



Welcome to your home

Your Melin handbook

If you require this document in another language, large print, braille, or audio version please contact us.

Updated February 2024

Welcome

To help you settle into your new home we have created this handbook to help answer any questions you may have about your home, your contract with us and the services we provide to you.

If you can't find the information you need, please take a look on our website at **www.melinhomes.co.uk** or get in touch using the contact details on page 5. Our team of friendly staff are here to help.

This handbook is designed to give you general advice and does not form part of your occupation contract agreement, which is a legal document.

You will find all of this information on our website at www.melinhomes.co.uk. To ensure you have the most up to date info, please check the website.

Our Melin Promise

We exist to create opportunities for people and communities to thrive. We recognise the importance of meeting the needs and expectations of our customers and will act to ensure that all contact with Melin is positive.

We don't want there to be any surprises when you access our services. That's why, by working with residents and other stakeholders, we have developed a set of standards that clearly explain what our customers can expect from us; and what we expect from them.

Our team are trained to listen to you and respond in a patient, courteous and friendly manner. Please be polite and respectful to our staff, they are working hard to help you. Please do not use abusive language when dealing with our staff or contractors. We will not accept threats or violence against any member of staff or contractors. We will take action, if such incidents occur.

We will always do our best to resolve any challenges you are facing and where this is not possible, we will take the time to explain why and try and find a solution that works for everyone.



Please think before you print. If this document has been printed please note it may not be the most up to date document. For the most up to date version of this handbook please visit our website or your account.

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Contacting us

When you contact us

- We will respond promptly.
- We greet you and tell you our name.
- We personally take responsibility for resolving your enquiry.
- We use plain language that is free from jargon.
- We will provide a translation service for you if English is not your first language.
- If you would prefer to communicate with us in Welsh just let us know.
- If we can't provide a full response immediately, we'll explain why and let you know how long it will take.
- We'll keep you informed and set clear expectations of what we can deliver.

Every time you contact us, we want it to be a good experience, but we also ask that you:

- treat our staff with courtesy, respect and dignity;
- keep any appointments that you have with us or let us know if you can't keep an appointment and we'll work with you to arrange a different one;
- give us the information we need to help you;
- give us your views and suggestions to help us improve our services.

If we visit your home:

- We try to give you at least 48 hours' notice of our visit.
- We'll agree an appointment with you for the morning or afternoon.
- We'll wear photo ID that tells you who we are.
- If you are not at home, we will leave a calling card.

Our Customer Contact Team will be the first people who help you when you contact us. The team deal with all of our:

- Social media messages
- Letters
- Emails
- Live chat messages
- WhatsApp messages
- Telephone calls.

They aim to deal with at least 80% of your queries at the first point of contact. If they cannot deal with your query, you should receive an acknowledgement from the department who needs to take a look into it within 48 hours.

We try to resolve any issues informally at first. However, if we are unable to do this we have a formal process in place where we will investigate your concerns.



For the full details of our complaints procedure visit our website at www.melinhomes.co.uk/residents/make-a-complaint

How to contact us

- We're on WhatsApp – just add our number **07830 365910**
- Email **enquiries@melinhomes.co.uk** for general enquiries
- Text **07860 027935**
- Send us a message on Facebook or Twitter (Search @MelinHomes)
- Live chat on our website
- You can also call us on **01495 745910**

Our office hours are Monday to Friday 8am to 5pm, outside these hours if you have an emergency you can still contact us by calling **01495 745910**, and **choosing option 2**.

To find out more about what is classed as emergency please see page 13.

If you want to write to us our postal address is: **Tŷ'r Felin, Lower Mill Field, Pontypool, Torfaen NP4 0XJ**

For specific enquiries

To report a repair, for rent queries, money or employment advice please email **enquiries@melinhomes.co.uk**

To let us know how we are doing please answer this quick survey at **www.melinhomes.co.uk/tell-us-how-we-are-doing** or scan this QR code to take you to the survey

You can also send us a compliment or complaint to **complimentsandcomplaints@melinhomes.co.uk**



To have your say and shape our services why not join our Melin Voices group? Email **enquiries@melinhomes.co.uk** – you can find out more about this group on page 35.

Manage your account online

We are starting to introduce more digital services, so you can do more online.

You can log into your account to:

- view details of your occupation contract with us;
- view and print your rent statement;
- pay your rent;
- view your repairs history;
- request a repair;
- change your contact details.

All you need to do is register. It only takes a minute; just follow these three simple steps:

1. Follow the link to your account on our website (it's up the top on the right-hand corner labelled **Login**).
2. Type in your occupation contract reference number, and email address to register.
3. Start managing your occupation contract online.

Moving in

We appreciate that it can be stressful moving into a new home. Here's a handy checklist to make your move easier.

- Contact gas, water and electricity suppliers to set up or change your utilities account.
- Take meter readings as soon as you move in.
- Contact your local council to set up or change your Council Tax payments and to add your household to the electoral roll.
- If you receive housing benefit or Universal Credit don't forget to update your accounts with your new address and rental payment details.
- Find out where your stop taps, fuse box and trip switch are located (contact your housing officer if you need help).
- Arrange contents insurance for your personal belongings. To safeguard your possessions, we recommend that you take out cover. There are lots of companies who offer contents insurance, you could compare prices on a price comparison website. We don't recommend any insurance companies but some companies offer specialist resident contents insurance like **www.thistlemyhome.co.uk**

- Buildings insurance is already set up for your home.
- Redirect your mail from your previous address. Please contact your local post office for advice.
- Arrange a television licence, if necessary.
- Remember to tell your doctor, dentist, bank, employer, school and DVLA your new address.
- If you install a phone, please let us know your number.

Bills

Your gas, electricity and water provisions will be connected when you move in. We will give you the meter readings which you will need when speaking to the energy provider of your choice.

Rubbish

If you have a lot of rubbish after you move in, you will need to arrange a bulk rubbish collection or take it to a local tip (please see 'Useful contacts' on page 45 for details of your local council).

Furnishing your home

We are all trying to do our bit to look after our planet. When you are looking for new furniture for your home local charity shops, and Facebook Marketplace can have some really good pieces of furniture available.

We work closely with a number of organisations that offer furniture at a reduced rate. If you are struggling please get in touch (contact details are on page 5) and we will see what we can do to help.

Rent and money matters

Paying your rent is one of your main responsibilities to us. We are a not-for-profit organisation and your rent is our main source of income. The money we get primarily goes back to maintaining your home and other homes that we manage, but also helps us to build more affordable homes for people in the communities we serve.

Rent payments are made in advance, weekly on a Monday. You should always have one full weeks credit on your rent account. If you choose to pay monthly, you will need to pay a month in advance.

Ways to pay:

- Use our 24-hour payment line. Call **01495 745910** and choose option 1.

- Log into Your Account via our website **www.melinhomes.co.uk**

- Set up a Direct Debit.

- Standing order

This is an arrangement made with your bank, for them to pay your rent directly into our bank account. You can set up a standing order by visiting or telephoning your bank; using a banking app; or through your internet banking.

You will need our bank details and your occupation contract reference number, so that we can identify your payment.

Sort code: **20-18-58**

Account number: **20099120**

Please make sure you quote your occupation contract reference number or we won't know who has paid their rent.

- Or through **allpay**

You can visit your local Post Office or PayPoint outlet, just look for the PayPoint and allpay signs. Allpay card users can now register at **www.allpay.net**.

- We can take your payment over the telephone when you are speaking to a member of our Income team. We send a link by email or text message whilst you are on the phone, by clicking the link you can then enter your bank details and click 'Make payment'. Our Income Officer will then get a notification email to say the payment has been made.
- Your Neighbourhood Officer or one of our Income Advisors will be able to help you set up your preferred method.

Rent changes and statements

We send you quarterly statements (every three months) which will show the rental payments you have made. Don't forget you can also view statement online by signing into Your Account.

We give you two months' notice of any rent payment changes and notify you in January of each year.

If you claim Universal Credit, please make a note of your new rent charge on your journal on the day the change happens.

Service charges

You will be required to pay a service charge if we provide you with services for the upkeep of communal areas, such as gardening, window cleaning, door entry systems and lifts. The details of the services and charges which apply to your property are listed in your occupation contract agreement. Each year, we send you a reminder of your service charges, including details of any charges.

Supporting you

If you can't pay your rent

The most important thing is to tell us. We have trained officers who can talk to you about any financial difficulties you're facing and can check if you're receiving all the benefits you are entitled to.

They can:

- create an affordable payment plan
- refer you to support
- help you find independent advice

Money advice

We are dedicated to supporting our residents in every part of their lives. A big part of this is helping Melin residents with money matters.

Here are some of the money related areas we can help you with...

Budgeting

When running a household, there are a lot of things to consider. Having enough money to pay our rent, utility bills and to put food on the table is important. Our advisors are able to help with budget planning and can provide you with the knowledge and tools to better manage your money.

Bills

The increasing cost of living can put a strain on our household finances. Shopping around to get the best deal on gas, electric, internet and other household bills can save you a lot of money. Our team can help provide you with advice and information to get the best deals available so that you can save money.

Benefits

It is important that we are all able to claim for the benefits that we are entitled to. Claiming the correct benefits can help residents to ensure they have enough income to meet the costs of running their home. We know that making benefits claims can be very difficult, so our advisors are on hand to help you with understanding benefits and making claims.

Emergency situations and sudden changes in circumstances

If your household has faced a sudden change in circumstances, you may find yourself in a difficult financial situation. Challenges can include suddenly losing your job, the death of a family member, or a delay in being awarded your benefits claim. Whatever your circumstances, if you find yourself in an unexpected situation, reach out to us. We may be able to offer you some emergency support to get you back on your feet.

Employment advice and support

Are you worried about job security? Or are you looking for work?

Our employment advisors can help you find a way, just like they've helped many others over the years to find training, help to write your CV or help you with interview techniques.



You can email our Income Team at enquiries@melinhomes.co.uk

Energy advice

Our advisors can help you save money and energy. If you need help with...

- Gas and electric bills
- Changing supplier
- Pre-payment meters
- Priority Service Register (PSR)
- Water payments
- Warm Homes discount

We've included a handy guide on page 32 of things you can do to save money at home and be kinder to the environment.

Help from our Tenancy Sustainability team

If you are struggling, this team can provide vital support. They work with departments across Melin, and our external partners providing help to residents who face a number of challenges. If you are struggling and need additional support please get in touch with the team who will see what they can do to help.



You can get in contact with them any of the ways listed on page 5

Getting online

You might be surprised at how much you're able to do on the internet. You can manage Your Melin Account, connect with friends and family, carry out tasks like shopping and banking, and access services such as the GP surgery and the local council. The internet can also be a great source of entertainment and education.

Get in touch with us to see how we can help you get online.



You can get in contact with them any of the ways listed on page 5

Your home

Repairs and maintenance

Keeping your home in good condition is really important to us and we know it is to you as well, that's why we have a programme of planned maintenance to make sure things like windows, doors, kitchens and bathrooms are updated. Sometimes things do go wrong and you will need to let us know when they do.

How to report a repair

Please tell us about a repair as soon as possible. There are a few ways to report a repair.

What to do in an emergency

An emergency repair is one that is required to avoid danger to your health, risk to the safety of others and/or risk of serious damage to the property and will be prioritised as an emergency and attended to and made safe within 24 hours of the fault being reported. We will always get to you as quickly as we can, usually on the same day. In busy periods, such as bad weather, we have to prioritise emergency repairs to ensure the most serious are dealt with first.

The purpose of this first visit is to make the property safe and we may have to arrange another appointment with you to complete the works. When you report your emergency, our staff will ask questions to ensure that the repair is a genuine emergency. Our staff will check with you to establish the exact details of what is wrong so that we can you use the resources we have in the best way we can.

If we attend and the repair is not an emergency as described, then we will charge you the cost of attending to undertake an emergency repair.



**If you have an emergency repair to report outside of office hours,
call 01495 745910 and press option 2**

How to report a repair

Please tell us about a repair as soon as possible. There are a few ways to report a repair.



Log in to Your Account on our website



Email us at repairs@melinhomes.co.uk



Text - send us a text including your house number, post code and a brief description of the problem to 07860 027935



WhatsApp 07830 365910



You can send us a message on Twitter to @MelinHomes



You can send us a message on Facebook, Find our page @MelinHomes



Phone - call us on 01495 745910 (Monday to Friday, 8am to 5pm)

Completed repairs

When we have completed the repair, we will send you a repairs satisfaction questionnaire to find out if you are satisfied. Please take the time to complete it, it helps us to improve the services we provide. If you would like to give us a compliment or a complaint, we are always here to listen. Find out more on page 5.

Our repairs promise

Our responsibilities

We will:

- keep the structure and outside of your home in good condition;
- repair fixtures and fittings inside your home, such as kitchen units, doors, pipes and heating;
- make sure that water and electricity are supplied safely and that waste is taken away properly;
- (if you live in one of our flats) we will take reasonable care to keep common entrances, halls, stairways, lifts, passageways, rubbish chutes and any other common parts in good repair.

We will undertake repairs to damage caused by you or any unauthorised alterations or services installed. We will recover the costs of these works from you.

Repairs are by appointment

All repairs, apart from emergencies, are offered on an appointment basis. We will carry out these repairs within 28 working days of being reported at a time that is convenient to you. Some repairs may take longer than the 28 days, this could be because

- Specialist materials, equipment or external contractors are needed.
- The property is less than 12 months old, the contractor who built your home will complete the repair. We will contact them for you.
- If the repair requested is due to take place as part of our planned work programme. This will normally apply to repairs to items such as kitchen, bathroom or other major structural elements such as doors, windows or the roof. We will tell you an approximate time when the repair will be completed when you contact us.

We will tell you as soon as possible if we believe that the repair will not be completed within 28 working days.

Your responsibilities

Please keep the inside of your home in good condition. Make sure that you, your family or your visitors don't damage your home either accidentally or deliberately.

You can help us by making sure that:

- you report repairs to us as soon as possible;
- you keep repair appointments with us, or let us know as soon as possible if you need to change the date;
- your home is in good decorative and clean condition during your tenancy to make any repair and improvements easier for us to do;
- you ventilate your property, by opening windows regularly and ensuring that you use bathroom and kitchen extractor fans.

We understand that some residents may require more assistance with repairs that are not Melin's responsibility. If you or your family cannot undertake the repairs yourself, please contact us and we will put you in touch with someone who can help you.

Making changes to your home

Any work that involves physical changes to the structure, fixtures or fittings of the property will require our permission.

Other things that will require our approval

- Fitting a satellite dish if it is to be sited externally on a block of two or more flats, and if there is already one fitted (as Local Authority Planning will only permit one receiver for the building, but no more).
- External decoration;
- Installing fencing or boundary walls and gates;
- Installing a patio;
- Building a garage;
- Installing a shed or greenhouse;
- Timber or other decking.

Some things won't require our permission

These include:

- Fitting a water meter;
- Small scale garden work, as long as there is no electrical work, structural changes or the use of water;
- Decoration or soft furnishings such as curtains or blinds;
- You are welcome to make your home your own by painting, wall papering or adding soft furnishings. Some of our older properties may contain asbestos, which is harmless if it isn't disturb (you can read more about asbestos here).
- Changing light bulbs, bath plugs, shower curtains or toilet seats.
- Fitting white goods, such as a tumble dryer, as long as connections to services are already available.
- Installation of a BT telephone line or cable TV.

If you are decorating your home please make sure you:

- Soak any wallpaper before removing it. If possible, use a steam stripper and then gently peel away the paper before redecorating.
- Don't drill, sand, saw or disturb any asbestos-containing materials which are in good condition.
- Don't carry out any DIY work on any part of your home which you think may contain asbestos. Seek advice from us first.

- Don't try to remove textured coatings (Artex) from ceilings or walls. Wash any areas of flaking paint before repainting.

If you are unsure or need any help or advice please get in touch with us.

- Carpeting, vinyl or laminate flooring. Please do not try to remove old floor tiles or linoleum. Leave them in place and lay new floor coverings over them.

(Please remember you will need to arrange for doors to be eased if they won't close as we don't provide this service).

Help and advice for common things that residents contact us about

Pest control

You told us you didn't know who to contact when you had issues with pest control.

To rid your property of pests you can contact your local authority to see if they have a pest control service, or contact a reputable company, or buy readily available products from a shop.



For help and advice please visit the **British Pest Control Association** at bpca.org.uk

If they are getting into the house please get in contact with us to let us know where the entry point is and we will attend to rectify.

Blocked sinks and toilets

You told us you needed some advice on how to unblock a sink or toilet.

HomeServe has loads of useful articles with step by step instructions on how to unblock a sink:

www.homeserve.com/uk/living/how-to/how-to-unblock-your-kitchen-sink

or toilet:

www.homeserve.com/uk/living/how-to/how-to-fix-a-blocked-toilet

We ask residents to try and fix the issue before we will attend. If we visit you and the problem has been caused by food, hair, wet wipes, etc, then we will recharge you the cost of the call out.

Having a pet

It's important you speak with us and check whether you are allowed a pet before moving in, or before you decide on getting one during your tenancy.

It depends on a number of factors, including the type of home you have with us, your tenancy agreement and the type of animal it is.

Please get in contact with us to have a chat, our contact details are on page 5.

Damp, mould and condensation

What causes mould

During the winter months, many properties suffer from damp and mould growth due to condensation.

We can all make small changes to the way we live in our homes to prevent mould which is normally caused by a build-up of condensation in our homes..

Top tips

Let light enter your home

Moist and dark spaces are breeding grounds for mould, so ensure your curtains are open during the day to allow natural light and fresh air to enter the room.

Keep air moisture to a minimum

The key to prevention is keeping air moisture to a minimum. Dry any condensation that may be gathering on your walls, ceilings, and windowsills. Dehumidifiers can also help to remove moisture from the air.

Try to keep your bathroom and kitchen doors shut tightly and keep your windows open while cooking.

Remove any excess moisture

To prevent mould and condensation forming, it's a good idea to dry and wipe any areas with excess moisture. This could be your bedroom windows for example, after a night's sleep, just wipe them down with a dry cloth.

Ensure your home is well-ventilated

Ventilation is key when it comes to tackling condensation. If you experience condensation issues often, you'll need to tackle your home's humidity by ventilating. This can be achieved by opening trickle vents on windows or slightly opening a window.

Keep your home sealed from water

If you have any concerns regarding water entering your home, please contact us.

Heat your home

During the winter, heat your home efficiently, at a constant low temperature of 18°C, to prevent condensation forming because of changes in warmth. With the cost of living

crisis you may not want to put your heating on, but this can cause problems. If you are struggling, please contact our Advice team who will do everything they can to help you.

What are humidity and condensation?

Humidity

Humidity is one of the most common reasons mould occurs. That's why mould is primarily found in kitchens and bathrooms where steam often appears from showering and cooking, resulting in more humid conditions than in other rooms.

Condensation

There is always some moisture in the air, even if you can't see it. If warm air gets cold, it cannot hold all the moisture produced by everyday activities and some of this moisture appears as tiny droplets of water. It's most noticeable on windows on a cold morning.

This is condensation.

Condensation occurs in cold weather, even when the weather is dry.

Look for condensation in your home. It can appear on or near windows, in corners and in or behind wardrobes and cupboards.

Condensation forms on cold surfaces and places where there is little movement of air and will sit on the surface, whereas damp would penetrate deeper than the surface.

To prevent condensation, take the following steps

- Make less moisture by drying your clothes outside not on radiators.
- If you're using a tumble dryer, please make sure it's vented correctly.
- Running the cold tap before the hot tap in the bath and putting lids on saucepans.
- Ventilate your home by opening windows or trickle vents.
- Using extractor fans if you have them, they typically cost one penny per day to run.
- Heat your home efficiently, at a constant low temperature of 18°C, using a thermostat to control your heating, rather than quick blasts of heat. This is the most efficient way of heating your home, and costs less than turning heating on and off. If you don't think your heating is working correctly, please get in contact with us.
- Please avoid using bottled gas or paraffin heaters they are not only dangerous, but also generate a lot of moisture and produce carbon monoxide. Please ensure you have a working carbon monoxide alarm in the same room if you do use them, we can provide these free of charge.
- Close bathroom and kitchen doors when you use them. It is also a good idea to keep bedroom doors closed, as these rooms are normally colder and can attract moisture.
- Ventilate cupboards and wardrobes and avoid putting too much in them as this stops the air circulating.
- Keep furniture away from the walls to allow air to circulate.

Locks

Keys are your responsibility. It can be really frustrating being locked out, if that happens you will need to pay for a qualified locksmith to get you back into your home. You can find a reputable company by searching on the MLA Approved Locksmiths website at **www.locksmiths.co.uk/find-a-locksmith** or by typing 'find a locksmith near me' into Google.

It is a good idea to leave a spare key with a trusted friend or family member. You could even consider a key safe, all you would need to do is remember the pin.

Please don't leave your key under the doormat or pot near the front door as that's the first place people look.

Your neighbourhood

Rubbish

We get a lot of complaints about rubbish. How can you help keep your street clean and tidy?

- Put your bin out for collection on the right day.
- Put it away as soon as possible after it is emptied.
- Mark your bin in some way so you know which one is yours.
- If your bin tips over and rubbish is on the street, bin store area or garden – please clean it up.
- If you have recycling bins please use the correct bin for the waste (for example garden waste for the garden bin).
- If you do see rubbish blowing around your street, help keep the neighbourhood tidy and please pick it up. If we all do our bit it helps to keep our street and the area we live clean and tidy.
- Organise special collections with your local council for bulky rubbish as soon as possible.

Please make sure you use a registered waste carrier to remove unwanted household items and excess rubbish from your home.

Local authorities are responsible for dealing with most types of small scale fly-tipping on publicly owned land including roads and lay-bys.



To report fly-tipping to your local authority through Fly-tipping Action Wales visit flytippingactionwales.org/en/report-incident

Grounds maintenance

Keeping your garden neat and tidy is part of your occupation contract agreement. We will help keep your neighbourhood in top condition. Here's how:

- Maintain open grassed areas on estates between April and October each year. It's not possible to guarantee the timings of these because bad weather sometimes prevents us from carrying out the grass cutting at the scheduled time. We will not cut the grass in heavy rain or when the ground is too soft;
- Following consultation with residents, grass cuttings are not collected as the cost of doing so is too high.

- Prune and tidy shrubs annually.
- We visit estates regularly to clear litter from our open land and communal spaces. Some of our schemes will receive a monthly litter pick.



If you would like to improve the gardens around your home, or some help to set up litter picking our Communities Team may be able to help, get in touch by email to enquiries@melinhomes.co.uk

Parking

More of us own a car, and many households own more than one vehicle, so please think about where you're parking as this can sometimes cause disagreements between neighbours. Inconsiderate or illegal parking is a breach of your occupation contract, and we will work with the local authority and police to resolve this issue when it arises.

Who do you contact when there is an issue?

- Parking obstruction and dangerous parking are matters for the police, please call them on 101 to report it. Gwent Police are the only enforcement agency for public highway parking. As well as parking regulations, they also enforce resident permit parking on the highway.
- Your local authority will have responsibility for parking in car parks or other areas away from the public highway unless those car parks are ones that we own, (there will be a sign stating this).
- It is the responsibility of the local authority, to remove abandoned and nuisance vehicles on public land.
- Untaxed vehicles should be reported to the DVLA, not the police.

Don't be foul

Dog fouling is illegal in the UK, so cleaning up after your dog is a legal duty – if you don't, you could face a fine of up to £1,000.

Whilst most owners do their bit, there are some who don't and this causes problems in our communities.

Dog faeces is a health hazard, smells and looks disgusting, so pick it up! All public spaces have designated dog poo bins, but any bin will do. It's simple to remember: just bag it and bin it!

Snow and gritting

When heavy frosts, snow or ice are forecast overnight our contractors will normally attend early the next the morning to spread grit on communal pathways and car parks owned by Melin.

The majority of roads around your home will be treated by your local Council, but Melin are responsible for a small number of roads, and grit bins are provided on these roads.

Winter is a time when the roads and paths can get icy and be potentially dangerous. Keeping our residents safe is a top priority for us. If you have any questions about gritting at our schemes, please get in contact with us.

To find out about gritting in your area please visit your local authority website:

- Torfaen
www.torfaen.gov.uk/en/RoadsTravelParking/RoadsAndPavements/Roadsandhighways-gritting/Winter-Maintenance-Service.aspx
- Monmouthshire
www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/gritting-routes
- Newport
www.newport.gov.uk/en/Transport-Streets/Road-Street-Maintenance/Gritting-Information.aspx
- Blaenau Gwent
www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/en/resident/highways/winter-gritting
- Powys
powys.gov.uk/article/4708/Winter-gritting

Communal areas, blocks of flats and sheltered schemes

Cleaning

We clean communal areas, blocks of flats and our sheltered schemes regularly.

There should be a poster on your notice board with more information – if that's not the case please let us know, all the ways to contact us are on page 5.

In between cleans it is neighbourly if you notice any mud or rubbish in a communal area to try and tidy it yourself.

Window cleaning

We clean the outside of windows quarterly on most of our schemes and blocks of flats. Questions or concerns should be made to **enquiries@melinhomes.co.uk**

TV satellite

If you live in a communal block, there will be communal satellite equipment. If you are having issues with your TV or aerial system, such as the picture breaking up, pixilation, or some channels that can't be received it means that you are not receiving a quality signal.

Possible causes:

- Is the dish out of alignment?
Could the dish have been knocked or blown out of alignment? A satellite installer (your provider) can help check and fix alignment problems.
- Is something blocking the signal?
The dish needs a clear line-of-sight to the satellite; trees, scaffolding, buildings and walls can block the path to the satellite and cause problems. If something is blocking the satellite, please contact your provider in the first instance.
- The weather
Heavy rain is no friend to satellite TV reception. If high winds cause problems, that could indicate that the dish is not securely fixed. If the satellite is fixed to your property, it would be up to you to get this issue fixed, if it is a block of flats get in touch with us.
- Cabling
Check that the cable from the dish to the back of your satellite receiver is undamaged and is securely connected. If it is damaged or not securely connected it would be up to you to get this issue fixed, if it is a block of flats get in touch with us.

Things you can check before you contact us:

- The signal quality
Most satellite receivers have an on-screen signal strength meter which allows you to check how much signal your box is getting. Look at this and see what's being shown. Pay close attention to 'Signal Quality' anything below 50% will cause problems. If it is below 50%, please check the problem we have listed above.

How to check signal quality on a Sky box?

Press **Services** > **System Setup** > **Signal Test**

How to check signal quality on a Sky+HD

Press **Services** > **Settings** > **Signal**

- Check the connectors
Are the F-Plug connectors at the back of your satellite TV box secure and tight? If not, give them a tighten
- Try rebooting the box
Sometimes restarting a satellite TV box is worth a go. Switch the box off, unplug it from the mains and leave for one minute. Plug the box back in, turn it on and try again

- Check the external cabling

Please look at the cabling coming from the dish. Is it damaged? Is it secured to the dish correctly? Could water leak into the connection at the dish end?

If it is damaged or not securely connected or water is leaking in, it would be up to you to get this issue fixed, if it is a block of flats get in touch with us.

If you have a Communal system

Please check with a neighbour to see if they are experiencing any issues with their TV system.

Still having problems?

If you have a communal system and all the above have been checked and you are still receiving issues with your TV/aerial system, then please contact us.

What next? The call will be passed to one of our contractors or one of our Maintenance team will attend.

Keeping you safe in your home

Safety and compliance

We have dedicated teams across Melin who cover all areas that are governed by regulations and legislation.

We employ staff and contractors to carry out tests and servicing in communal areas.

This is to keep you safe. Find out more about the work we do:

Gas safety checks

We are legally required to carry out a gas safety check every 12 months.

This helps to keep you, your family and neighbours safe and ensures your appliances are working efficiently.

We'll get in touch when yours is due, you can then arrange an appointment for us to come out and check it all over for free! It is really important to keep your appointment with us as it helps keep you and your family safe.

If for any reason you need to rearrange the appointment you booked with us, please give us as much notice as possible, as your gas safety certificate is only valid for 12 months from the date of your last gas safety check.

When we have completed your Gas Safety Check we will either email or post your certificate.



For more information and advice you can visit the Gas Safe Register website at www.gassaferegister.co.uk

Electrical testing

We have a legal obligation to ensure the electrical installation in your property is safe.

It is recommended best practice that an (EICR) Electrical Installation Condition Report is carried out every five years, this helps to keep you, your family and neighbours safe.

The test can take between two to four hours to complete, we will check to make sure there is no deterioration to cabling or to any switches or sockets.

We will replace any broken accessories and repair any faults that we may find, this is to make sure that your home is safe for continued use.

We will also check to see if your smoke detectors are present and are in working order.

You will receive a letter from us when it's time for your electrical test to be carried out. Get in touch with us when you receive this letter to book your appointment. If for any reason you need to rearrange the appointment you booked, please give us as much notice as possible.

We test all our electrical equipment in communal areas, this can be small stair ways with just a few lights to our larger sheltered communal areas. This is makes sure that all our buildings are well maintained and safe for use.

Fire safety

What we do - communal areas and sheltered schemes

- Carry out risk assessments of buildings with communal areas.
- Service and maintain fire safety equipment.
- Work with Fire & Rescue services to make sure that we maintain the correct level of fire management standards.

What is your responsibility?

- Keep all communal areas clear of your belongings and obstruction free as these could present a fire hazard or obstruct evacuation in the event of an emergency.
- Please do not tamper with any fire safety equipment.

South Wales Fire & Rescue has some excellent advice for keeping safe in your home.



For more information and advice you can visit the South Wales Fire & Rescue website at www.southwales-fire.gov.uk

Asbestos

A small number of our homes contain asbestos. This should not concern you as it is perfectly safe to live with asbestos as long as it is not disturbed.

Making alterations to your home

Your Occupation Contract makes it clear that failure to tell us of any work you are doing to your home will leave you responsible for the cost of the work. You could also be charged to undo the work you have carried out without our knowledge and permission.

If you are planning on making any alterations, please contact us before you start any work.

Decorating your home

If you are planning decorating your home, it is best to contact us and ask for advice as we will be able to tell you if your plans, in the unlikely event may disturb any asbestos in your home.

What to do if material containing asbestos is damaged?

Please contact our Customer Contact Team, contact details are on page 5.

Please do not attempt to repair or sweep up any debris yourself. The use of a domestic vacuum cleaner or sweep as this could lift asbestos fibres into the air.

Please remember: Asbestos containing materials that are undamaged and in good condition are not dangerous and completely safe.

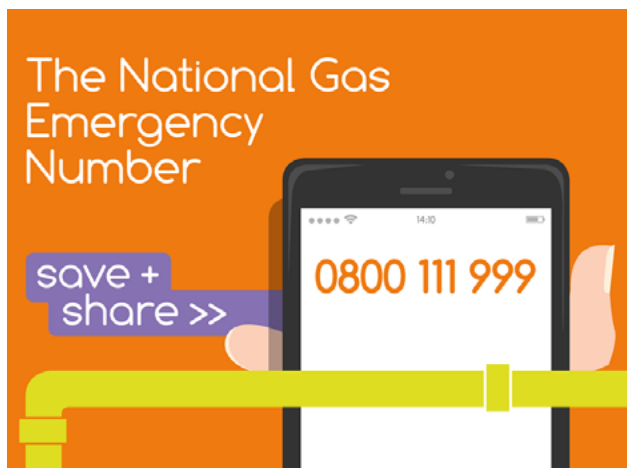
Legionella

Our residents who live in communal schemes or blocks of flats may have large water systems shared by everyone. In order to prevent the bacteria that causes legionnaires disease from building up, we routinely monitor and test water temperatures. Staff and contractors will often be seen in communal laundries, shower rooms and in attic spaces undertaking these tests to help keep residents safe.

We also undertake regular tests and inspections on lifts, automatic doors, dry risers and sprinklers in communal blocks and schemes, and many other regulatory items, and adaptations.

If you smell gas

For information on how to stay safe visit www.wwutilities.co.uk/services/smell-gas



If you smell gas, please report it to Wales & West Utilities on 0800 111 999 immediately

Being a good neighbour

Everyone has the right to enjoy their home quietly and peacefully.

It benefits everyone in the community if people get on with each other. We expect all our residents to be considerate neighbours, and to be aware of how their actions could affect someone else.

Antisocial behaviour (ASB) has a huge impact on the lives of people and the communities they live in.

Our Community Safety Team take a person-centred approach, engaging and working with our residents. We recognise that antisocial behaviour can be a symptom of unmet need or trauma.

Our staff are fully trained and focus ASB incidents to the behaviours, strengths and needs of all parties involved. We strongly believe that by working in partnership and using early intervention with a balanced approach focusing on; education, support, prevention and legal action when required provides a lasting solution for residents and their communities. We have a range of services offered by partners we work with to help find solutions to many antisocial behaviour cases;

Conflict Coaching – Having your say, so you feel heard and find solutions.

Mediation – Mediators are completely impartial, they listen to both sides to reach a mutually acceptable agreement

Counselling – antisocial behaviour can be distressing for everyone involved, talking things through with a trained professional can help.

What is antisocial behaviour?

- Excessive and persistent noise nuisance
- Abusive, threatening or violent behaviour
- Drug use or drug dealing
- Criminal behaviour
- Harassment
- Vandalism

(These are just some of the types of ASB)

There are some things that are in our power to help with, and some areas which are the responsibility of your Local Authority or the Police.

Noise

We have a new procedure for investigating noise nuisance. Noise disturbance must be excessive and regular. For example, a one-off noise disturbance like your neighbours having a noisy BBQ will not count.

If you are reporting noise nuisance then we strongly recommend that you use The Noise App which instantly records the noise on your phone.

1. If you are being affected or disturbed by a noise nuisance caused by a Melin resident, the first thing you should do is get in touch with us through our customer contact centre.
2. If you haven't already, our customer contact team will help you to get set up on the Noise App (visit www.thenoiseapp.com). We will also ask whether you have contacted the council (Environmental Health department) to report the noise disturbance.
3. Our Customer Contact Team will then speak to our community safety team about your complaint.
4. A member of the Community Safety team will then get back in touch with you to discuss your concerns and to agree an action plan as a way forward.
5. We may need to get more evidence of the noise complaint from you, using the Noise App. On our end, we will activate your account on the Noise App, so that you can send us your recordings/evidence.
6. You may be asked to submit noise recordings for a fortnight, these recordings will then be reviewed by our community safety team. If there is a serious incident during that fortnight, we will review the recordings sooner.

CCTV

Any concerns about misuse of domestic CCTV (inc. ring door bells) needs to be reported to the ICO – Information Commissioner's Office. More details can be found at ico.org.uk/your-data-matters/domestic-cctv-systems-guidance-for-people-using-cctv

If you feel you are being harassed by any cameras, you need to report it to the Police for them to investigate the allegations of harassment. If the Police take any action, we are able to respond with the appropriate action.

Drugs

Drugs are a criminal matter and need to be reported to the Police as well as Melin.

Unless Police confirm that drugs are being misused or sold from the property, as a landlord we are limited with what action we can take. If Police execute a drug warrant and have a positive result (drugs found on the premises) we may be able to consider taking legal action such as an injunction to prevent the behaviour from happening in the future or prevent visitors attending a person's address.

Staring

We are unable to act on a person staring, as it is very difficult to prove it is being done in a nasty way. We encourage you to report any concerns to the Police if you feel, you are being harassed because of the staring.

How to report ASB to us

You can report antisocial behaviour to us in the following ways:

- At our website by completing the form on our Contact page
- By email to enquiries@melinhomes.co.uk
- By text **07860 027935**
- Send us a message on WhatsApp **07830 365910**
- Send us a message on Twitter or Facebook (Search @MelinHomes)
- By telephone **01495 745910**

Here are some other useful contacts that you may find you need:

Gwent Police www.gwent.police.uk

Emergency number **999**

Non-emergency number: **101**

Powys Police www.dyfed-powys.police.uk

Crimestoppers is an independent charity that gives people the power to speak up and stop crime – 100% anonymously.

crimestoppers-uk.org/campaigns-media/community/Wales

Connect Gwent is a multi-agency hub for victims and witnesses of crime and antisocial behaviour in Gwent. Visit www.connectgwent.org.uk

Call **0300 123 21 33**

Live Fear Free can provide help and advice to:

- anyone experiencing domestic abuse;
- anyone who knows someone who needs help.
For example, a friend, family member or colleague;
- practitioners seeking professional advice.

Visit gov.wales/live-fear-free/domestic-abuse-wales or call **0808 80 10 800**

ASB Help is a registered charity in England and Wales set up to provide advice and support to victims of antisocial behaviour. Visit asbhelp.co.uk/community-trigger

Charities offering assistance

Anti-Bullying Alliance **www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk**

The Anti-Bullying Alliance is a group of organisations and individuals working together to stop bullying. They seek to create safe environments in which children and young people can live, grow, play and learn. They provide advice and expertise in relation to all forms of bullying between children and young people.

Bullying UK (information on cyber bullying) **www.bullying.co.uk/cyberbullying**
Specific information on what cyber bullying is, and what to do about it.

Citizen's Advice **www.citizensadvice.org.uk**

Citizens Advice aims to provide free, independent, confidential and impartial advice. This can be in any area of your life. The CAB wants to help with the problems people face. It also wants to improve the policies and practices that affect people's lives.

The Cybersmile Foundation **www.cybersmile.org/who-we-are**

A charity full of information to help people tackle all forms of digital abuse and bullying online.

National Domestic Violence Helpline **www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk**

A national service run in partnership between Women's Aid and Refuge for women experiencing domestic violence and their family, friends, colleagues and others calling on their behalf.

National Stalking Helpline **www.stalkinghelpline.org**

A helpline number to call and a website with advice, information and case studies of others suffering stalking.

Neighbourhood Watch **www.ourwatch.org.uk**

News from different local Neighbourhood Watches. You can input your postcode to find your Neighbourhood Watch, Home Watch and Citizen Patrol schemes. It also provides information on how to set up your own scheme.

Victim Support **www.victimsupport.org.uk**

Victim Support is a national charity giving free and confidential help to victims of crime, witnesses, their family, friends and anyone else affected across England and Wales. They work through local offices. Most people are referred to them by the police following a crime but they can also be contacted directly through their helpline on **0845 30 30 900**.

For social services and environmental health (including noise), contact your relevant local authority:

- Torfaen County Borough Council: **01495 762200**
- Monmouthshire County Council: **01633 644644**
- Newport City Council: **01633 656656**
- Blaenau Gwent Council: **01495 311556**
- Powys County Council: **01597 826000**

Our promise to you

If you report antisocial behaviour to us, our Community Safety Team will keep everything confidential. You will be given the name of the officer dealing with your problem. If you are reporting a criminal matter, then we will need the police evidence in order to progress the issue.

Doing our bit for the environment

We are committed to doing our bit for the planet – for our team, our residents, communities, and our partners who we work with. We all must do our bit to protect what we love from the climate and nature emergencies.

You can read about how we are trying to make a positive change on our website at www.melinhomes.co.uk/about-melin/sustainability-and-doing-our-bit

To help you make a difference we have put together some ideas which may help you.

Saving energy

- If you are out of the house for long periods of time, use the timer to switch your central heating off and on when you go out and come back, so it's not heating your home when you're not in.
- Try charging your phone in the day when you can keep an eye on when it is fully charged, instead of leaving it overnight.
- Fit low energy light bulbs when replacing traditional ones
- Remember, lowering your heating by one degree can save you money.
- Ask your energy supplier for a smart meter or a smart meter display.
- Smart meters not only help with accurate meter readings, they can also help you save money by setting a budget with your energy use. Smart meter readings are more accurate because your usage information can be sent to your supplier every half hour, day or month. You choose when, so no more estimated bills.

Keep warm and save

- By stopping draughts, you can prevent heat escaping. You can do this by closing curtains as soon as it starts to get dark and by putting draught excluders by doors. Make sure to keep doors and windows closed when heating your home. You'll use less energy to keep your home warm. It is important to keep a ventilated home, but open windows and doors when your heating is off.
- Try keeping internal doors closed and curtains shut at night to help keep the heat in your home.
- Use the correct tog duvet for the weather (low tog in summer and high tog in winter), to avoid having to use the heating unnecessarily.

Switch off and save

- Many of your electrical items, such as TVs, have a standby mode that they go into when they're not in use, but they're still using electricity and costing you money.

- Save on average £30 a year by switching off TVs and other electrical items. Create a routine to switch off before bed or work, or you can use a timer on the socket, so you don't have to try to remember.

Shop and save

- When it's time to buy a new white good, such as a washing machine, choose one with a high energy-efficiency rating. This will save you money.

Wash and save

- Wash clothes and dishes at a lower temperature to save energy and money. Washing clothes at 30 degrees rather than 40 degrees uses less electricity and can save you up to £6 per year. If you can cut out one wash cycle per week, you'll save money off your annual energy bill.
- Tumble Dryers can be an expensive source of electricity. Only use them when you have to. Put washing out to dry whenever possible, as opposed to drying on radiators inside the home. Drying clothes on radiators can generate up to nine pints of water which can cause damp and condensation. It also restricts the heat emitted by the radiators, so your home isn't heating as it should do. If you can't dry your clothes outside, use a clothes horse inside the home as an alternative.
- Make sure that you only turn your dishwasher and washing machine on when they're full.
- You can save around £25 a year by washing up in a bowl rather than using a running tap.
- Perhaps put a clock in the bathroom so you can encourage yourself or members of your family to have quicker showers.

Cook and save

- By cooking meals in bulk and freezing some for later you can save on energy as you will be using cooking appliances less.
- Where possible you can use the microwave instead of the oven as they use less energy.
- If you keep lids on pans, you will prevent condensation and keep the heat in the pan with your food too. If you are using a kettle when cooking, make sure you only boil the amount of water you need.
- Kettles use a lot of electricity, try only boiling the amount of water you need.

Reducing waste

- Make sure you recycle as much of your household rubbish as you can. Visit your Local Authorities website to find out when your recycling days are and what they will collect.
- Get recipes and tips for using food and reducing food waste lovefoodhatewaste.com
- Use refillable water bottles, and reusable containers for your lunch refill.org.uk

- Try and cut down on single use plastics. **www.sas.org.uk/plastic-free-communities**
- There are lots of shops Zero Waste Refill Shop, we've added some to our handy numbers and websites at **www.melinhomes.co.uk/news/doing-our-bit-for-the-environment**
- Look after your clothes and try not to buy disposable fashion. Local charity shops have some good bargains too.
- Visit **www.loveyourclothes.org.uk** for ideas on how to upcycle clothes.
- Donate unwanted clothes, bric-a-brac, books, furniture, etc to your local charity shop to reduce landfill and help raise money.
- Take your broken appliances to a local repair and reuse store. If you search on Facebook or Instagram there are lots of these charities popping up. They try and fix any broken appliances, and you can pay a small amount to borrow items too.

Walking and cycling

- Try and walk for short journeys and reduce carbon while getting fit at the same time!
- Find out about local cycle routes and cycling groups and get on your bike.
www.sustrans.org.uk/national-cycle-network
- Team up with parents and your local school to develop a walking bus to walk your little ones to school.
- If your journey is too far try using public transport instead of the car.

Grow your own

- You could try growing your own herbs and vegetables. If you're now green-fingered why not try scattering some wild flower seeds bees and butterflies love them.

If you have any ideas or would like to share what you are doing to lower your carbon footprint please share them with us at **news@melinhomes.co.uk**

Get involved

We know that you are the best people to tell us how we are doing, so we're always keen to hear your views.

We ensure that everyone has the opportunity to take part in surveys. If you receive a text from us, asking for your views please take the time to tell us your opinions, to help us make a positive difference. These views shape our services and we have made many improvements thanks to residents' feedback. The group even won a TPAS Award for their feedback to us throughout the coronavirus pandemic.

If you would like to be more involved you can join one of our Voices focus groups, just get in touch.

The Community Group – meet monthly with the Communities Team to plan and fund neighbourhood events and award grant funding.

The Customer Service Group – they scrutinise the services that Melin provides and give recommendations on service improvement, seeking the views of residents and staff. They meet when required to get reports completed.

Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) Cymru.

TPAS Cymru has supported social housing tenants and landlords in Wales for over 30 years and has a strong track record in developing effective participation through training, support, practical projects and policy development. They have extensive knowledge of social housing with a focus on issues from the tenant perspective and for tenants' benefit.

If you've had negative or positive experiences of Welsh housing and feel you want to contribute to making Welsh housing better, why not get in touch with TPAS Cymru to discuss how you can make a difference.

For more details visit their website at www.tpas.cymru/resources/tenant-voice

The Jump2 Fund

Our Jump2 Fund provides grants of up to £250 for projects and activities which benefit our residents, their families and our communities.

Jump2 can be used for:

- environmental improvements, for example communal planting schemes;
- social benefit, for example equipment for community halls and play areas;
- one-off events that can have a lasting impact;
- hiring of facilities to provide activity to benefit a community;
- transport to and from venues;

- school projects within a Melin Community;
- education/training costs (Melin residents only - excluding digital aids such as laptops) provided that the resident is not being supported by Melin on other projects. We can only accept one application per household.

For full details and to apply please visit our website at
www.melinhomes.co.uk/residents/get-involved/jump2-fund

Compliments and complaints

We want to know what you think about our services and believe that providing excellent services to our residents and customers is essential.

We welcome your feedback, both good and bad on the services that we provide. We want to learn from compliments and complaints to improve. Sometimes things can go wrong so if you feel that the service we have provided has fallen short of your expectations let us know so we can put it right.

Normally, we will only look at your complaint if you tell us within six months of it happening. In any event, regardless of the circumstances, we will not consider any complaints about matters that took place more than one year ago.

Ways you can tell us how we are doing

There are many ways that you can make a complaint or give us a compliment:

- Complete the feedback form on our website – www.melinhomes.co.uk
- Email us at complimentsandcomplaints@melinhomes.co.uk
- Talk to us on social media – we're on Facebook and Twitter (search @MelinHomes)
- Write to us and send it to: **Customer Feedback, Tŷ'r Efail, Lower Mill Field, Pontypool Torfaen NP4 0XJ**
- Telephone **01495 745910**

To help us deal with your complaint we ask that you provide us with as much information as possible. It will help us if you can answer the following questions as well as providing any documents or pictures you may have. If you need help making a complaint or a compliment please contact us, we want our services to be accessible for everyone.

- Name of the department or service you are complaining about.
- What do you think they did wrong, or failed to do?
- Please describe how you personally have suffered or have been affected.
- What do you think should be done to put things right?
- When did you first become aware of the problem?
- Have you already put your concern to one of our frontline staff? If so, please give brief details of how and when you did so.
- If it is more than six months since you first became aware of the problem, please say why you have not complained before now.

How we deal with complaints

We try to resolve your complaint at first contact. However, if we are unable to resolve any issues as a service request we have a formal process in place where we will investigate your comments.

Stage 1 – Formal investigation by a Service Manager

Stage 1 complaints are sent to the investigating service manager to be investigated. You will receive an acknowledgement in three working days which will detail who is investigating your complaint. This will be the nominated member of staff who responds to you about your comments. We will provide you with a formal response within 15 working days of the acknowledgement of your complaint.

If you feel that we have not properly resolved your complaint, or you are not happy with the response will move your complaint to stage 2. You will need to provide a specific reason(s) for the review and be clear on the outcome you want.

Stage 2 – Complaint Appeal

At stage 2 the complaint is passed to a Director responsible for the service who will identify whether or not we provided an appropriate and proportionate response. You will receive an acknowledgement in three working days which will detail who is investigating your complaint. This will be the person who responds to you about your comments. We will provide you with a formal response within 15 working days of the acknowledgement of your complaint.

Unresolved complaints

If you feel that your complaint has not been properly resolved after exhausting our internal complaint process you can refer your complaint to a number of external agencies who will independently arbitrate the decision we have made.

For unresolved Housing related complaints please contact:

The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales

1 Ffordd yr Hen Gae

Pencoed

CF35 5LJ

Tel: **0300 790 0203**

Fax: **01656 641199**

Web: **www.ombudsman-wales.org.uk**

Email: **ask@ombudsman-wales.org.uk**

Help and advice

If you need help or advice in making a complaint you can contact your local councillor, Member of the Senedd (MS) or Member of Parliament (MP). Alternatively, you can also contact Citizens Advice

www.citizensadvice.org.uk/wales/about-us/contact-us/contact-us/contact-us

Shelter Cymru **sheltercymru.org.uk/email-advice**

For complaints relating to Supporting People Funded Schemes please contact your local authority and ask to speak to their supporting people team.

It may also be relevant to speak to your local authority's Trading Standards team if we have provided a service that it associated with our subsidiary activities.

Equality and diversity

We believe that everyone should receive the support they need to achieve their full potential. Working with our residents and our partners, we aim to provide people with tailored services to help them achieve this. In the communities we serve, we challenge inequality and promote diversity for all our residents.

We are also committed to removing discrimination and harassment in our neighbourhoods. Equality, diversity and inclusion is an important part of our business. It enables us to develop more efficient and innovative services to respond to individuals' needs. When we consider the needs of vulnerable people, we pay particular attention to the protected characteristics defined in the Equality Act 2010: Race, Age, Disability, Gender, Sexuality, Religion/belief, Gender identity, Pregnancy and maternity, Marriage and civil partnerships.

In addition to this, we also look at other issues such as deprivation, responsibility for dependants, criminal convictions or any other matter which may mean a person is treated unfairly.

Privacy policy

Your privacy is hugely important to us. We want you to be confident that the information you give us when using any of our services is safe and secure.

You can view our full Privacy Policy on our website at www.melinhomes.co.uk/privacy-policy or alternatively you can request a copy.

If you have any queries relating to our use of your personal information or any other related data protection questions, please contact us. Email dpo@melinhomes.co.uk

Frequently asked questions

Here are some common questions we have been asked. If you can't see the answer to a question you have please contact our Communications Team by email at news@melinhomes.co.uk and we will add it in.

Q. Will you come and change my lightbulb?

We only change lightbulbs in communal areas.

Q. What do I do if I have a problem with rats?

To rid your property of pests you can contact your local authority to see if they have a pest control service, or contact a reputable company, or buy readily available products from a shop.

For help and advice please visit the British Pest Control Association at bPCA.org.uk

If they are getting into the house please get in contact with us to let us know where the entry point is and we will attend to rectify.

Q. What do I do if there is a wasp nest in or near my home?

We will only treat wasp nests if they are attached to the property. (This doesn't include sheds.)

Q. What if my sink or toilet is blocked?

HomeServe (www.homeserve.com) has loads of useful articles with step by step instructions on how to unblock a sink or toilet. Just go online and type "unblock sink" or "unblock toilet" into the search box on their website.

We ask residents to try and fix the issue before we will attend. If we visit you and the problem has been caused by food, hair, wet wipes, etc then we will recharge you the cost of the call out.

Q. The grass in our communal areas has been cut but the clippings have been left. Why?

The grounds maintenance teams are only contracted to cut the grass if they were asked to remove clippings too this would incur additional cost to residents.

Q. What do I do if my boiler isn't working?

Sometimes if you haven't used your boiler for a while it can lose pressure – this is something you can sort out yourself, the Worcester Bosch YouTube channel at www.youtube.com/WorcesterBoschHeating has produced which shows you how to repressurise your heating system. A video called on there called “How to Repressurise a Heating System with an Internal Filling Key” will give some simple tips.

If you're having boiler issues that you can't solve yourself, then get in touch with us.

In cold weather If your boiler has stopped working in freezing temperatures, then there is a good chance that your condensate pipe has frozen. Luckily, this isn't a big problem and it can be easily resolved yourself.

A video on the Worcester Bosch YouTube channel called “How to safely defrost a frozen condensate pipe” shows a guide on how to do it.

If you're still having boiler issues that you can't solve yourself, then get in touch with us.



Do you have a question not answered in this handbook? Email our Communications Team at news@melinhomes.co.uk and we'll add it in

Moving on

If the time comes that you want to move on, there are a couple of things you should know.

You need to give us four weeks' notice to end your tenancy. You can tell us you would like to end your contract with us by contacting us, however we will require a signature to legally end your occupation contract.

You could receive £150 cash back (after your tenancy ends) if you:

- give us four weeks' notice that you are ending your contract;
- allow our Housing Officer to carry out a property inspection;
- allow us access to your property for relevant surveys;
- carry out any work identified by the surveyors before leaving;
- return your keys to us by the agreed date;
- make sure your house, garden, shed and attic are clean;
- You need to pay any money that is owed to us.

If there is damage to the property

When you moved in, your home was in good shape and we expect it to be left that way for the next residents. Your housing officer will discuss any items that may need attention during their visit. You may be charged if there is any damage found.

If you owe money to Melin

Please contact our Income Team as soon as possible. They will help look at your circumstances and agree with you how the debt will be paid.

If you do not get in contact with us and engage with the help we offer, we will make every effort to recover the debt. We will give an unsatisfactory reference to any enquiries from future landlords. Ignoring unpaid debt will affect any future applications for social housing.

If you want to leave before the agreed date

If you want to return your keys early and we are able to re-let your home before the end date of your notice period, you will not have to pay any rent after the date that the new contract starts.

However, if you don't return your keys until after the agreed contract end date, you will be charged a week's rent and this will continue until we are in a position to take back the property.

Leaving items at the property when you move

When you go, all your belongings and furnishings should be removed. The only time you will be able to leave items is when it is felt that the incoming resident would benefit from them and it has been agreed with us.

Exchanging with another resident

You may be able to exchange your home with another housing association resident. This could be anywhere in the UK. This is called a 'mutual exchange'.

We are a member of an online mutual exchange scheme called HomeSwapper. You can register for free at www.homeswapper.co.uk

Moving to a sheltered housing scheme

If you are interested in moving to Sheltered Housing accommodation and you meet the age criteria which is 55+ you will need to apply to the housing register for the local authority area.

Living at our sheltered housing or extra care schemes

Each scheme has a Scheme Manager, who manages the accommodation day-to-day; providing housing management services; they are a point of contact for residents to check on welfare; help with queries; and they will work with residents to create a vibrant, inclusive and welcoming place to live.

Door entry systems: Our schemes have either a secure door entry system or door intercom system so residents feel safe in their homes and can control who they give access to.

Guest rooms: All our schemes have a guest bedroom that relatives can use when visiting residents. These are bookable through the Scheme Manager.

Communal facilities: Our schemes have communal lounges and/or communal seating areas for residents to enjoy including outdoor seating areas at most schemes. Scheme Managers work with residents and our Communities Team to arrange social and well-being events at our schemes. Some of our schemes have a car park and charging/storage space for mobility scooters.

Our extra care schemes have all of the above plus on-site care staff commissioned by the local authority. Care teams work closely with Melin's Extra Care Coordinators at our accommodation to meet residents' housing and care needs.

If you would like any more information please get in touch, all our contact details are on page 5.

Moving to extra care accommodation

When applying for our extra care accommodation you would be required to complete a social care assessment, please contact your local authority to arrange for this to be carried out.

All properties are allocated by an allocation panel process.

If you have any queries about the process or would like to visit one of our schemes before making an application please contact us (our contact details are on page 5) and our Independent Living team will be happy to help.

Useful contacts

Government and local authorities

Torfaen County Borough Council visit www.torfaen.gov.uk

Monmouthshire Council visit www.monmouthshire.gov.uk

Newport City Council visit www.newport.gov.uk

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council visit www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

Powys County Council visit www.powys.gov.uk

Welsh Government services and information. Visit gov.wales

For emergencies

If you smell gas and suspect there has been a gas leak call Wales & West Utilities on **0800 111 999**

To report criminal behaviour call **101** or **999** in an emergency.

For support

HomeSwapper is the UK's leading mutual exchange service for Council and Housing Association homes. Visit www.homeswapper.co.uk

Job Centre Plus visit rightstobenefits.com/how-do-i-contact-my-local-jobcentre-plus or call **0800 169 0190**

For older people

Age UK is a local charity working in the community to support older people, their families and carers. Please telephone **08000 223444** or visit **www.ageuk.org.uk**

Care & Repair – Helping older people to live independently in warm, safe, accessible homes. Visit **www.careandrepair.org.uk/en/your-area**

Zero waste refill shops

For Torfaen **zerowastetorfaen.co.uk**

For Monmouthshire visit **www.wyeweight.co.uk** or **naturalweigh.co.uk**

For Newport visit **www.serozerowaste.com**

For Blaenau Gwent visit **www.facebook.com/ZeroWasteShopBrynmawr**

Other useful numbers

Add any other numbers if you'd like to keep them handy.
