



Welsh Language Scheme

MELIN HOMES LIMITED

Prepared in accordance with the Welsh Language Act 1993

**This Welsh Language Scheme was approved by the Welsh Language Board on 26
March 2012.**

Foreword

Melin Homes was created in April 2007 and is a quality homes and service provider in Blaenau Gwent, Monmouthshire, Newport, Powys and Torfaen. Melin owns and manages over 3,200 properties, has a fresh and dynamic outlook and intends to make a positive difference in the communities in which we operate.

Melin is a member of the GENUS consortium, which was established to enable Housing Associations to work closer together on procurement for new home provision and property maintenance.

Melin is responsible for the allocation and maintenance of affordable housing for rent. This includes sheltered and extra care schemes for older persons as well as general needs family and single person accommodation.

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.

Melins Vision

- To be an excellent landlord
- To be a major provider of new homes
- To be a partner of choice
- To create opportunities for residents and communities
- To be a vibrant place to work

Melins Values

Our work will be underpinned by:

- Equalities and Diversity
- Accessibility
- Innovation
- Partnership
- Communities and People, not just bricks and mortar
- Being responsive to change and flexible in approach
- Being an excellent employer

Service Users

Melin provides homes and services to those in need of affordable housing within our area of operation.

Melin provides employment opportunities within Torfaen & Monmouthshire through both direct employment with Melin and employment initiatives such as Intermediate Labour Market (ILM), Future Jobs Fund and Volunteering.

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 prior consultation and agreement with the Welsh Language Board.

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 are able to 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 dedicated 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, which has a small number of Welsh speakers, although trends indicate a growing number of younger people with greater knowledge of the language. According to the 2001 Census, 15% of the population, in the areas in which we operate, speak Welsh, with the highest proportion being in Powys where we only have a small percentage of stock.

- 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 governmental level for the protection, maintenance and promotion of the Welsh language.
- 1.7 In order to achieve this we will welcome all enquiries for services in Welsh and put in place an action plan to improve Melin's ability to deliver services of equal quality in both Welsh and English.

2 Service Planning and Delivery

2.1 Policies and Initiatives

In formulating new or amending existing policies and initiatives, Melin will assess their linguistic impact and make sure they are consistent with this Language Scheme and will 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 the requirements of the Scheme and appropriate advice.

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.

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;
- when Melin is a partner in a consortium, it will encourage the consortium to adopt a language policy. When acting publicly in the name of the consortium, Melin will act in accordance with the Language Scheme.

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

In line with our policies and procedures around Customer Service, customers and members of the general public are welcome to contact Melin 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.

3.1 Written Correspondence

Letters received in Welsh will receive a signed reply in Welsh within the same timescale as an English letter. A translation service will be pursued if necessary. Emails received in Welsh will also receive a reply in Welsh within the same timescale as an email received in English.

All correspondence following a telephone or face-to-face conversation in Welsh, or a meeting where it was established that Welsh is the preferred language of the person, will be in Welsh.

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

3.2 Telephone Communication

In order to achieve the aim of treating the 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:

- 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 3 bilingual members of staff. If these 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.
- The names of the staff available to speak in Welsh are currently:

Kate Buckley	People & Learning Manager
Elizabeth Howard	Financial Support Manager
David Pettitt	Leasing Project Officer

3.3 Public Meetings

When public meetings are held by Melin, including conferences and other similar events, we will invite attendees to inform the organisers in advance whether they wish to use Welsh or English.

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.

3.4 Face to Face Contact

Melin will ensure that 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 individuals language preference may not be the same for written and verbal service provision. We will be flexible and adapt to these requirements.

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.

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

4.2 Signs

When we renew or re-erect any signs we will ensure that the new versions are bilingual and signs erected for the first time will be bilingual.

The size, standard of clarity and prominence of the words on the signs will respect the principle of language equality.

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.

4.3 Publishing and Printing Materials

We will produce our key standard documents or those aimed at the public in general in a bilingual form.

If it is necessary to produce any document in Welsh and English, every effort will be made to incorporate both versions into one document. If separate documents are necessary, the versions will be equal in terms of size, prominence and quality and both will be available at the same time. Every version 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.

We will ensure that our website is totally bilingual and that material will be available in both languages at the same time by the end of the lifetime of this scheme.

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 ensure that Welsh speakers are available to conduct interviews with the press and the Welsh language broadcast media if appropriate.

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.

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

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, 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.

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.

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

7 Review and monitoring of the Scheme

The Assistant Director Business Consultancy will provide annual monitoring reports for the Melin Human Resources Committee 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:

Assistant Director Business Consultancy
Melin Homes
Ty'r Efail
Lower Mill Field
Torfaen
NP4 0XJ
Email: sharon.bebb@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

Melin will continually publicise the scheme, our Welsh Language Services and activities and the complaints procedure to the public, staff, partners and to those dealing with Melin.

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.

Welsh Language Scheme Action Plan 2012-2015

Reference	Target / Task	Person responsible	Target date	Outcome
2.1	Assess all new policies and initiatives for consistency with the Welsh Language Scheme	Quality Management Officer	On-going	All policies and initiatives are consistent with the scheme
2.2	Establish translation services to ensure there is no delay when a response to correspondence is required in Welsh	Communications Manager	On-going	Documents are translated professionally and in a timely manner
2.2	Undertake an annual assessment of Welsh language requests to assess the need for training and recruitment	Assistant Director Business Consultancy People & Learning Manager	April 2012 & ongoing	Increase the availability of Welsh language skills depending on demand
3.1	Maintain records to establish language preferences of correspondents	Communications Manager People & Learning Manager Director Customer Services	On-going	We retain records of those persons who wish to deal with Melin in Welsh
3.2	Publish names, location and availability of staff with Welsh Language skills on the intranet	People & Learning Manager Communications Manager	April 2012 and updated as required	Welsh speakers are able to deal with Melin in Welsh
3.3	Determine prior to public meetings or events whether there are any attendees who wish to use Welsh	Communications Manager	September 2012	Welsh speakers are able to deal with Melin in Welsh
4.1	Develop posters, pictures and greetings in Welsh for reception areas and update door signage	Communications Manager	May 2012	Melin develops a bilingual corporate identity
4.2	All replacement or new signs will be bilingual and given equal prominence to both languages	Communications Manager Assistant Director Asset Management	On-going	New signs will be bilingual
4.3	Annual report to be published in bilingual form	Communications Manager	October 2012 & annually thereafter	Key standard documents produced in bilingual form
4.3	Ensure all forms and documents clearly state that it is available in Welsh upon request	Communications Manager	April 2012	All documents and forms are produced bilingually if necessary
4.3	We will ensure that our	Communications	April 2014	Website is bilingual

	website is totally bilingual	Manager		
5.1	Include awareness training for the Scheme in staff inductions and equalities training	People & Learning Manager	September 2012	New staff are aware of Melins Welsh Language responsibilities
5.1	Conduct an annual language skills audit	People & Learning Manager	April 2012	Sufficient Welsh speaking staff are employed to support delivery of services
5.1	Develop in house language skills by offering training to those wishing to learn Welsh, tailored to the needs of the business	People & Learning Manager	Ongoing	Melin support staff wishing to learn Welsh in line with their role
5.1	Publicise staff achievements in learning Welsh and promote mutual support and mentoring between learners	People & Learning Manager	September 2012	Melin support staff wishing to learn Welsh in line with their role
7	Produce an annual monitoring report to the Melin HR Committee & the Welsh Language Board	Assistant Director Business Consultancy	Reported to HR Committee annually in December	Progress is monitored in a consistent manner
7	Complaints to be recorded and dealt with in accordance with the Melin complaints policy	Quality Management Officer	Reported to Audit & Risk Committee quarterly	Complaints are recorded and responded to in an appropriate way
8	Publish the Scheme on Melins website and ensure all stakeholders are aware of it	Communications Manager	April 2012	The Welsh Language Scheme is publicised effectively
8	Ensure all staff are aware of the scheme and are aware of Melins responsibilities	Assistant Director Business Consultancy	April 2012	Staff are made aware of the Scheme and Welsh speakers are able to deal with Melin in Welsh
8	Help promote the scheme by holding an awareness day to coincide with St Davids Day	People & Learning Manager Communications Manager Assistant Director Business Consultancy	March 2013	Staff engage effectively in Melins Welsh Language Scheme