



## **Welsh Language Scheme**

**MELIN HOMES LIMITED**

**Prepared in accordance with the Welsh Language Act 1993**

## **Foreword**

Melin Homes owns and manages over 4,000 homes across the region. We aim to make a positive impact on neighbourhoods by providing high-quality homes to those who need them. This includes sheltered and extra care schemes for older and disabled people as well as general needs family and single person accommodation.

We were created in April 2007 and operate in Blaenau Gwent, Monmouthshire, Newport, Powys and Torfaen.

Melin is active in promoting sustainable communities through lettings and allocations policies and community development work. Melin also has a strong record of resident involvement through both formal and informal structures.

## **Vision**

Delivered by an agile, caring and flexible workforce, who have helped us to become one of the top 10 companies to work for, we will create thriving communities in south east Wales. We will build at least 1,000 new affordable homes in these communities and generate at least £5m from commercial sources and through savings achieved from a drive for resident focused operational excellence which we will reinvest in our core services.

## **Values**

Together we can -

- Do the right thing
- Find a way
- Make things happen
- Make a difference
- Enjoy the journey

## **Service Users**

Melin provides homes, services, employment and volunteering opportunities to those in need within our area of operation.

## **Statement of Intent**

Melin has adopted the principle, that in the conduct of public business in Wales, it will treat the Welsh and English languages on the basis of equality.

This Welsh Language Scheme sets out how we will operate that principle in providing services to the public in Wales.

This Scheme will not be amended without notifying the Welsh Language Service.

### **1 Introduction**

- 1.1** The Welsh Language Act 1993 places a duty on the public sector to treat Welsh and English on an equal basis when providing services in Wales. Under section 5 of the Act all public bodies which receive a statutory directive from the Welsh Language Board are required to prepare a Welsh Language Scheme for approval by the Board. This ensures that Welsh speakers can access services in their own language as a matter of course.
- 1.2** This Welsh Language Scheme has been developed as a mark of Melin's commitment to the principle of equality for the Welsh and English languages so far as is appropriate in the circumstances and reasonably practicable.
- 1.3** Melin's scheme will be based on the following objectives:
  - to enable everyone who uses a service or is in discussion with Melin to do so through the medium of Welsh or English according to the personal choice of the individual;
  - to ensure high quality services through the medium of Welsh;
  - to encourage others to promote and use the Welsh language;
  - to promote and facilitate the use of the Welsh language in the workplace.
- 1.4** Melin acknowledges that members of the public can express their opinions and needs better in their chosen language. It also acknowledges that enabling the public to use the Welsh language is a matter of good practice rather than a concession, and that denying them the right to use their chosen language could place them in a disadvantaged position. Melin will therefore offer the public the right to choose which language to use when dealing with it, in accordance with the principle above.
- 1.5** Melin operates in south east Wales; the 2011 Census shows the proportion of Welsh speakers is between 7.8% (Blaenau Gwent) and 18.6% (Powys) in our area of operation. Trends indicate a growing number of younger people with greater knowledge of the language.

<b>County</b>	<b>% of population Welsh speaking</b>	<b>Number of Melin properties</b>
Blaenau Gwent	7.8%	404
Newport	9.3%	702
Torfaen	9.8%	1,770
Monmouthshire	9.9%	1,098
Powys	18.6%	126

- 1.6** Melin is committed to acting in accordance with the principles of Iaith Pawb: A National Action Plan for a Bilingual Wales, which was published by the Welsh Government in February 2003. The plan represents the first ever national framework for action planned at government level for the protection, maintenance and promotion of the Welsh language.

## **2 Service Planning and Delivery**

### **2.1 Policies and Initiatives**

In formulating new or amending existing policies and initiatives Melin will carry out an equalities impact assessment, that includes an assessment of linguistic impact, to make sure they are consistent with this Welsh Language Scheme and to ensure that the measures in the Scheme are implemented when new policies and initiatives are implemented.

Melin will consult the Welsh Language Board beforehand regarding any proposal which would directly affect this Welsh Language Scheme. This Scheme will not be amended without the prior agreement of the Welsh Language Board.

We will ensure that all staff involved in the formulation of policies and initiatives are aware of Melin's responsibilities under the Regulatory Code and Welsh Language Act 1993.

### **2.2 Service Provision**

Melin is committed to achieving equality and valuing diversity. These principles are maintained and promoted in all areas of Melin's work including employment, recruitment, management and service delivery. This involves operating in an anti-discriminatory way throughout all levels and functions of the organisation.

We will ensure that as many of our services as possible are available in Welsh and we will inform the public when they are available.

Melin will carry out the commitments noted in the Scheme by implementing the following arrangements:

- organise the service team so that staff who can speak Welsh can deal with the public who speak Welsh;
- ensure we have access to professional translators;
- raise awareness among Melin staff of the Language Scheme;
- consider the need to increase the availability of Welsh language skills by means of training and recruitment;
- Enable officers from one department who can speak Welsh to assist another department when the need arises;
- Adopt systems or procedures that facilitate the provision of service in the chosen language of the person receiving the service.

### **2.3 Services provided for the public by other organisations**

Any contracts or arrangements made with a third party will be consistent with relevant sections of this Scheme.

Melin works in partnership with public bodies, organisations from the voluntary sector and other agencies. Melin operates on many levels when working with others:

- when Melin is the strategic and financial leader within a partnership, it will ensure that the public service provision is compliant with the Language Scheme;
- when Melin joins a partnership led by another body, Melin's input to the partnership will comply with the Welsh Language Scheme and Melin will encourage other parties to comply.

Melin will ensure that officers are aware of the requirements of the Welsh Language Scheme when operating in partnership.

### **2.4 Quality Standards**

Services provided in Welsh and in English will be equal in quality and they will be provided within the same timetable.

## **3 Dealing with the Welsh speaking Public**

We are committed to communicating with customers in the format and language of their choice. Our policies and procedures around customer service are that we welcome contact through written, verbal or electronic means in English or Welsh and response times to correspondence will be the same in Welsh and English. This will be publicised through newsletters, annual reports and any other appropriate means.

The language preference of a potential customer will be established at the first point of contact in order that the most appropriate language provision can be put in place. We will remain sensitive to the possibility that an individual's language preference may not be the same for written and verbal service

provision. We will be flexible and adapt to these requirements.

### **3.1 Written Correspondence**

Melin welcomes correspondence in Welsh. Replies to letters and emails will be processed in the same timescale whether received in Welsh or English. Correspondence following a telephone or face-to-face conversation in Welsh will be in the person's preferred language. A translation service will be used if necessary.

We will keep a record of those persons who wish to deal with Melin in Welsh.

### **3.2 Telephone Communication**

Melin welcomes telephone calls in Welsh and English languages on an equal basis. We will take the following steps to enable Welsh speakers to deal with Melin in Welsh over the telephone:

- Aim to ensure that we have available bilingual front line officers; in their absence we will use the Big Word service;
- provide an internal directory of Welsh speakers to whom calls can be transferred;
- provide staff with guidelines on how to deal with telephone calls from Welsh speakers and ensure that they are familiar with the arrangements;
- Melin currently has 4 fully bilingual members of staff and one learner who is almost fluent. Two have volunteered to assist in providing our services to Welsh speakers. If they are unavailable, the member of staff will courteously explain to the caller that they are unable to communicate in Welsh and either arrange for a Welsh speaking colleague to return the call as soon as possible, offer that the caller makes a written enquiry in Welsh or continues the conversation in English.

### **3.3 Public Meetings**

We will welcome contributions in English and Welsh at public meetings held by Melin. We will invite attendees to inform the organisers in advance whether they wish to use Welsh or English. The organiser will assess whether translation services are needed.

As well as considering whether Melin has been informed of the chosen language of the attendees, the organiser will consider the location of the event, who is likely to be present, and the subject in question.

When there are Welsh speakers among those attending, meetings should be held bilingually, using translation facilities. In these circumstances, written materials

such as leaflets or other documents, may be provided in bilingual form.

There will be circumstances in which it will be appropriate, on the basis of information, to hold all the activities bilingually, in Welsh only, or in English only.

As well as translation equipment we will assess the need for members of staff who speak Welsh to be present to welcome the public and to deal with their inquiries. Our staff will make their language abilities evident at meetings, for example by greeting people bilingually and using the Welsh Language Commissioner's "Iaith Gwaith" badges.

### **3.4 Face-to-Face Contact**

Melin welcomes meetings with the public in Welsh or English but due to the shortage of Welsh speakers we cannot guarantee a face-to-face meeting in Welsh.

Melin currently has 2 bilingual members of staff able to support our Welsh language service. It may not be appropriate for one of them to conduct face-to-face meetings in place of a colleague because of differences in responsibilities. The member of staff will courteously explain that they are unable to communicate in Welsh and offer to continue the conversation in English, or where feasible, arrange for a Welsh speaking colleague to conduct the meeting as soon as possible, or arrange to carry out the meeting using a simultaneous translation service such as The Big Word.

If it is obvious that there is a consistent demand for face-to-face meetings through the medium of Welsh, and we are failing to meet that demand, we will consider taking action such as training or appointing bilingual staff.

## **4 Public Image**

### **4.1 Corporate Identity**

The Melin name will appear on all headed paper, fax paper, signage, both external and internal, business cards, forms, posters and leaflets.

Melin is committed to developing a bilingual corporate identity and we will work towards adopting a more bilingual public image during the lifetime of this Scheme.

### **4.2 Signs**

Wherever practicable, new or replacement signs will be bilingual. The size, standard of clarity and prominence of the words on the signs will respect the principle of language equality.

Bilingual signage will be preferred, however at times Welsh and English signs

will be provided separately, but will be equal in terms of form, size, quality, clarity and prominence.

When developing a new housing estate or other accommodation, Melin will suggest a name that is consistent with the heritage and history of the area, offering Welsh language suggestions wherever possible.

All greetings and door signage at Melin offices will be bilingual and will carry the Melin logo.

#### **4.3 Publishing and Printing Materials**

We will produce our key standard documents (Corporate Strategy, Business Plan, Annual Report, regulatory judgements, Equality Promise and this Welsh Language Scheme) or those aimed at the public in general in a bilingual form. Where separate Welsh and English language versions of documents must be published, our standard practice will be to ensure that both versions are available at the same time and for the same price (if relevant). Both versions will be equal in terms of size, prominence and quality. Both versions will clearly state that the material is available in the other language.

We will ensure that staff and those with responsibility for printing are aware of the policy and procedures for publication.

Our website will remain totally bilingual.

#### **4.4 Press Releases**

Press releases are a prominent part of Melin's public face and we will therefore publish them bilingually where appropriate under the circumstances.

We will endeavor to make a Welsh speaker available to conduct interviews with the press and the Welsh language broadcast media if appropriate.

#### **4.5 Marketing and publicity campaigns**

Our marketing campaigns will comply with the relevant sections of this Scheme.

#### **4.6 Official notifications, public notifications**

Our official and public notices will be bilingual when it is appropriate under the circumstances. They will be equal as regards form, size, quality, clarity and prominence.



## **5 Staffing and Recruitment**

### **5.1 Staffing**

Melin will monitor the skill levels and locations of its Welsh speaking staff by means of a language skills audit in order to ensure that sufficient Welsh speaking staff are employed to support the delivery and provision of services.

Unless recruited for a role for which Welsh language skills have been identified as essential or desirable, members of staff who speak Welsh will be able to choose whether, and to what extent, they wish to volunteer their assistance to help with translation or to conduct conversations on behalf of colleagues.

In assessing our staffing needs, we will provide for a possible increase in the demand for services through the medium of Welsh as schemes are implemented and as Welsh speakers respond to the offer of service in Welsh.

Melin supports and will continue to support and encourage any responsible requests from members of staff who wish to learn Welsh in line with their role and responsibility within the organisation.

Line managers will ensure that they consider the opportunity to learn Welsh as part of an individual's Personal Performance Plan during their performance management cycle.

Language awareness will be included as part of the staff induction programme and ongoing training will be provided as appropriate.

### **5.2 Recruitment**

We will respond to any lack of skills by means of our recruitment and training, or by considering the possibility of relocating staff internally.

We will set Welsh language requirements (desirable or essential) on some posts, by considering the following factors:

- The amount and frequency of contact with the public
- The current ability of the unit or office to deliver a face to face service through the medium of Welsh
- The expertise of the post, i.e. skills in the Welsh language could be vital in some specific fields
- If it is a post in a specific geographical area, on an assessment of the number/percentage of Welsh speakers in the area.

In assessing our staffing needs, we will provide for a possible increase in the demand for services through the medium of Welsh as schemes are implemented and as Welsh speakers respond to the offer of service in Welsh.

Information packs, such as job descriptions and person specifications will be prepared in Welsh and in English for every post where Welsh language skills

are essential.

When we use the Welsh language press to advertise, our advertisements in those publications will appear in Welsh only.

Advertisements for posts for which Welsh language skills are essential will appear in Welsh in all publications, with an explanatory note in English for English or bilingual publications. When it is desirable or essential that an applicant should possess skills in the Welsh language, this will be noted clearly in the qualifications section of the post and in advertisements.

If an applicant who cannot speak Welsh is appointed to a post where the ability to speak Welsh is considered essential then the ability to learn the language up to a specific level of skill, within a reasonable period of time to be agreed, will be one of the conditions of appointment. Progress towards the target will be monitored regularly.

### **5.3 Welsh Language Training**

We will support this Language Scheme by encouraging and supporting members of staff to learn Welsh or to improve their skills in Welsh.

We will plan our training programme carefully and concentrate resources on those parts of our service where there is frequent communication with Welsh speakers, or where there are linguistic requirements to the post.

Dictionaries and electronic material will be available to help members of staff who are learning Welsh.

Melin will also provide awareness training for staff with regard to the requirements of this Scheme. Our standard practice will be to include such training in the induction of new staff.

### **5.4 Vocational Training**

Human resources managers and staff who have responsibility for training will assess the need for specific Welsh language vocational training for staff.

## **6 Implementation of the Scheme**

The commitment to the Welsh Language Scheme has been approved by the Melin Leadership Group and carries the authority of the organisation.

All Melin staff will be made aware of the scheme and their responsibilities via written guidelines and through their line managers. The commitment and measures laid down will form part of the induction process for all new staff.

We will maintain records, promote arrangements and produce an annual report

in accordance with the Welsh Language Commissioner's Self-regulation Checklist (see Appendix 2).

The Director of Business Improvement is responsible for the co-ordination and development of the scheme.

## **7 Review and monitoring of the Scheme**

The Director of Business Improvement will provide annual monitoring reports for Melin Leadership Team, Melin Board and the Welsh Language Board. Complaints will be recorded and responded to in an appropriate way in accordance with Melin's complaints policy. Any complaints regarding the implementation of the scheme or the quality of service should be sent to:

Director Business Improvement  
Melin Homes  
Ty'r Efail  
Lower Mill Field  
Torfaen  
NP4 0XJ  
Email: [tom.broadhead@melinhomes.co.uk](mailto:tom.broadhead@melinhomes.co.uk)  
Tel: 08453 101102

Melin will review the progress of the scheme and action plan after three years in collaboration with the Welsh Language Board. Where amendments are agreed, these will be reflected in the revision of the Melin Welsh Language Scheme.

## **8 Publicising the Scheme**

We will ensure that Melin's staff are familiar with the measures included in the scheme in order to ensure that attention is paid to the measures whenever appropriate.

Our methods of publicising the Scheme and its contents will follow our usual corporate publicity arrangements and will include ensuring that the Scheme is published in a prominent location on our website.