

Press Release
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Minister goes to school with housing association to launch new financial strategy



Dr Brian Gibbons, Minister for Social Justice and Local Government, joined Melin's Chief Executive Mark Gardner and Board Chair Doiran Jones on Monday to launch the housing association's new Financial Inclusion Strategy 'Investment in Futures'.

The representatives visited Garnteg Primary School in Garndiffaith to launch the strategy.

Melin's strategy aims to tackle financial exclusion and ensure that all of its residents and members of the wider community are able to take responsibility for their day-to-day and long-term finances. This will involve informing people about ways to maximise their incomes, increasing their access to bank accounts and

affordable credit, and helping to tackle unemployment by promoting training and work opportunities.

At school assembly, the Minister presented the school with a cheque from Melin that will allow each year 6 pupil to invest £20 in a savings account with the local credit union Savings Gateway. This will help the pupils begin saving for their future and will also fulfil the Welsh Assembly's vision for every secondary school child to have access to a local credit union. Pupils from other years in the school will receive a Melin piggybank so they can start saving immediately too.

Melin chose Garnteg Primary, Garndiffaith, as the site to launch its new financial inclusion strategy because not only does the housing association have homes near the school, but this part of South East Wales has also been identified by the Welsh Assembly Government as one of multiple deprivation. Melin aims to tackle financial exclusion here and all the other communities in which it has homes with the support of its Investment in Futures strategy.

Melin's Chief Executive, Mark Gardner, said: "I'm so proud of our new financial inclusion strategy as it demonstrates Melin's commitment to addressing the financial issues affecting all our communities. In fact, our launch at Garnteg Primary school encapsulates the far-reaching nature of Investment in Futures – it aims to ensure that all members of our communities, young and old, are aware of the services that can help maximise their individual financial circumstances."

Dr Brian Gibbons said: "I welcome the fact that Melin Homes is leading the way by developing its own financial inclusion strategy that reflects local needs. The current economic climate means that it is more important than ever that everyone is aware of services that can help them financially.

"Opening a credit union savings account for each Year 6 pupil going to secondary school in September is very much in line with the Assembly Government's vision for every secondary school child to have access to a local credit union. I am certain that the action Melin is undertaking is going to make a real difference."

ENDS

Photo caption: Pupils at Garnteg primary school help Melin launch its new financial inclusion strategy.

For more information contact Laura Maddrell, Communications Officer, on 01495 745929 or email laura.maddrell@melinhomes.co.uk

Notes to editors:

- Melin Homes is a not-for-profit landlord providing quality homes and services across Blaenau Gwent, Monmouthshire, Newport, Powys and Torfaen. For further information, please visit www.melinhomes.co.uk
- It is estimated that more than 70% of the 2.8 million UK households that are currently financially excluded live in social housing (Financial Inclusion Task Force 2007).
- The Welsh Assembly Government defines financial inclusion as 'a state in which everyone has access to appropriate financial products and services

in order to manage their money effectively, regardless of income levels or social status.'

- Financial exclusion can manifest in many ways which include lack of access to a bank account; unemployment; limited access to pensions and insurance; limited access to advice, arrears of rent, utilities and council tax; fuel poverty; doorstep lending and inability to save even small amounts.