Retrofit advice services in England: A postcode lottery?

A research report by Benjamin Duffy and Dr Freya Wise,

Centre for Advanced Built Environment Research, College of Arts, Technology and Environment, The University of the West of England. Published: September 2025[1]

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Executive summary

The retrofit of existing buildings is widely acknowledged to be an important strategy to reduce carbon emissions in the UK and meet critical climate goals [1]. High quality retrofit can also provide other benefits such as reduced energy costs, healthier buildings, increased energy independence and wider economic benefits such as skilled jobs. However, a lack of access to high quality, context specific and tailored information has, along with cost, been identified as a key barrier to retrofit [2]. In addition, there is a need for services that provide whole house plans and for 'one-stop-stops' which provide support with the whole retrofit process including recommending tradespeople, project management and support with funding.

This report presents the results of a comprehensive study mapping non-commercial retrofit advice services in England. It identifies a postcode lottery, with access to advice services varying across different counties and regions. Desk based research identified 80 services across England, while a dataset and an interactive mapping resource were created to enable households, policymakers and retrofit professionals to understand the services that are currently available.

An analysis of the identified services was undertaken, and the full results can be explored below. The main findings and recommendations were:

1. There was substantial variation in the scope, quality and cost of services available in different areas, leading to a clear postcode lottery for households, with a patchwork of different services across England.

2. Just over half of the services offer pure retrofit advice (51%) often in the context of wider fuel poverty support, 15% offer whole house planning and 34% offer one-stop-shop services. For the one-stop-shop and whole house planning services there was a clear lack of pre/post retrofit performance monitoring or tailoring of retrofit plans to households' lifestyles and motivations.

3. Only limited data was available on the numbers of households supported but it was clear that numbers are well below the levels needed to help assist in the rapid acceleration in retrofit that is required in the UK.

The report highlights the positive work that these services are doing to support retrofit in England and help to overcome informational barriers. However, it also highlights that more consistent support is needed across the country and that funding and structure should be provided build on and develop this support as part of a comprehensive and holistic national retrofit strategy.

1 Introduction

Energy used in the operation and construction of buildings is responsible for around 34% of global carbon emissions [3]. In the UK there is limited new construction, and it is estimated that around 80-90% of existing buildings will still be present in 2050 [4]. To reduce carbon emissions from buildings in the UK and meet crucial and legally binding climate goals there must therefore be a focus on the 'retrofit' of existing buildings, alongside ensuring that new buildings are as low carbon as possible [3,5].

Retrofit covers a range of actions to improve both the fabric and systems of existing buildings. For example, adding insulation or solar panels or switching to a heat pump. Retrofit can also involve behaviour changes to reduce energy use and carbon emissions. If done well, retrofit can provide benefits not only by reducing carbon but also by reducing energy bills, increasing building resilience, making buildings healthier and more comfortable for occupants and providing jobs and economic growth [6,7]. Estimates suggest that around 2 homes per minute between now and 2050 must be retrofitted to achieve required climate targets and currently the UK is well behind this goal [1].

Alongside financial costs, limited access to high quality retrofit information is frequently identified as a key barrier to retrofit, both internationally [8,9,10] and in the UK [2,11,12]. Recent research has identified that significant generic retrofit information is widely available but its non-specific nature and the fragmented character of the retrofit sector [13] means that this information is not useful to households and is more likely to: 'produce confusion rather than enlightenment' [11].

Key challenges identified by one of the authors, in a recent study in southwest England include:

- information overload and conflicting information
- a lack of holistic and context specific information
- the need for trustworthy and local information to be actively taken *to* households [2].

These informational barriers all make it harder for households to take retrofit actions even if they desire to do so [14,15] and contribute to limited progress in scaling up and accelerating retrofit [16]. In particular, there is a need for more information that is specific to the context of individual homes and that overcomes industry siloes to take a whole house approach and consider how different retrofit measures interact [2,13,17]. The identification of suitably skilled and trustworthy tradespeople and retrofit process management is also often a challenge for households and can lead to them feeling overwhelmed and result in decision paralysis [2,12,18,19].

A response to these issues in the EU, and to some extent in the UK, has been the creation of retrofit advice and planning services and 'one-stop-shops'- which provide

advice on retrofit, help put households in contact with local tradespeople and often also manage the retrofit project and provide support to access funding and other financing mechanisms in a ‘wrap-around’ service. Services may be free, pay to access, or a combination, and examples of one-stop-shops include People Powered Retrofit in Manchester [20], Energy Communities Tipperary Cooperative in Ireland [21] and De Energiecentrale, Gent, Belgium [22].

One-stop-shops have proven to be beneficial in a number of locations, and as a result the EU has included a requirement for countries to provide one-stop-shop services in the 2024 recast to the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD) [23]. Meanwhile a research project involving De Energiecentrale -which provides free retrofit advice and support to all citizens of Gent- found that each €1 invested in advice provision generated €17 of retrofit activity [24]. One-stop-shops and other services providing retrofit *advice* – differentiated from *information* in this study by being context specific to an individual building or household –therefore show promise in helping to overcome informational barriers to retrofit [13,25].

However, there is no detailed, up-to-date mapping of the advice services that are currently available in England, the services they provide and the areas that they cover. To achieve a just transition, all areas must be supported to achieve the multiple benefits of retrofit [13]. Understanding which areas are well or underserved is therefore important. A previous study by the MCS foundation and partners in 2023 [25] identified some services but provided limited details as this was only one aspect of their research.

The desk-based research presented in this report, thus aimed to map advice services and one-stop-shops available across England in the summer of 2025 and to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the numbers and types of services available across England?
2. Is there a ‘postcode lottery’ of services, with some areas well served and others underserved?
3. What examples of good and poor practice can be identified?
4. What are the key developments that could be recommended in this field?

In addition, the project sought to create a freely available resource mapping the services available in each county and region, which can be used by households, policy makers and professionals.

Previous research has found that charities, local groups and organisations, and local authorities may be well positioned to be trusted providers of retrofit advice if they have the appropriate capacities and skills [2,18,25,26]. In contrast, commercial providers are often considered less trustworthy by households and more likely to be trying to ‘sell’ their particular solution regardless of its appropriateness [2,15]. Therefore, commercial retrofit services were excluded from this project which

focussed on services provided by charities, community interest companies, other NGOs, and Local Authorities.

In the remainder of this the report, the method is detailed in section 3 and in section 4 results and links to the final resource are presented. The findings and implications are discussed in section 5 and the conclusions and recommendations for future actions and research are presented in section 6.

2 Methodology

2.1 Data collection

Retrofit advice services were identified by a systematic internet search on a county-by-county basis. Services that provide generic, non-specific information about *potential* retrofits, such as the Energy Saving Trust website [27] were excluded from this study which focussed on those providing tailored and *specific* retrofit advice for households.

The search was carried out in June and July 2025 beginning in the southwest of England. Five search terms were entered sequentially into Google for each of the 47 ceremonial counties of England [28]. For each search term, all pages of results were reviewed before proceeding with the next search term (Table 1). If no relevant results were returned, the procedure was repeated, replacing '[County]' with '[City]', using the same search terms. Only if this procedure for several main cities identified no relevant services was the county considered 'not covered'.

Table 1: Google search terms

Number	Search term
1st search term	[County, e.g. 'Cumbria'] Home retrofit one-stop shops
2nd search term	[County] Home retrofit services
3rd search term	[County] retrofit advice
4th search term	[County] home energy efficiency advice
5th search term	[County] home energy advice

Advice services were sorted into three broad categories:

1. **Pure advice services (PA)**: services offering tailored retrofit advice to individual homes. For example, offering a dedicated advice line or home energy advice visits.
2. **Whole house planning services (WHP):** services offering home assessments and subsequent creation of a comprehensive plan of multiple retrofit measures for households to consider and arrange to carry out themselves.

3. **One-stop shop services (1SS)**: providing WHP and comprehensive support to carry out the retrofit, such as recommending tradespeople, project management and funding acquisition.

These are collectively referred to throughout the rest of the report as ‘advice services’.

Services offered by purely commercial providers such as consultancy firms were excluded from this study. Services that *solely* provide government funded retrofit measures, such as delivering the Warm Homes Local Grant Scheme, were excluded unless other PA/WHP/1SS services were offered by local authorities (LAs) in the county alongside the funding scheme. This is because this type of funding is generally limited to specific retrofit measures and often lacks a holistic whole house approach to retrofit or wraparound support such as advice [29,30]. In addition lists of LAs that have received funding are already available on Government websites [e.g. 31]. Similarly, schemes funded under the Energy Company Obligation (ECO) and others were excluded unless a dedicated webpage for the scheme could be found and they explicitly stated that retrofit measures were implemented and advice was provided.

The Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE) kindly engaged with the research and provided a list of advice services which was used to cross reference the comprehensiveness of the search procedure. Comprehensiveness was also assessed against a previous report which identified a selection of one-stop-shops in 2023 [25]. The data was extracted to a spreadsheet for analysis and the creation of the dataset.

2.2 Data analysis

Once collected, the data was analysed using descriptive statistics, visualisations and qualitative assessments of good practice to answer the research questions and develop insights. Prior to the main search, a pilot investigation was carried out with several advice services already known to the authors and this was used to compile a list of categories for relevant data collection. The list was refined with several iterations during the course of the project (Table 2).

Table 2: Data collected on each service

Category	Description/rationale
Name of service	Meta-data
Website address	Meta-data
Overview	A few sentences describing what the service offers
Service type	Pure advice, Whole-house-planning, One-stop-shop
County/region	Geographic area covered

Category	Description/rationale
Organisation type	Local authority, charity, community group, etc
Scope of organisation	E.g. purely retrofit focussed or retrofit as part of broader services such as fuel poverty support or sustainability activities
Type of services offered	Seven subcategories with yes/no boxes e.g. retrofit planning, recommendation of tradespeople, etc
Cost of different services*	E.g. retrofit planning costs, installation support costs etc and notes about what costs relate to
Type of planning tool used*	What modelling tool is used in any WHP service offered
Households supported*	Number of households supported, and year/s data relates to
Energy/carbon saved*	Estimates on the amount of energy/carbon saved from supported retrofits
Government funded service? Y/N	Whether service includes government funded support for some households such as LAD (local authority delivery), HUG (home upgrade grant) etc.
General notes	Notes on examples of good practice from services

*Where the information is available on the service website.

In addition, a qualitative evaluation of webpage useability/readability was undertaken for each service with a ranking from 1 = Extremely poor to 10 = outstanding. This was based on an assessment of:

- How easy it was to find information
- The clarity of the website layout
- The clarity and specificity of the content
- Frequency with which unexplained technical terms were used

The full scoring criteria is provided in Appendix A.

The categorisation was undertaken bearing in mind the research questions and the aim of creating a publicly available resource. For some of the categories, such as carbon emissions saved, only very limited data was available, meaning that a detailed analysis was not possible.

2.3 Creating the resource

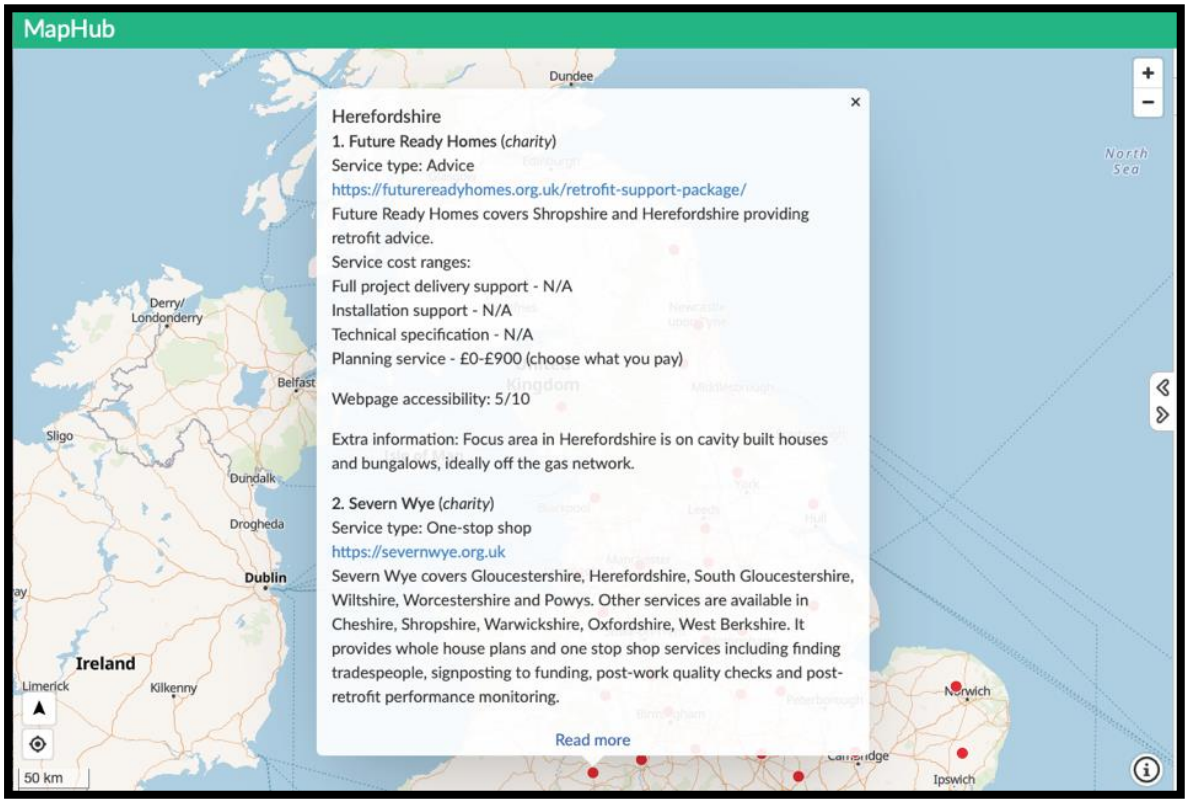
An interactive map was created to allow users to explore available services within a chosen county. A number of mapping tools were investigated and ‘MapHub’ [32] was selected as a user friendly, free-to-access platform with a simple and customisable data input system. MapHub also provided the ability to embed the interactive map into the project website.

For each service, several key categories were selected to display on the MapHub entry to maximise useability for users. These included:

- Organisation name
- Organisation type
- Service type
- Webpage link
- Overview of service offerings and geographic coverage
- Cost ranges for services offered
- Webpage readability/useability
- Extra information (where considered useful for households)

This data was presented in summary, with clickable markers for each county, which display pop-up boxes when selected (see Figure 1). Within these pop-up boxes a list of available services is displayed, with the above categories described under each service, along with a link to the full dataset to allow users to further explore the services offered in their chosen county.

Figure 1: Example of a MapHub entry



A project webpage was created to host the map, and to provide instructions on use and a summary of results. The webpage also provides a link to the spreadsheet with the full dataset and the option to download the this report.

3 Results

The project webpage with all the public resources is available here.

The interactive map can currently be found here, and will also be embedded in the project webpage. The results below detail the findings of the analyses.

3.1 Geographic gaps

This study identified 80 advice services in total across England. The scale of the services varied from one nationwide and several multiregional services to those that only covered one or two towns or a single London borough. Choropleth maps were created using a tool called Datawrapper [33], to visualise the distribution of services across England, covering total advice services, and also divided by different service types (Figure 2). There is one WHP service, 'Groundwork – Green Doctor' that covers the whole of England and is hence not included in the mapping or other geographic results.

There is only one county with no advice services except 'Green Doctor' and this is Rutland, the smallest county in England (Figure 2A). However, there is substantial variation in the number and types of different services available in each county.

Five counties (Cumbria, Kent, Nottingham, The West Midlands and Warwickshire) have only one service available, while Devon (7), Somerset (6) and Gloucestershire (5) have the highest number and widest choice of services. Greater London also has seven services but only four of these cover the whole of London, with the others covering specific areas such as Waltham Forest, or Richmond, Wandsworth and Hackney.

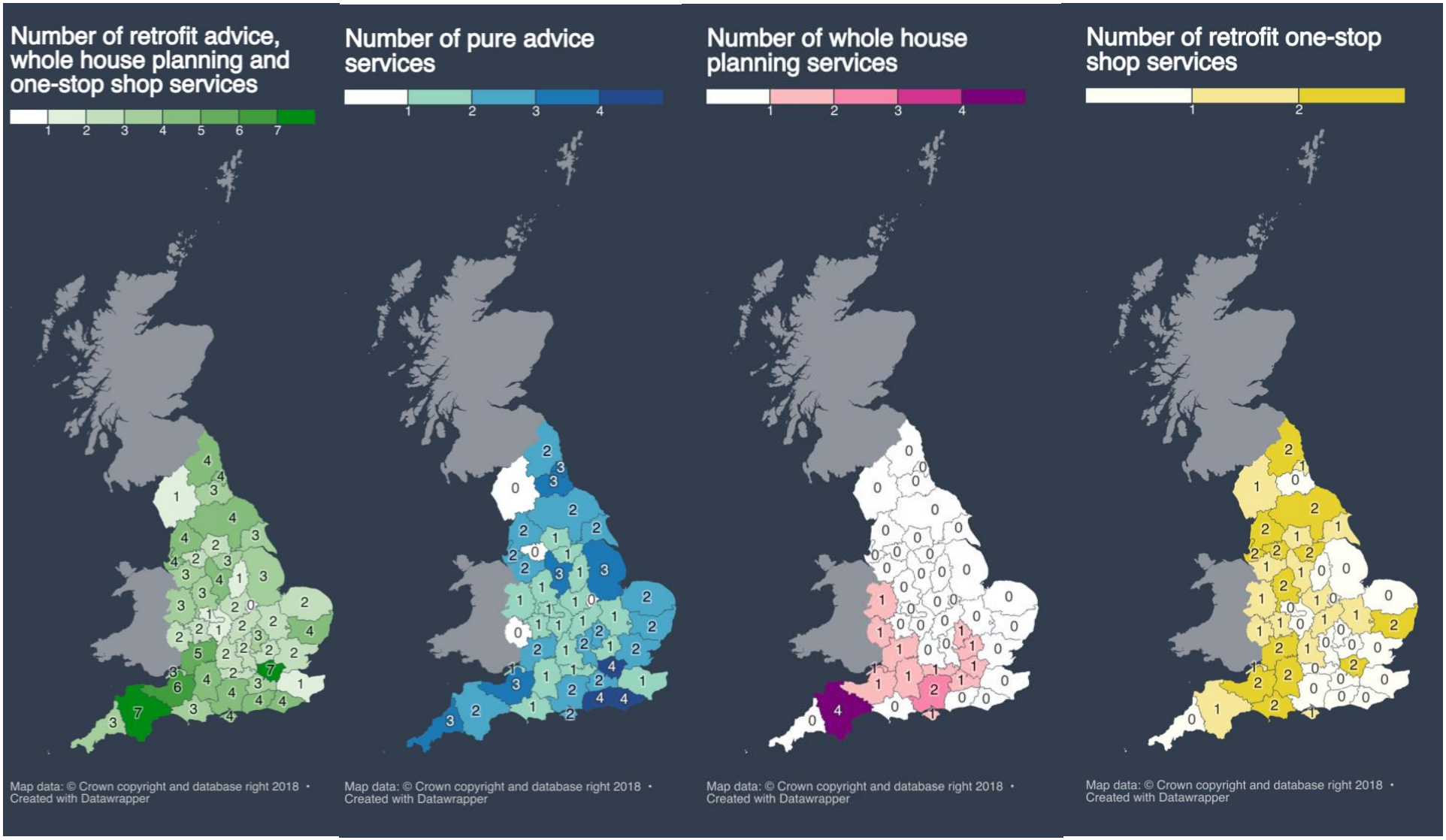
Four counties (Cumbria, Greater Manchester, Herefordshire and Rutland) lack PA services while 16 counties have one pure advice service (Figure 2B).

WHP services are clustered around the southwest of England (Figure 2C), with four services in Devon, and two in Hampshire. The national Green Doctor service states that they can provide medium term retrofit plans after a home survey, but there is no information available about how widespread this service is or how often it is used compared to their pure advice provision.

Finally, there are clear gaps in the coverage of 1SS services (Figure 2D), particularly in the southeast of England, Norfolk, Lincolnshire and Cornwall. 18 of the 47 counties (38%) lack 1SS and no county has more than two.

By looking at all four maps it can be seen, overall, that there are very limited WHP and 1SS services in the southeast of England -excepting London- and in Norfolk, Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire, with these areas only having access to pure advice services. Meanwhile the southwest of England is the best served region overall, offering the greatest choice to households.

Figure 2: A-D choropleth maps from the left A: total advice services, B: Pure advice services, C: WHP services, D: 1SS services across England (maps data used under the Open Government licence v.3.0)



‘Retrofit advice services in England: A postcode lottery?’ Duffy & Wise, 2025

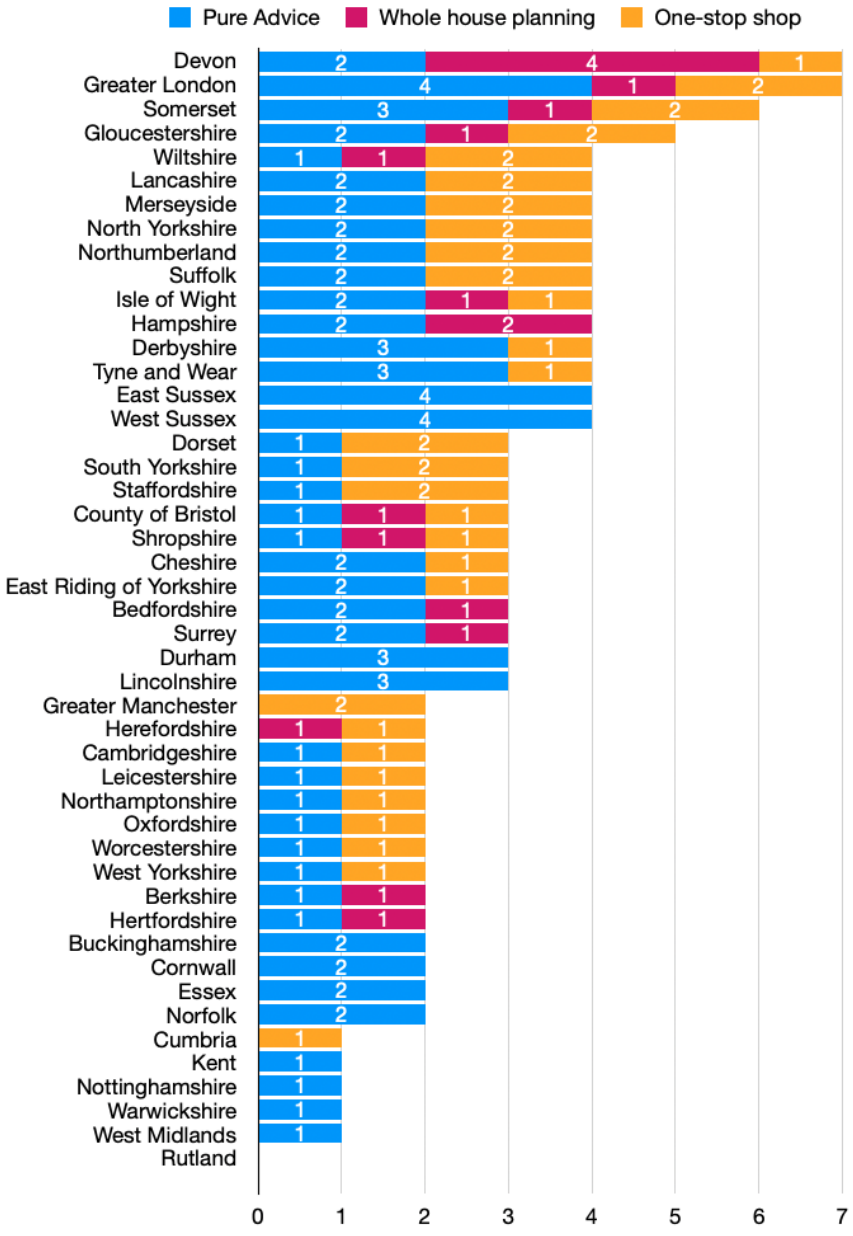
3.2 Service types

The services can be divided by type (Table 3). 51% of the services identified provide pure advice, WHP is provided by 15% of services and 1SS make up the remaining 34%. This highlights the dominance of pure advice services in England and relatively limited 1SS and WHP services. The division of these services across the different counties can be seen in Figure 3 (which excludes 'Green Doctor').

Table 3: Types of services

Advice	Whole house planning	One-stop-shop	Total
51% (41)	15% (12)	34% (27)	80

Figure 3: Services by type in different counties



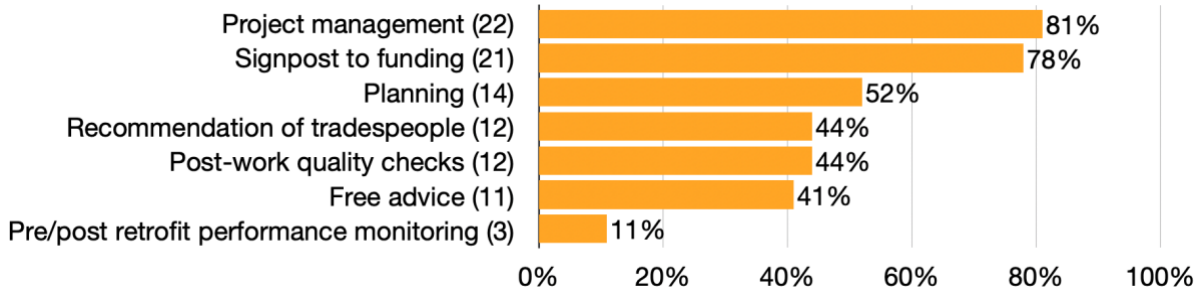
NB: More than 80 data points are shown in this graph because some services cover multiple counties

3.3 Service sub types

The offer from different advice services varies service-by-service (Figure 4 and Figure 5). Among the 27 1SS services, project management (81%) and signposting to funding (78%) is offered by the majority. However, only three of the 27 services (11%) appear to offer pre and/or post retrofit performance monitoring and only 44% provide post work quality checks. This suggests that there is strong logistical project support across services but a potential lack of focus on in-situ retrofit performance. It

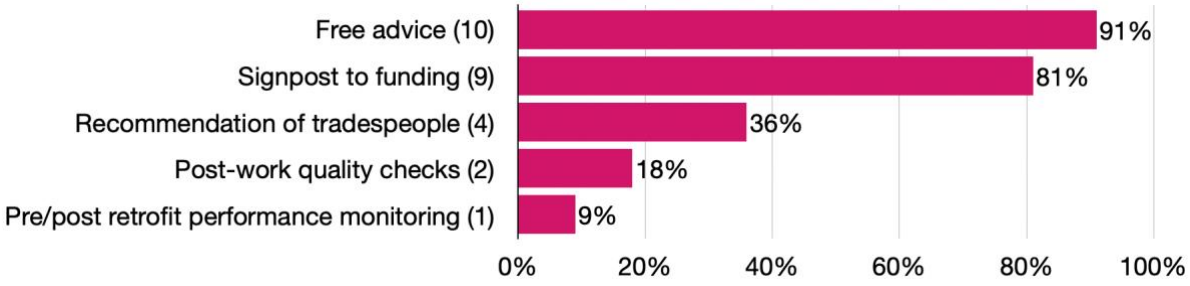
is surprising that so few 1SSs provide recommendations of tradespeople (44%) but it is possible that this may be included by some in their general project management offer and is just not specified on their websites.

Figure 4: Services offered by the 27 one-stop-shops services



Among the 11 WHP services all but one offer free retrofit advice (91%) and nearly all provide signposting to funding (81%). However once again pre and/or post retrofit performance monitoring and post work quality checking is limited, only being offered by one and two services respectively, and further highlighting this gap. It is worth noting that some services may offer this, but this has not been identified due to a lack of clarity in the description of services. For example, '361 Energy' may offer planning services, but this is not explicitly or clearly stated, with the website instead providing contact information for households to make further enquiries.

Figure 5: Services offered by the 11 whole house planning services



3.4 Provider types

There is a diversity of retrofit advice service providers in England (Figure 6). Local Authorities are the largest provider of retrofit advice services (29%), followed by charities (21%), and many of the partnerships are between LAs and charities, or Community Interest Companies (CICs). Charities and community organisations (16%, includes community groups; community benefit societies; and co-operatives; community enterprises; and community businesses), together account for over a third of the services (37% in total). This demonstrates the significance of local and voluntary provision of retrofit advice. Meanwhile London South Bank University provides a free retrofit advice help line staffed by students and available to residents of greater London [34], supported by Southwark Council. The 'other' category

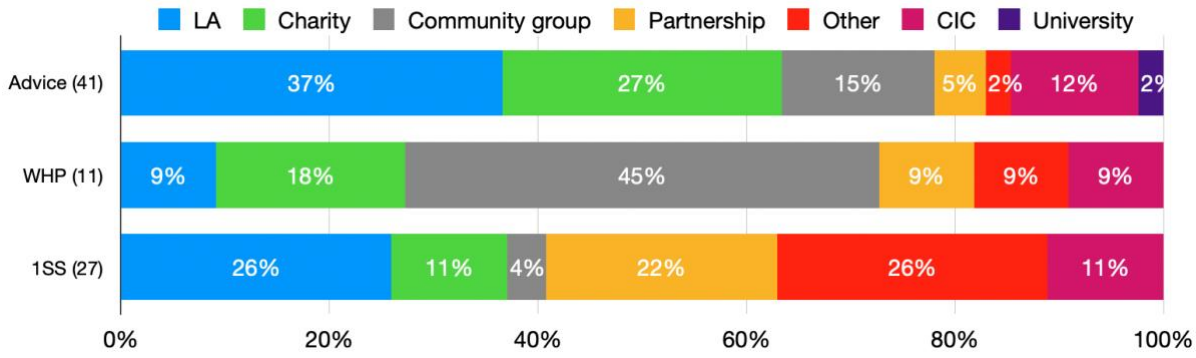
includes non-incorporated organisations, social enterprises and LA managed arm's length organisations of various types.

Figure 6: Total number services by organisation type

**Community Interest Company (CIC)*

A crosstabulation of retrofit type with service provider showed multiple providers for all three service types. Just under 40% of pure advice services were provided by LAs, and LAs and partnerships together provided almost 50% of 1SS services (Figure 7).

Figure 7: crosstabulation of provider and service type



3.5 Costs

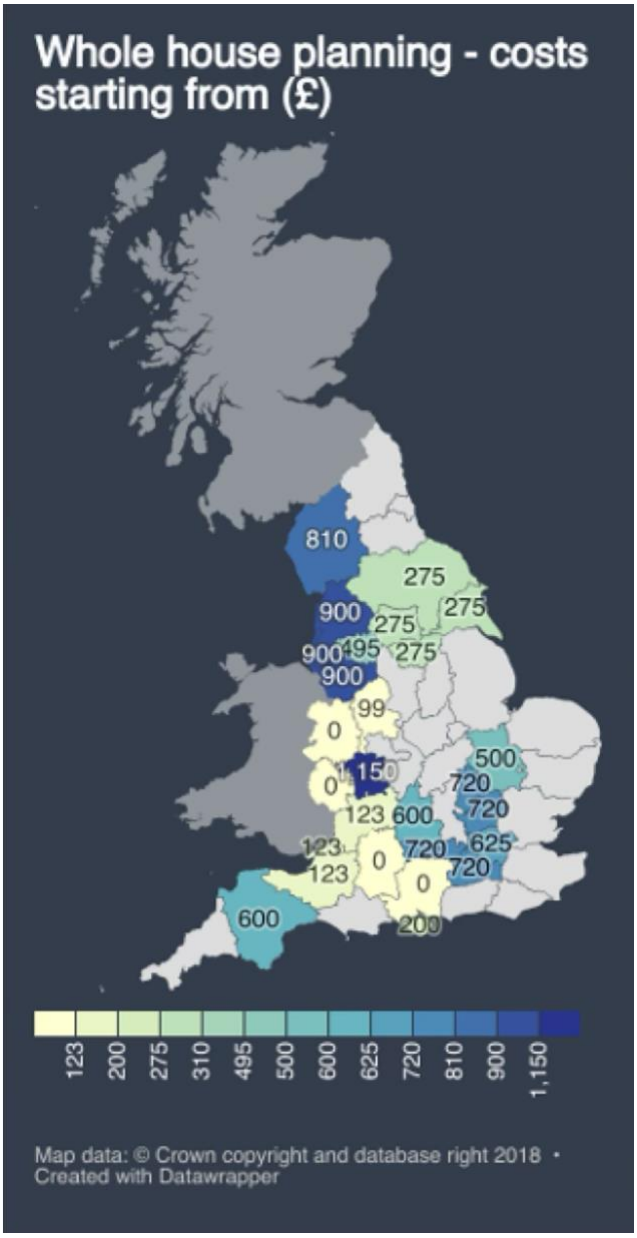
The creation of a whole house plan (offered by WHP and 1SS services) were the only services for which there was enough cost data to make analysis valuable. For the services that offer whole house plans, 41 out 45 (on an area basis) provide some form of costs on their website (a full list of counties with available costs is provided in Appendix B). The lowest costs in each county can be seen in Figure 8, this is the starting cost for services, e.g. 'prices start from X depending on…'

Whole house plan starting costs ranged from £0 – £1,150 across England with substantial regional variation and clustering of high and low starting costs. This is seen for example in the northwest, where the starting cost for whole house planning is £900 in Lancashire, Merseyside and Cheshire. Another example of this clustering of starting costs is in Yorkshire where the starting cost for planning services is comparatively much lower at £275. Worcestershire has the highest starting costs out

of all counties at £1,150 and Hampshire, Wiltshire, Herefordshire and Shropshire all have the lowest starting cost at £0.

Costs for other services such as project management, are not mapped due to the limited data available and the limited cross-organisational comparability of project management services, with their functions often varying significantly between different organisations.

Figure 8: Choropleth map of lowest WHP costs within each county where WHP services are provided and data is available



Maps data used under the Open Government licence v.3.0 [35]

The variation in whole house planning starting costs may be partly a result of service level variation, alongside the availability of services in particular counties. For example, Worcestershire has the highest starting cost of all counties at £1,150. Severn Wye is the sole provider of whole house plans in the county and provides a detailed service which they say is: 'Ideal for larger homes with up to six bedrooms, or historic properties that have unique energy efficiency challenges.' This service provides:

- *'a consultation covering your ideas, goals and ambitions for the property*
- *a detailed site survey undertaken by a qualified retrofit assessor*
- *a bespoke energy efficiency and renewables recommendation report*
- *analysis of at least your last 12 months of energy bills, supplied by you*
- *estimates for potential carbon and cost savings from energy-efficiency improvements*
- *a roadmap to a retrofit solution considering agreed timeframes and trigger points*
- *executive summary of recommendations broken down into no-cost, low-cost and capital-cost improvements*
- *signposting to sustainable financing options*
- *impartial advice on selecting an installer*
- *energy tariff comparison including recommendations for switching to save carbon*
- *a new EPC to establish an efficiency baseline.'* [36]

This can be compared with Wiltshire for example where Severn Wye also offer services, but which also has Sustainable Calne covering a part of the county. Sustainable Calne provide a free but significantly more limited planning service which will:

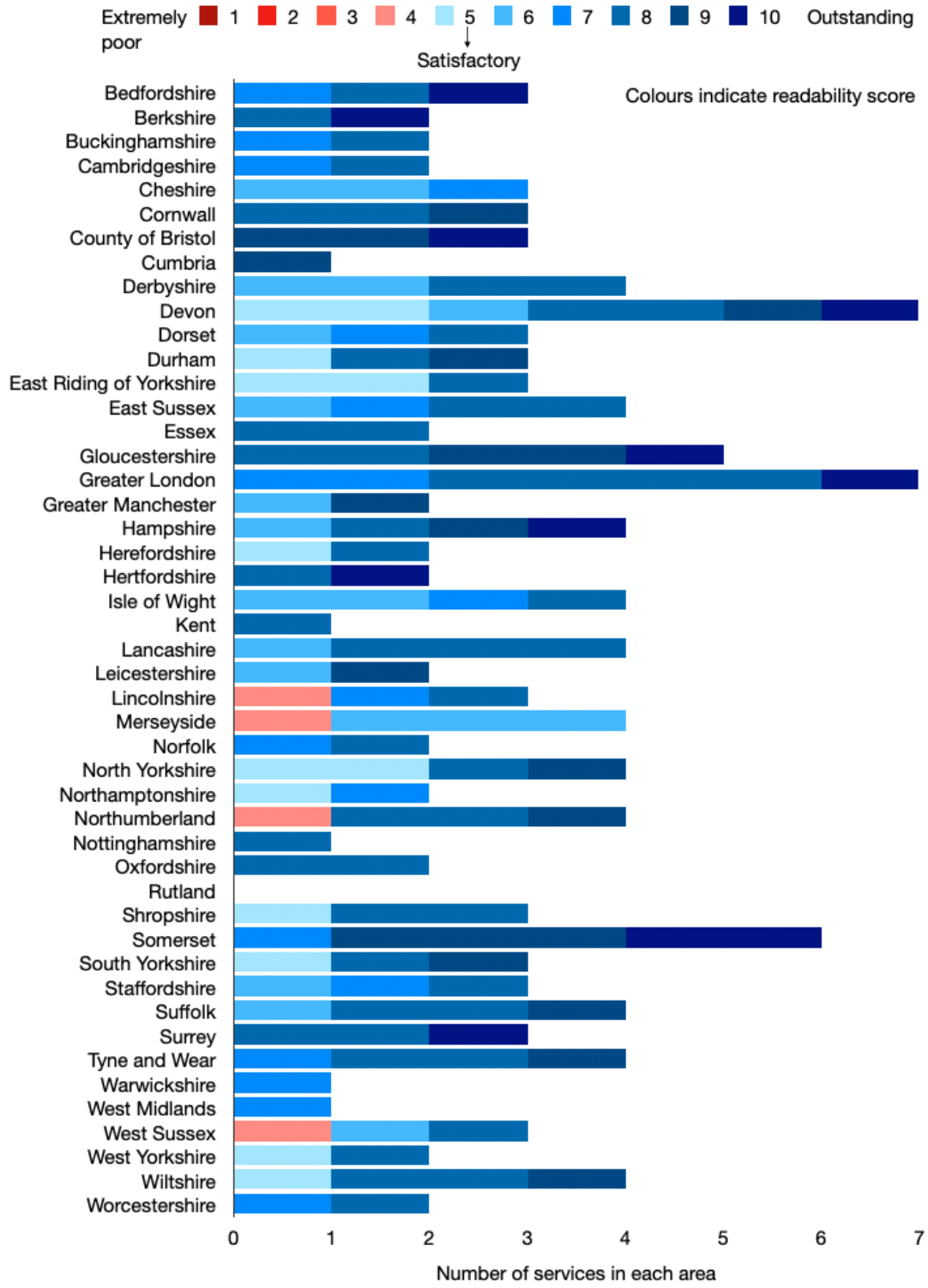
- *'Suggest the most beneficial measures to upgrade for your home*
- *The preferred order to have them installed*
- *Funding and incentives*
- *The cost and typical payback period by upgrades lowering heating bills'* [37]

This highlights the variation in service provision and costs and indicates some of the challenges that households face in identifying services which will sufficiently meet their needs.

3.6 Webpage useability/readability

The useability/readability of service's websites was mapped across the different counties (Figure 9). This visually shows a good overall level of webpage useability across services and counties, with only four services (5%) scoring as somewhat poor. Useability was however still varied across counties and some areas, such as Merseyside for example, had a poorer level of useability than others, highlighting a lack of consistency.

Figure 9: Heatmap of webpage useability/accessibility scores by county



To explore whether there was a correlation between service type (PA, WHP, 1SS) and webpage useability/readability, a Kruskal-Wallis statistical test was undertaken but this showed no statistically significant difference between the groups (Table 4).

Table 4: Kruskal-Wallis test results

Test Statistic (H)	P-value
0.6905	0.7081

3.7 Households supported

It was possible to find data on the number of households supported in the one of the last two financial years for 18 of the 80 services identified (23%) and this is broken down into different types of support in Table 5. The highest figures were for advice from telephone helplines (76,965 households across the 18 services) followed by home advice visits (23,309). Meanwhile the number of home assessments (820) and homes retrofitted (875) were dramatically lower. Many of the telephone and home visit advice services have a broader focus on assisting households with fuel poverty and energy advice, rather than solely with retrofit.

Table 5: Numbers of households supported

	Areas covered	Telephone advice	Home visits	Homes assessed	Homes retrofitted	Date	Notes
Ground-work green doctors (WHP)	Nation-wide		14,972			2024	Home visits to advise on energy and water efficiency
Better housing better health (PA)	Multi-regional, Southeast and East of England plus Devon and Cornwall		1,367			2023-2024	
Centre for Sustainable Energy (PA)	Multi-regional: Bristol, South Gloucestershire, Bath & Northeast Somerset & Wiltshire.	22,593				2024-2025 report	
People Powered retrofit (1SS)	Greater Manchester, Cheshire, Merseyside, South Lancashire, western Peak District & southwest Pennines.			>200	40	2024 report (2022-2024)	
Severn Wye (1SS)	Gloucestershire Herefordshire, South Gloucestershire, Wiltshire,	6,147	2,089		562	2024-2025 report	

	Areas covered	Telephone advice	Home visits	Homes assessed	Homes retrofitted	Date	Notes
	Worcestershire & Powys.						
ACT on Energy (PA)	Worcestershire, Warwickshire & the West midlands	17,000	1,933			2023-2024 report	
Residential energy services (1SS)	Staffordshire & Shropshire	6,087		412	215	2023-2024 report	160 fabric & 55 Renewable heating retrofits
Community Energy Plus (PA)	Cornwall	6,890	481			2024 year in review report.	4,000 via telephone, 2,890 at event advice clinics
Warm and Well in North Yorkshire	North Yorkshire	6,324				2023-2024 report	
Community Law service (PA)	Northampton-shire	1,477				2024-2025 report	1,477 received fuel poverty & energy efficiency advice
BHESCO (PA)	Sussex		189	102		2024 report	
Energise Sussex Coast (PA)	East Sussex	9,703	227			2024 report	
Futureproof Cumbria (1SS)	Cumbria	244			31	2024-2025 report	
361 energy (1SS)	North Devon & Torridge		870		27	2022/2023 annual report	
Cosy Homes Oxfordshire (1SS)	Oxfordshire			106		2024 impact report	106 WHP
Greenrose (PA)	Lancaster & Morecambe	c.500	c.500			2023 impact	Over 1,000 households given advice: mix of telephone & home visits
Burnham and Weston Energy (PA)	Burnham & Weston, Somerset		500			2024 report	

	Areas covered	Telephone advice	Home visits	Homes assessed	Homes retrofitted	Date	Notes
Plymouth Energy Community (PA)	Plymouth		181			2024 report.	
Totals		76,965	23,309	820	875		

3.8 General quality of resources and modelling tools

Detailed information on what different services offered was often difficult to find or was not available unless contact was made with the organisation through email, online form or telephone. This is reflected in the cost data in section 3.5.

Additionally, information on carbon /energy savings and often basic information on the service offerings was often not available or clear. An example of this is mentioned in section 3.3. A lack of standardised terminology across services regarding their offerings exacerbated this issue, making the categorisation and understanding of the services provided more complex.

This lack of clarity about service offerings is also apparent in the lack of detailed information on the planning tools/methodology used to plan retrofit measures. Of the 45 counties where whole house planning was offered, only four services provided details of the methodology used to facilitate their whole house plans. Two services used models based on the Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) which is used to create Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs) for new homes. Meanwhile the other two services used models based on the reduced Standard Assessment Procedure (RdSAP), which is substantially less detailed, and is used to create EPCs for existing homes.

3.9 Examples of good practice and poor practice

A number of positive practices were identified within the services and some examples are provided in Table 6. These include themes such as: understanding how household behaviours determine the most appropriate retrofits; specific support for heritage and traditional buildings; emphasising awareness of ventilation and moisture management; and follow up and post retrofit aftercare services. Most of these examples are from 1SS services. A reasonable number of services also mentioned that they followed the PAS:2035 quality standards for retrofit [38].

Table 6: Examples for good practice

Organisation and area	Example(s) of good practice
Rethink retrofit (1SS) Yorkshire	Examines home energy performance in-use to understand how the home behaves based on how it is lived in by occupants. Considers the whole ecosystem of the home including ventilation to ensure appropriate moisture management.
Cozy Homes Oxfordshire (1SS) Oxfordshire	Can provide advice and support on heritage buildings. Tailored support dependant on usage of the space and energy.
Kanopiworks (1SS) Waltham Forest, Greater London	Offers aftercare advice and servicing of retrofit measures to ensure optimal performance.
Residential energy services (1SS) Staffordshire and Shropshire.	Offer heritage building impact assessments
Bath and West Community Energy (1SS) Bath and Northeast Somerset	Has specialists in heritage homes, especially listed buildings
Wight Community Energy (WHP) Isle of Wight	Considers how the home is used, including personal circumstances to provide tailored retrofit advice. Provides retrofit advice and assessments for traditional buildings.
Energise Sussex Coast (PA) East Sussex	Offer detailed information on energy saving in Victorian homes. Provide small free home energy saving measures.
Greenerhomes (PA) Lancashire	Offer a follow up service to ensure optimal performance.

However, a number of examples of poorer practice were also identified within the services included in this study:

- Services have limited detail on the scope of retrofit advice/support that they can offer. For instance only referring to advice on energy efficiency improvements without any detail (such as Community Energy Colchester [39]).
- Very limited numbers of services mention offering tailoring of retrofit measures to a homeowner's lifestyle and/or behavioural changes within the home. Only Rethink retrofit, Wight Community Energy and Cozy Homes Oxfordshire specifically mention tailoring support to the homeowner's lifestyle.

- Services that are only available to eligible households and not to all residents of a particular area, often with lack of clarity about the services provided, eligibility criteria and costs.

A key issue overall, as mentioned in section 3.8, is the lack of clarity and detailed information available on the scope of services without contacting the service provider. General quality of resources and modelling tools

4 Discussion and implications

4.1 Discussion of findings

The findings are discussed below in relation to the four research questions from the introduction.

4.1.1 Service types and geographic gaps

This study has identified 80 retrofit advice services across England and examined the different types and scope of services in response to research question one. It is positive that all counties in England (except Rutland) have access to some level of retrofit advice provision.

However, is it also clear that there is indeed a postcode lottery of retrofit services, with some counties well served and others underserved (research question two). There is a clear dominance of advice-only services in England, with fuller retrofit support services from whole house planning and one-stop shops less readily available. This is particularly evident with the lack of One-stop shops in the southeast and east of England and the lack of whole house planning services in most of the country. This study therefore highlights that support for retrofit delivery is limited and the level of and types of support available depends very much on the area where a household lives. Furthermore, in many counties there is only one choice of service available.

As highlighted in the introduction, retrofit must be substantially and rapidly upscaled to meet national and global climate targets. The UK Green Building Council estimates that 29 million homes in the UK will need some level of retrofit by 2050 [40], with other organisations providing similar estimates. Considering the number of households supported by services where this information was available (23%) for one of the last two financial years, advice provision was in the high tens of thousands (77k) while actual home assessments and enacted retrofits were only in high hundreds (Section 3.7). Even considering that data was only available for a fifth of services, this indicates the slow uptake and low levels of provision of retrofit support and advice. This study therefore emphasises the need for further action to support and expand services and translate retrofit advice into physical retrofit actions.

4.1.2 Examples of good and poor practice

In response to the third research question ‘What examples of good and poor practice can be identified?’ a range of examples and themes were identified.

Considering the 1SS and WHP services that are available it is noticeable that pre and/or post retrofit performance monitoring is generally lacking. This is important as significant research has identified that understanding the current state of homes and households’ lifestyles and motivations is key to realising quality retrofit performance [41,42]. Meanwhile pre- and post- retrofit monitoring can also help to reduce the ‘performance gap’ where predicted energy savings from retrofit are overestimated compared with those in reality [43,44,45]. It is worth noting that the limited clarity of service descriptions may be obscuring the extent of pre and/or post retrofit monitoring taking place. However, the lack of emphasis on performance monitoring and understanding household lifestyles suggests that there still limited interest in/awareness of this topic, which is likely to contribute to the full benefits of retrofit not being realised in England.

Linked to the point on performance gaps, is the opacity of the modelling tools that services use in their assessment and creation of whole house plans. This meant that it was only possible to identify modelling tools for four of the services. However, all four of these used SAP or RdSAP and this is concerning given the substantial research showing that these models are not currently fit for purpose as retrofit support tools [42,46,47,48]. A replacement tool, the Home Energy Model (HEM) is currently in development, and it will be interesting to see if it resolves the criticisms levelled at the SAP methodology. But the point remains that if models do not accurately reflect real building performance, and if this is not monitored before retrofit, it is unlikely that measures will perform as predicted and may in some cases lead to negative outcomes for both the building fabric and occupant health.

This is especially true for traditionally constructed and heritage buildings which often manage moisture differently and need particular approaches to ensure successful retrofit [10,15]. It was therefore positive that some services mentioned having specific heritage expertise or provided specialist information aimed at certain types of heritage buildings, although this was by no means universal. A few services also mentioned that they considered ventilation and moisture management. This is of the greatest importance in avoiding unintended consequences in all buildings and particularly in traditional and heritage buildings, which make up over 20% of the UK’s housing stock [42,49]. It was however positive that a reasonable number of the services identified in this study state that they adhere to the PAS:2035 standard [38] on retrofit which was developed in response to the ‘Each Home Counts’ review [50] and its recommendations to improve the quality of retrofit.

The range of charity, community and local authority providers of advice services found by this study was positive because research suggests that all of these groups may be well positioned to be trusted providers of retrofit advice [2,18,25,26]. The number of partnerships between charities/community groups and LAs is also positive

and may allow for synergies of skills and funding to provide useful services. However, the diversity of organisations offering retrofit services also highlights the lack of standardised retrofit advice services and delivery support which contributes to the large differences in the quality and scope of services available in different areas.

The large variation of whole house planning costs and the clustering of high and low costs shows a postcode lottery in terms of access to affordable planning services. A previous report suggests that households may only be willing to pay £100-200 for a retrofit assessment [25], while multiple studies have identified financial costs as a key barrier to retrofit take up [12,51,52,53]. The costs of many of WHP services were substantially higher than this and are therefore likely to be a barrier to retrofit take up. Meanwhile, the variation in costs and the level of detail available in whole house plans also highlights some of the challenges that households must face in first finding, and then deciding on, appropriate services for themselves and their home as they navigate their retrofit journey. This study found that the availability, costs, and service levels available within England is extremely varied, with households' access to quality and affordable services dependent on their location.

Overall, there was a good level of useability/readability in services' webpages with generally limited use of unexplained technical language, relatively clear website layout and clear information. However, to some extent services' efforts to be 'user-friendly' and avoid overwhelming technical detail may also be a flaw, because in many instances it was it challenging to find detailed technical information about the services provided, tools used or what exactly was covered. Households were often encouraged to contact the services for further information, but some users may prefer to understand more of the details before committing to contact a service, especially for those services offering paid for WHP and 1SS. In addition, many households who have reached the point of seeking advice on retrofit are likely to have already explored a range of generic information and have a reasonable level of retrofit knowledge. They may thus be interested in having instant access to more of the technical details [2,17].

Some services and their scope were not easy to identify, it is therefore hoped that the interactive map and dataset created alongside this report will be of value to households seeking retrofit advice and help to reduce informational barriers to retrofit.

4.2 Limitations and future research

The project's time constraints meant that the study focussed solely on retrofit advice services in England, neglecting Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. The full scale of retrofit services across the UK was therefore not obtained. Future research should investigate the retrofit advice services available in the rest of the UK to gain a comprehensive understanding of the retrofit support available across the home nations.

Another limitation is that as the study was purely desk based, it was not possible to contact advice services for clarification or to ask for their thoughts on future developments. The decision to exclude commercial advice service providers has also limited the scope of the study but is felt justified given research indicating that not-for-profit providers and LAs are generally more trusted by households.

Further research could also provide a more comprehensive analysis of other service costs (alongside whole house planning) by contacting services to understand potential cost barriers to retrofit. This could potentially also include collecting additional data on how much homeowners are willing to pay for specific services and investigations of whether existing services meet their needs.

In addition, further comparative studies examining the services offered in England with other countries -for example Ireland who have a directory of registered retrofit one-stop shops [54]- could help aid the development of good practice. In the future, as one-stop-shop services become more common in the EU in line with the updated Energy Performance of Buildings Directive, a comparison of how this concept is enacted in multiple countries and its effect on retrofit take up would also be beneficial.

5 Conclusions and recommendations

In this study, retrofit advice services in England were identified, mapped and analysed. A resource was created to allow households, policymakers and professionals to view an interactive map containing available services and key information about them in a chosen county, with links to the full dataset. The study identified 80 retrofit advice and the main findings were:

- Pure advice services are the most common across England and are often focused on broader fuel poverty and energy efficiency advice as well as retrofit.

- Access to whole house planning and one-stop shop services varies across England, with some areas, particularly in southeast and eastern England lacking services, resulting in a clear postcode lottery.

- There is substantial variation in whole house planning starting costs, with clusters of counties only having access to high or low-cost services. The scope of available services is also variable and often reflected in the cost.

- Services such as pre and/or post retrofit performance monitoring and an emphasis on understanding household lifestyles and motivations are rare, despite the importance of these aspects in ensuring that the full benefits of retrofit are realised in reality

- From the limited reporting available on the number of households that were supported by services, it is clear that the scale of retrofit which they support is much lower than required to meet our climate goals.

- Webpage useability/readability was generally good across England but was geared towards user friendliness, often at the expense of providing detailed information about scope of services and technical details such as modelling tools utilised.

- Only a few services demonstrate good practice such as heritage building expertise, pre/post retrofit monitoring and a focus on ventilation and moisture management, highlighting the need for wider improvements in service quality.

As a result of these findings, this study can make a number of key recommendations to help improve the provision of retrofit advice in England and reduce the postcode lottery effect.

1. Increased government funding for advice, whole house planning and one-stop-shop services in order to expand into areas which do not have current coverage.

2. Improved transparency and clarity of information about services by standardising retrofit support terminology and stating exactly what is and is not included in a particular service in order to allow households to make informed decisions on retrofit options and enable direct comparisons between services.

3. An increased focus on the pre/post retrofit monitoring and real-world performance of retrofit measures to ensure that the benefits of retrofit such as carbon savings, lower energy bills and better health are realised in reality and not only on paper.

As other research and reports have identified, local provision is likely to require national support, policy action and leadership to accelerate retrofit at the speed and scale required [2,13,25]. Information and advice are indisputably important but are also only one aspect of a successful and holistic national retrofit strategy, something that is likely to be required if the UK is to achieve the multiple benefits of retrofit and meet critical national and global climate goals.

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Appendix A: Website readability scoring criteria

Table 7: Webpage readability/useability criteria and scoring system

Score	Criteria
1 - Extremely poor	Extremely difficult to find information. Extremely disorganised layout. Extremely vague content. Unreadable text. Heavy use of unexplained terms and technical language
2 - Very poor	Very difficult to find information. Very disorganised layout. Very vague content. Very hard to read text. Very frequent use of unexplained terms and technical language.
3 - Poor	Difficult to find information. Disorganised layout. Vague content. Hard to read text. Frequent use of unexplained terms and technical language

Score	Criteria
4 - Somewhat Poor	Somewhat difficult to find information. Somewhat disorganised layout. Somewhat vague content. Somewhat hard to read text. Some use of unexplained terms and technical language.
5 - Satisfactory	Moderately easy to find information. Moderately well-organised layout. Moderately clear content. Mostly readable text. Occasional use of unexplained terms and technical language.
6 - Decent	Generally easy to find information. Generally well-organised layout. Generally clear content. Generally readable text. Infrequent use of unexplained terms and technical language.
7 - Good	Easy to find information. Well-organised layout. Clear content. Readable text. Minimal use of unexplained terms and technical language.
8 - Very good	Very easy to find information. Very well-organised layout. Very clear content. Very readable text. Rare use of unexplained terms and technical language.
9 - Excellent	Extremely easy to find information. Exceptionally well-organised layout. Extremely clear content. Extremely readable text. Very rare use of unexplained terms and technical language.
10 - Outstanding	Effortless to find information. Outstandingly organised layout. Outstandingly clear content. Exceptionally readable text. No unexplained terms or technical language.

Appendix B: Counties where whole house plan costs were identified

Table 8: Counties where costs for whole house plan services are available

County	Number of services providing whole house planning (including one-stop shops which provide whole house planning)	Number of services advertising whole house planning costs
Bedfordshire	1	1
Berkshire	1	1
Bristol	2	2
Buckinghamshire	0	0
Cambridgeshire	1	1

County	Number of services providing whole house planning (including one-stop shops which provide whole house planning)	Number of services advertising whole house planning costs
Cheshire	1	1
Cornwall	0	0
County Durham	0	0
Cumbria	1	1
Derbyshire	0	0
Devon	4	2
Dorset	0	0
East Riding of Yorkshire	1	1
East Sussex	0	0
Essex	0	0
Gloucestershire	3	3
Greater London	2	1
Greater Manchester	2	2
Hampshire	2	2
Herefordshire	2	2
Hertfordshire	1	1
Isle of Wight	1	1
Kent	0	0
Lancashire	1	1
Leicestershire	0	0
Lincolnshire	0	0
Merseyside	1	1
Norfolk	0	0
North Yorkshire	2	1
Northamptonshire	0	0
Northumberland	0	0
Nottinghamshire	0	0
Oxfordshire	1	1
Rutland	0	0
Shropshire	2	2
Somerset	3	3
South Yorkshire	2	2
Staffordshire	2	2
Suffolk	0	0
Surrey	1	1
Tyne and Wear	0	0
Warwickshire	0	0
West Midlands	0	0
West Sussex	0	0
West Yorkshire	1	1

County	Number of services providing whole house planning (including one-stop shops which provide whole house planning)	Number of services advertising whole house planning costs
Wiltshire	3	3
Worcestershire	1	1
Total	45	41