

## Renovating for baby

**Insulation, careful choice of paints and other materials, and good ventilation were keys to creating a safe haven for baby.**

### Lisa's story

It's amazing the living standards we're prepared to put up with; then along comes baby and the same conditions are no longer acceptable. The transformation of our office into a nursery illustrates this point perfectly.

Set on the south side of the house with south- and west-facing windows, our small office, 2.2m x 2.7m and 3m high, was sweltering in summer and arctic in winter (our 800W column heater barely raised the temperature; it simply wasn't up to the job). And it's no wonder; with no wall, ceiling or under-floor insulation, it may as well have been a lean-to.

With baby on the way the office would soon give way to a nursery. As it was, it certainly wasn't fit for a baby.

My husband and I were aware of the importance of insulating the whole thermal envelope – floor, ceiling and walls. So my husband did the renovations himself to save cash.

Although the crawl space in the ceiling was tight, it was relatively straightforward to insulate the entire space. Similarly, we went ahead and insulated the entire underfloor area. Although we'd chosen a product that was easy to fit, this work was particularly arduous and unpleasant – cramped, dirty and dusty. If we hadn't been on such a tight budget we would have forked out the extra cash to have a tradesman do the work.

We live in a 1930's bungalow, so there is no wall insulation. Unlike the ceiling and floor, it's not so easy, or affordable, to install. So we've decided to tackle it one room at a time. First, of course, was the nursery.

My husband is a competent DIYer so he successfully renovated the interior himself – he stripped out the room, fitted battens and building paper for ventilation, installed insulation, re-lined, plastered and painted. Finishing touches included a low VOC acrylic paint and draught-stopping the windows. We ventilated the room for a couple of weeks before moving baby in so she didn't breathe any fumes produced by all the new materials.



In hindsight the only thing we'd change is the window furnishings. Swayed by current trends, we'd made the unfortunate decision to buy slat blinds – not terribly effective at keeping the heat in.

While we've yet to find out how the renovations will stand up to summer conditions, we're in no doubt of the impact the work has had on winter conditions – the little heater now warms the room, even on the coldest night. And the underfloor insulation has stopped the musty, damp earth smell coming through the floor boards.

We're now happy to tuck our new addition into her cot at night, confident that she's sleeping in a warm, dry, healthy environment.

For more information:

- See Fact sheet on Keeping Heat In: Insulation