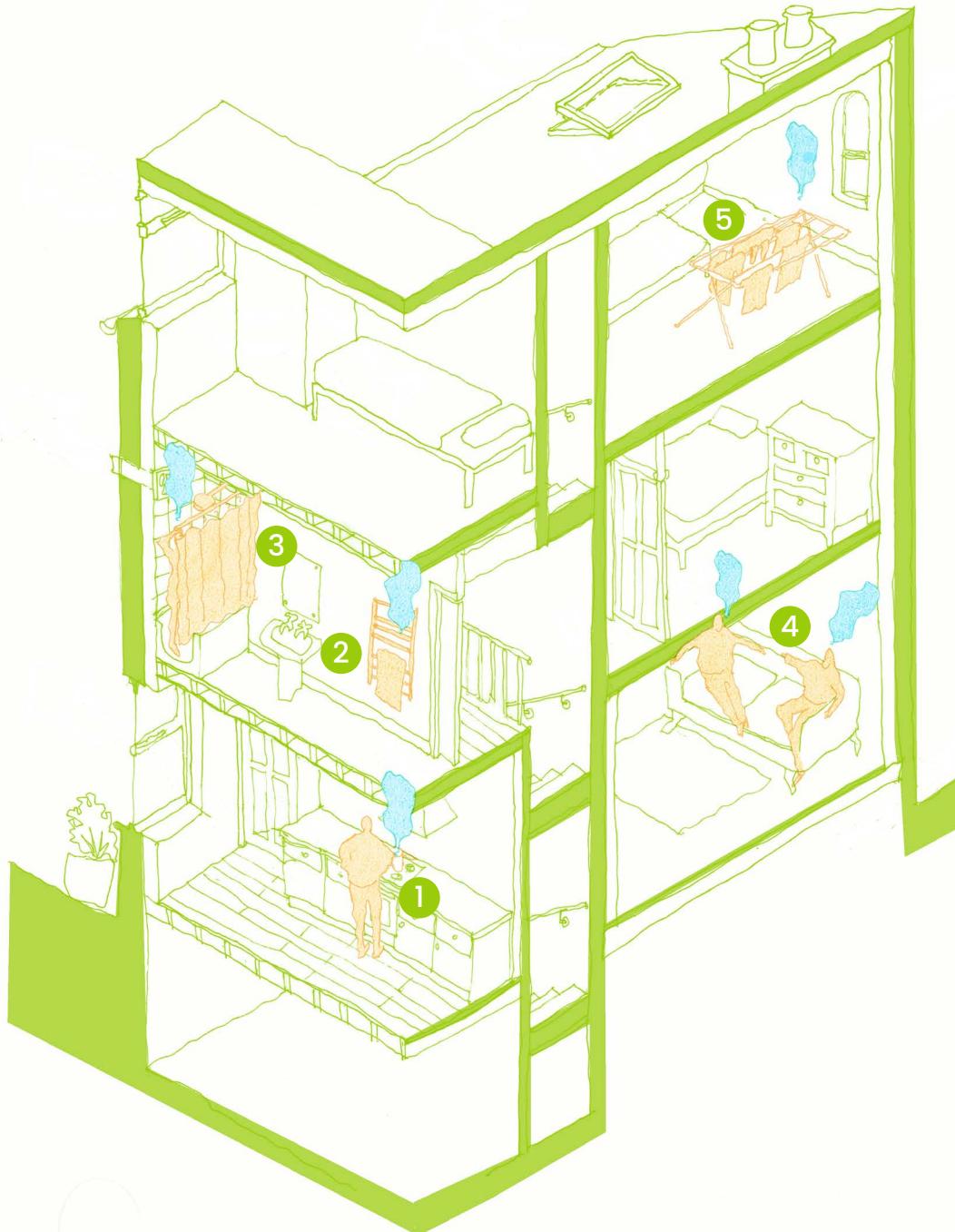
There are several things that you, and Canopy can do to reduce the risk of damp and mould.

What Canopy might be able to do:

- Insulate the house to increase the temperature of external walls, however this is expensive for Canopy and disruptive for tenants, often requiring them to move out;
- Fit new fans in the bathroom and kitchen;
- Put trickle vents on the windows to increase ventilation.

Things you can do:

- Keep your extraction fans in the kitchen and bathroom on constantly. They are set to be humidity sensitive so should come on more powerfully when there is excess moisture in the air, and turn back down when they have removed the moisture. We choose fans that are cheap to run – please get in touch to find out the current cost per week to run the fan and we can let you know.



There are numerous ways that we create moisture in our homes through carrying out everyday activities. However there are simple strategies that we can implement to mitigate issues with moisture condensing and prevent them leading to damp and mould.

- 1. Cooking
- 2. Drying damp items on radiators
- 3. Bathing and showering
- 4. Breathing
- 5. Drying clothes

- Keep the doors closed when cooking and bathing to keep the humid air in one room
- Open the windows after or during cooking and bathing to help remove the humid air from the kitchen/bathroom;
- Keep furniture away from the external wall so that cold air doesn't get trapped behind it and create a space for mould to grow;
- Put lids on pans when you're cooking, and use the cooker hood;
- Open your windows for at least one hour per day – ideally in the morning when you wake up;
- Try and heat your house as much as possible. Warmer air can hold more moisture, meaning that the humid air is less likely to condense and create mould. It also warms the walls in the house, also preventing moist air from condensing. If you are struggling with paying your bills please contact Canopy as there maybe some way we can help. be replaced.

Identifying a damp patch...



- A patch of paint on the wall that is a darker shade than the rest of the wall.
- The patch may get bigger after it's been raining.
- Usually located in the attic, beneath the bathroom or an external wall.
- The paint may be bubbling or chipped.

Does the damp patch get bigger when it rains?

No...

The damp patch is historic. Keep an eye on it, but it should just need a coat of 'Stainstop' and redecorating.

Yes!

Where is the damp patch located?

An External Wall

→ Damaged pointing or leaking pipes/gutters

Check outside if the damp patch relates to where gutters are leaking, or if the pointing between the bricks is damaged or missing. Call maintenance to organise for gutters or pointing to be fixed.

The Chimney Breast

→ Damaged pointing or flashing or capping on the chimney.

Ask maintenance to get a roofer out to come and assess the roof.

The Kitchen

→ Flooding in the bathroom or a leak from the bath, shower, sink or toilet or sealant gone around the bath.

Ask maintenance to call a plumber.

The Dormer Ceiling

→ Something has gone wrong on the roof.

Ask maintenance to organise for a roofer to come out.

Ground floor at the bottom of the wall

→ Damaged pipes, blocked drains, soil build up, plants or rising damp

Discuss with maintenance to decide on the best course of action.

Identifying a black mould (condensation)...



- Caused by condensation.
- Bad for your health.
- May or may not have a damp patch.
- Could be anywhere in the house but most likely around windows and on external walls.

Where is the mould located?



→ Around the window...

- Open your windows for an hour when you wake up to dry condensation.
- Ask maintenance to reseal around your windows to stop cold draughts.

→ Behind furniture...

- Humid air is getting trapped behind the furniture, condensing and forming mould.
- Move furniture away from the external wall.

→ External wall, but not behind furniture...

- Keep bathroom door closed when showering or bathing.
- Check ventilation systems are working and increase ventilation.
- Open windows for an hour when you wake up.
- Dry washing outside or with a dryer (Canopy will buy you one).
- Turn up the heating if possible.
- Run a dehumidifier.
- Keep kitchen door closed when cooking.

→ Any walls on the top floor of the house...

- Make sure your ventilation system is working.
- Open windows after showering or bathing
- Mop up water on the floor after showering.

→ Bathroom

- Make sure your ventilation system is working.
- Open windows after showering or bathing
- Mop up water on the floor after showering.

4



Ventilation



After the building has been repaired and insulated, there are fewer drafts in the building. This increases the risk of damp and mould in the house, as the moisture being generated from being inside the building stays in the building.

The risk of this humidity causing damp and mould is reduced through adequate use of the ventilation system, which must be switched on at all times. The ventilation in your kitchen and bathroom should automatically boost when the shower is on, or when you're cooking a meal to balance out the increased moisture in the air.

Drying Washing:

Drying washing on radiators makes all the damp from the clothes turn into moisture in the air.

When the radiators turn off when the washing is dry that moisture turns back into condensation.

Drying washing outside on airers provided by Canopy is the cheapest and best way to dry washing, however this isn't always possible – if you don't have a garden, or if you have too much washing to fit onto the airer.

Canopy can provide families with a condenser tumble dryer for drying washing.

Locate the waste water drawer when you get your dryer. They need to be emptied after each wash is dry!

If you do have to dry your washing inside, make sure you dry it in a well ventilated space, by opening the windows and closing the door of the room you're drying the washing is in.

Canopy Mould Strategy

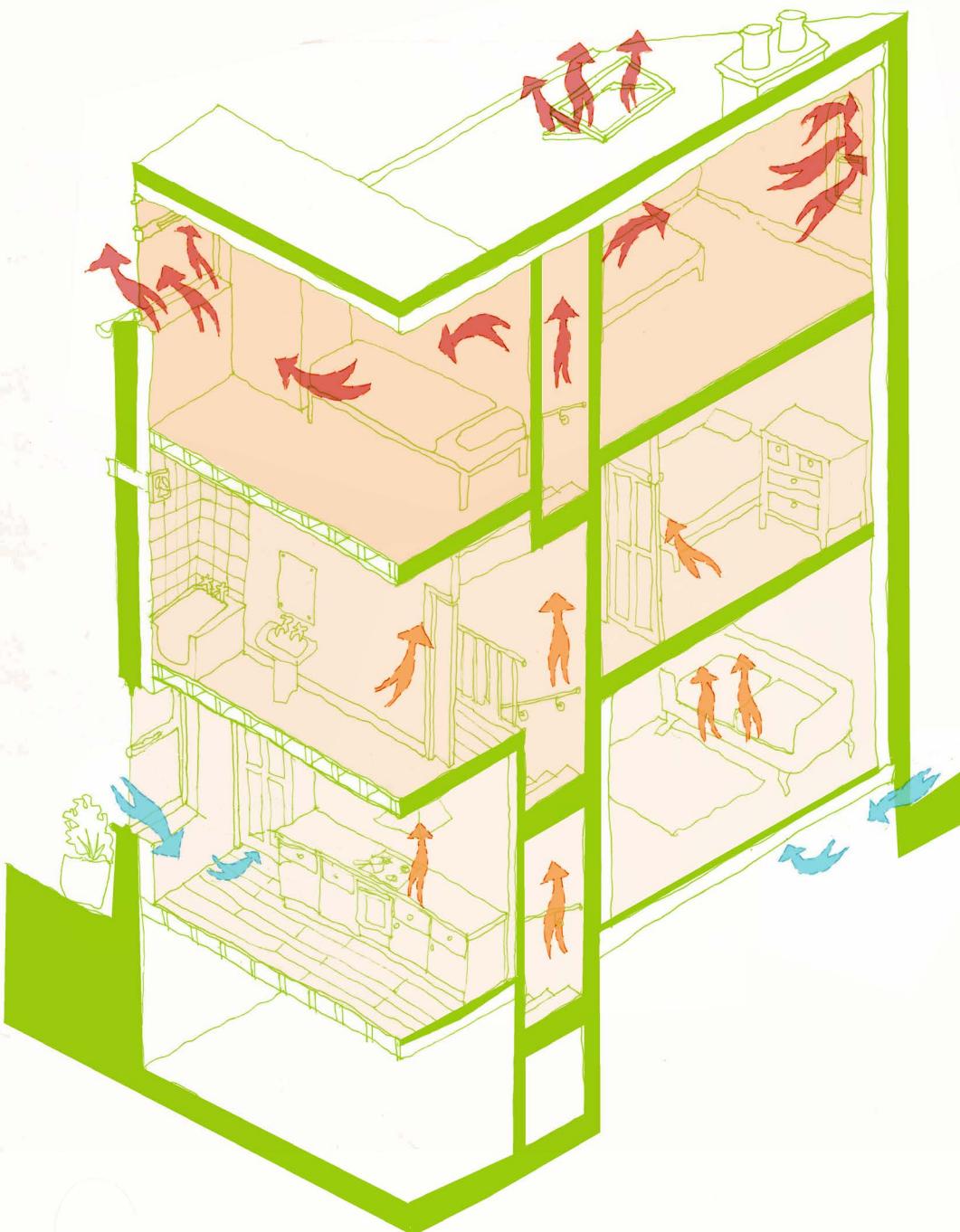
1. Remove mould quickly whenever we come across it.
2. Inspect and tackle the root causes, whether that be blocked gutters, rising damp, broken extract fans, or some other issues.
3. Dehumidify the property if humidity is high. We can supply tenants with dehumidifiers and pay towards their electricity to help you keep them on.
4. Speak to the tenant about any of their own behaviour that might be making the problem worse. This could be switching extract fans off, boiling pans without lids, drying wet clothes on radiators, packing too much into a room preventing air from circulating, or leaving the bathroom door open after a shower.

5



Overheating





Insulating houses means there is a bigger risk of getting too hot in the houses, especially in the upstairs rooms overnight in the summer.

In order to keep houses cool, its best to keep windows and curtains closed during the hottest parts of the day, and opening the windows fully when the heat of the day is over.

Its also possible to cool the house by pulling colder air from downstairs up through the house and opening windows on the top floor to pull the cold air up through the house.



Heating Your Home



Setting your heating system up so that it comes on for at least a couple of hours during the morning and evening helps with keeping the system running smoothly, making sure you're comfortable, and preventing the development of damp and mould which is bad for your health.

Typical heating bills depend on the size of your property and the property type. The back-to-back housing style reduces the cost of bills because you only have one external wall where heat is lost most quickly.

Rightmove estimates for energy bill costs as of Nov 2024;

Property Size	Cost for energy bills per year (£)
1 bedroom	1,700
2 bedrooms	2,000
3 bedrooms	2,300
4 bedrooms	2,900

Heating Systems

Boilers and Air Source Heat Pumps provide the heating and hot water in a building. Boilers typically run on gas, and Air Source Heat Pumps run on electricity.

Using boilers and air source heat pumps correctly can help to make sure that you are comfortable in your home, and prevent the likelihood of damp and mould in the property.

Boilers

Boilers work by on/off heating, where the radiators get really hot and then switch off when the room warms up to the right temperature.

Setting up the boiler correctly will help to improve the efficiency of your boiler and keep bills down. The thermostat is where you can set the temperature – Canopy can help you to set it up to suit your schedule when you move in.

Typical comfortable levels fall between 18°C and 21°C. These temperatures also balance comfort levels with energy efficiency, and keep your bills low.

Prepayment meter vs direct debit billing systems:

A prepayment meter is one that you top up before using the gas and electricity in the property.

It means that you know exactly how much money you will spend on your bills each week, however energy companies generally charge higher rates for prepayment customers.

A direct debit is a payment that you set up which automatically goes to the energy supplier on the same day each month.

They tend to be the same cost through summer and winter, which helps with budgeting as you still spend the same amount of money on bills during winter even when you're using more gas and electricity.

Canopy can help with setting these up to get the best deal for you as different providers charge different amounts of money. There are comparison websites online that can help with showing how much each different company will charge.

Doing a meter reading for energy providers:

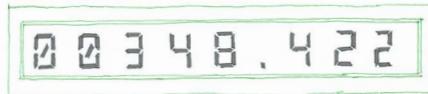
Energy providers will ask you to send meter readings sometimes to them so they can see how much energy you're using and make sure they are charging the right amount of money for the amount of energy you're using.

The display for an electricity meter will look like this:



The reading is only 5 figures long, you can ignore the number on the right hand side.

The display for a gas meter looks like this:



The first five numbers are the reading – you can ignore the numbers after the decimal place.

When you have a smart meter, the amount of gas and electricity you are using is sent directly to the energy supplier, but often the company will ask for a meter reading when you first sign up, even if you have a smart meter.

You can give them to your energy provider over the phone or online.

Gas and electricity meters are usually found in the cellar near the boiler.

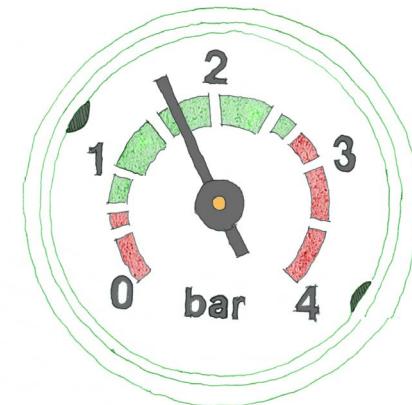
Boiler pressure:

Sometimes boilers stop working so well because the pressure drops in the boiler. This is because the amount of water in the heating system has reduced, so it needs more water adding to it.

In order to check the boiler pressure there is a gauge on the boiler that looks like this:

The pressure should always be set between 1 and 2, if it drops below 1 the boiler will not work well.

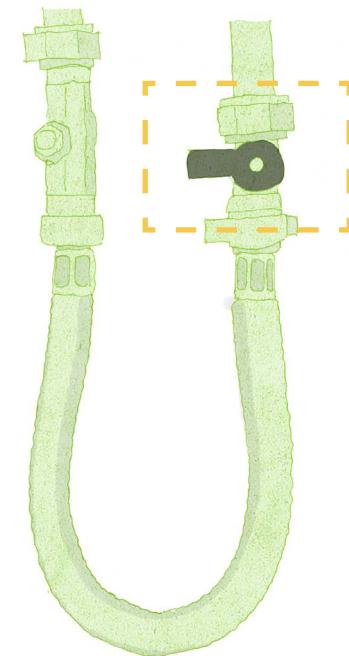
If you are struggling with this give us a call! We can talk you through it, or come over and show you how to do it for next time.



In order to increase the pressure, you need to turn the taps below the boiler that look like this:

Sometimes there will only be one tap, and sometimes there are two. If there are two taps you need to flick both taps open.

Make sure you only increase the pressure until the gauge reads between 1 and 2, then turn the taps off. If the pressure gets over 3 the boiler will not work well.



Fuse box

Sometimes when we plug different electrical items in at home, they can trip the fuse box! If all your electrics go out (no lights working, fridge turned off, plugs not coming on when they are switched on), go and check the fuse box!

The fuse box is usually located in the cellar, often near electric meters and looks like this:

If any of the switches shown below are flicked downwards, flick them back upwards so that they say 'on'. They are all labelled so you can see if the tripped switches correlate to the sockets or lights that aren't working:



7



Landlord Accountability & Tenants Unions



Left to right; Alex & Mark.

Canopy aims to make repairs within responsible time, depending on the severity of the repair, and the living conditions until the repair is done.

If you do not think that the repairs have been handled within a reasonable time, there are tenants unions that can support you through the process of getting repairs done on your property, such as ACORN, a UK wide tenant Union.

Sometimes, you have to pay a small fee to join a tenants union. They can help with preventing illegal evictions and requesting repairs be carried out.

Here are their contact information;

facebook.com/AcornLeeds

leeds@acorncommunities.org.uk

Often 'No-Win-No-Fee' lawyers go knocking door to door to offer taking landlords to court, and might get the tenants repairs carried out urgently, but will not give much money to the tenant afterwards.

Contact Citizens Advice Bureau to get independent advice about 'No-Win-No-Fee' lawyers

8



Gardens



Left to right; Sage & Alex W.

Gardens in cities provide space for nature to thrive!

We are working towards helping the establishment of a 'green corridor' in our built-up neighbourhoods. This helps insects and birds find safety in our cities.

Having natural spaces outside our houses can also boost our mental health and help to calm our minds. Its also good for our physical health to dig in the soil.

If you are interested in planting in your garden, Canopy can provide you with some pots, plants, bulbs, tools and watering cans and also offer you some help with doing the planting.

If you are interested in growing any fruit and veg please let us know.

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