

Welsh Housing Quality Standard 2023 Compliance Policy

Approach to Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS), reflecting local resources and circumstances:

Melin take a holistic approach to WHQS, using a cross-department approach to ensure the standard is embedded into working practices and procedures.

Melin has reviewed new areas of the standard and put processes in place to ensure that Welsh Governments targets will be met.

Decisions on Melin's approach and maintaining the standard have been made by a focused WHQS working group, involving members of staff from housing, voids, asset management, development and Comms. The group meets regularly to discuss progress and put plans into place to meet the standard. Plans are then cascaded through the teams to ensure delivery.

The void process has been adapted to account for the new measures and developments Full text before abbreviation ERs have been adjusted so that new properties are handed over WHQS compliant.

To enable reporting on the standard, Melin adapted data and information systems to hold the new standard information, and this data is collected during stock condition surveys. An Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) where required is carried out at the same time to ensure a complete picture of the property performance.

Melin has developed strong connections with local business to enhance capacity within and alongside our maintenance, employ local companies and source materials within Wales where possible. Melin source companies through local frameworks and gain insight through the Carbon Zero hub case studies. When introducing new technologies, Melin engages with local supply chains and uses the opportunities to learn new skills.

Melin will fully assesses properties in line with the new standard and will meet the elements of the standard in the following way:

1 Homes must be in a good state of repair

Melin will ensure that all properties are structurally sound and free from damp. In addition to following our repairs procedures, to ensure that we complete repairs in a timely way, strive to deliver a maintenance service that keeps our residents safe and meets their needs.

Taking the holistic approach, staff across all teams will report back any repairs noted whilst on site, inspect all reports of damp and keep residents informed at all times.

This alongside our rolling stock condition survey programme ensures that we fully understand the integrity of our buildings.

2 Homes must be safe and secure

Melin will comply with the requirements of legal, statutory and regulatory standards. We have dedicated teams across Melin who cover all areas that are governed by regulations and legislation.

All new windows and doors will meet Secure by Design (SbD) standard alongside newbuild and refurbished properties. Staircases and balustrades will meet Housing Health and Safety

Rating System (HHSRS) standards. Properties will be safe in the event of a fire and have adequate escape routes.

Repairs will be acted upon in a timely manner in accordance with procedures to ensure that homes are safe and secure

This alongside our rolling stock condition survey programme ensures our properties are safe and secure.

3 Homes must be affordable to heat and have minimal environmental impact

Melin ensure through a robust planned programme that all properties have an up to date, energy efficient and programmable heating system.

Through robust data and ongoing data collection, Melin will ensure that a Targeted Energy Pathway is created for each of our properties, using Intelligent Energy software as part of a Whole Stock Assessment by March 2027 to ensure that all homes meet Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) calculations to produce an EPC score of 75 in the interim and target SAP 92 in the long term. We will configure programmes and timelines to suit the business plan and Welsh Government objectives.

We will achieve minimal Carbon emissions to our homes (minimum of full text first (EIR) 92) as an average across our stock by following the Targeted Energy Pathway created for each home.

A small proportion of Melin's properties do not meet the SAP rating criteria of 65 as specified in the WHQS guidance. The majority of these properties are very old, hard to treat and in some cases listed or of special interest. Our intention is to investigate further the potential to improve these properties, particularly in light of energy efficiency measures, however a cost benefit analysis will be conducted at part of this exercise.

Our void standard has been adapted to fit water butts where appropriate and they will also be fitted during external works, garden works and if the resident requests one. All plumbing fittings will comply to The Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations 1999 with specific reference to Regulation 4 and smart meters will be fitted on change of tenancy.

Homes will have adequate ventilation and if identified as missing, new systems will be installed.

Repairs will be acted upon in a timely manner in accordance with procedures to ensure the home is efficient.

This alongside our rolling stock condition survey and EPC programme will ensure that homes will be affordable to heat and have minimal environmental impact

4 Homes must have an up to date kitchen and utility area

Melin collect survey data through stock condition surveys, staff/engineers reporting back that replacement of a component is required and during the void processes. From this data, we design a programme of planned works to replace kitchens. Melin work from the stance that no kitchen will be replaced unless necessary; programmes are collated from due dates established by maintenance surveyors.

During replacement, Melin ensure that all areas under part 4 are raised to the standard, alongside any other areas that may link in e.g. adequate extraction.

Repairs will be acted upon in a timely manner in accordance with procedures to ensure the kitchen and utility area remain up to date and compliant.

5 Homes must have an up to date bathroom

Melin collect survey data through stock condition surveys, staff/engineers reporting back that replacement of a component is required, and during the void processes. From this data, we design a programme of works to replace bathrooms. Melin work from the stance that no bathroom will be replaced unless necessary; programmes are collated from due dates established by maintenance surveyors.

During replacement, Melin ensure that all areas under part 5 are raised to the standard, alongside any other areas that may link in e.g. adequate extraction.

Repairs will be acted upon in a timely manner in accordance with procedures to ensure that bathrooms remain up to date and compliant.

6 Homes must be comfortable and promote wellbeing

Melin's newbuild properties are built in line with Welsh Development Quality Requirements (WDQR), ensuring that they are comfortable and promote wellbeing. In addition to this, Melin ensures that as properties are handed over, they comply with section 6 of WHQS 2023, alongside other areas.

Existing homes are compliant with the previous WHQS standards, and we are currently assessing stock to identify where there are any gaps in the new standard and setting up future planning. Our void standard has been adapted to ensure that from 1st April 2024 all new lets are fitted with suitable flooring.

Should an issue with noise be identified we will deal with it under our repairs procedures to resolve the situation.

7 Homes must have a suitable garden

Melin's newbuild properties are built in line with WDQR, ensuring that they are comfortable and promote wellbeing. In addition to this, Melin ensures that as properties are handed over, they comply with section 7 of WHQS 2023, alongside other areas.

Existing homes are compliant with the previous WHQS standards, and any issues identified during site visits are reported and dealt with under our repairs procedures. Should a garden require major works or is identified as being unsafe, the area is secured to ensure that the resident is kept safe until the necessary works can be completed.

8 Homes must have an attractive and practical outside space

All new Melin properties are provided with external lockable storage for cycles and equipment. Existing blocks that do not have these facilities are being assessed to understand numbers and costs to retrofit storage and if it is the right thing for the residents on that site.

Melin maintain outdoor spaces and liaise with residents on what is required on each site. Biodiversity is achieved through planning on newbuild sites and existing sites are being

examined for opportunities.

Database/asset management software:

Melin currently use Civica's Asset Management solution Keystone to manage stock data, create planned programmes and forecasting. The system has been adapted to collect WHQS2023 data and previous WHQS data has been mapped where possible.

EPCs and full text first Reduced data Standard Assessment Procedure (RdSAP) data is held and updated within the Asset Management system; modelling is then carried out using Sava's Intelligent Energy system.

Tenant engagement:

Melin is committed to delivering high quality repairs and maintenance services in line with WHQS. We understand that residents' views and feedback on how we are meeting and maintaining these standards is paramount. Melin ensure all repairs are completed efficiently and in line with safety and quality regulations by conducting regular performance reviews of our teams and our contractors. Our systems hold up to date information on our homes and our people that can be shared with staff and contractors working in our properties, when necessary.

To keep residents informed and involved Melin has published the easy read guide to WHQS on our website and refer to it when speaking with residents; regular surveys are conducted, both routine transactional questionnaires and more in-depth surveys on specific service areas. Regular maintenance and safety information is then posted on our social media channels and updates in our newsletters.

Our internal group Listen Act and Learn take comments and suggestions from staff and residents and assesses how we can make improvements in repair service delivery. Our resident engagement groups have undertaken specific work to assess what is important to our residents and how we can best meet their needs, this feeds into the wider resident body. Additionally, we provide transparent updates on repair schedules through digital platforms, newsletters, and direct communications methods.

Melin consults with residents before carrying out planned and major works including, but not exclusive of kitchens/bathrooms/retrofit works/heating upgrades.

By combining proactive maintenance service assessments and active resident engagement we aim to create homes and communities where everyone feels valued and supported.

Independent Verification:

Due to Melin's upcoming merger with Newport City Homes, a 10% validation of data within the asset management system has been carried out by an external consultant. In addition to this, Melin are audited on their WHQS submissions annually by an external company, who examine the data and validity of it. This will be an ongoing process post-merger.

Melin worked with Sava in the last year to carry out an audit of EPC data, this identified where there were data gaps. Sava filled the gaps from open-source data where possible and Melin are now working on filling remaining gaps with a dedicated member of staff.

This will be an ongoing process post-merger.

Compliance Statement for new tenants:

Melin has designed a Compliance Statement for new residents, the statement is issued at the point of re-letting. This informs residents if their property complies with the new standard and if not provides a rationale explaining why the property does not comply and what the resolution will be.

For an example of the Statement see Appendix 1.

Elements not measured (as such):

- 3d Landlords must carry out a Whole Stock Assessment and produce Target Energy Pathways for their homes.

Melin aim to carry out 20% of stock condition surveys (SCS) annually to ensure that accurate and up to date information is kept in the asset management system. Any planned works that are carried out or major component replacements are updated in a timely manner in the asset management system. EPCs are continually being carried out and scores re-calculated following relevant works. Through following this process, Melin will be able utilise the data to carry out the Whole Stock Assessment (WSA) and produce the Targeted Energy Pathway (TEP).

- 6d Homes should suit the specific requirements of the household.

Melin house residents in houses that suit their needs on let. If the needs of the residents change during their contract, Melin will aim to work with Occupational Therapists using Physical Adaptation Grants to adapt the property as required. If this is not possible housing staff will work with residents to see if there is suitable accommodation elsewhere.

- 6e Disabled and older people's housing requirements

Melin house residents in houses that suit their needs on let. If the needs of the residents change during their contract, Melin will aim to work with Occupational Therapists using Physical Adaptation Grants to adapt the property as required. If this is not possible housing staff will work with residents to see if there is suitable accommodation elsewhere.

- 8b Attractive Outside Spaces

Melin employ local contractors to carry out grounds maintenance on their estates to ensure that outside spaces remain usable and attractive. Additionally, Melin liaise with residents on the frequency of grounds maintenance and what is required on each individual site.

- 8c Biodiversity

On Melin's newbuild developments, biodiversity is achieved via the planning process as we must comply with planning notices including a section dedicated to biodiversity. Melin also have a programme of tree management works, so that we maintain and avoid the need to fell where possible.

- Broadband (see page 6 WHQS 2023 and digital connectivity)

There is fixed broadband at all Melin newbuild developments and S106s. All existing sheltered schemes have fixed broadband and Melin work with BT on their planned fibre upgrades.

Cost Prohibitive Activity:

Melin are currently awaiting two scheme appraisals to inform works and costings. Schemes will be appraised for future development work and decisions will be made in consultation with residents.

Target Energy Pathways Narrative:

In the approach to generating Target Energy Pathways, Melin assess their properties, looking at upcoming planned programmes, SAP scores and recommended improvements on EPCs. By understanding the asset and its performance, Melin can generate a Targeted Energy Pathway that ties work streams together to optimise resource, available funding, and minimise disruption to the resident. The outcome to this approach is quality homes with maximised energy efficiency and lower bills for residents.

Melin uses Civica's Keystone and Sava's Intelligent Energy software to gather, record and process information for the Targeted Energy Pathway. To ensure that we are using the most up-to-date information, Melin continually improve data. 20% of stock is surveyed each year, EPCs have been outsourced to catch up on properties where only RdSAP data is available and there is no physical EPC. Data is updated following planned and retrofit works to provide both a new score and clean data. An EPC is carried out on all voids where the current EPC is out of date or there is currently no EPC.

Moving forwards, Melin intend to continually cleanse and update information to provide the most accurate information available to create WSA & TEP. An extra resource has been assigned to this task and this process will continue post-merger.

Melin's approach to significant archetypes of property for individual targeted energy pathways are outlined below:

- Flats/Bedsits – Melin take a whole building approach looking at renewable and sustainable heating and examining building fabrics. Melin is also looking at shared Solar PV to reduce resident energy bills.
- House/Bungalow - Melin take a fabric first approach, this is followed by looking at renewable technologies. Heating systems will be replaced at end of life, by alternative heating systems.
- Terrace House – Melin take a fabric first approach, however, this could be a bespoke combination of External Wall Insulation/Internal Wall Insulation (EWI/IWI), depending on curb side status. This is followed by considering renewable technologies. Heating systems will be replaced at end of life, by alternative heating systems.

As part of Melin's planned programmes and decarbonisation projects; properties are being improved to reach SAP 75 and where possible with current technologies and costs SAP 92. A pathway is being developed to identify when we can achieve SAP 75 and any properties that will not achieve that by 2030.

Melin manage/own several properties that are listed and will not achieve the standard until new technologies become available. These include several Almshouses and refurbished blocks.

Redevelopment, Demolition and Carbon:

Any new developments will have to comply with WDQR 2021 guidelines which has its own technical scrutiny process whereby Melin have to evidence that they have adopted best practice for decarbonisation. Melin is currently working closely with Wood Knowledge Wales

to develop our own toolkit to calculate embodied carbon for us to demonstrate that we have taken steps to reduce embodied carbon. We will be looking to trial this on new developments towards the end of this year.

Community benefits:

Melin will ensure that formal Community Benefit clauses are included in all maintenance contracts and within Service Level Agreements on a cumulative basis for small or reactive works. The type and level of community benefit investment that we will require from our contractor will differ according to the type, duration and value of the contract, however as a minimum, a requirement to donate 0.5% of the value of works into our Sustainable Communities Fund. Melin are currently developing a suite of standard community benefit clauses for all contracts and once agreed these will be used to ensure consistency across our business. We will record community benefits using the Value Wales Community Benefit Tool.

Melin's Sustainability Team monitor and manage community benefits in our contracts.

Appendix 1 – Sample Resident Compliance Statement

We're pleased to let you know that your home at **1 Joe Street** conditionally passes the **Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) 2023**.

What This Means for You

Your home has been checked to make sure it meets the eight **key WHQS standards**:


- ✓ **Good State of Repair**
- ✓ **Safe & Secure**
- ✓ **Energy Efficient**
- ✓ **Up to date Kitchen**
- ✓ **Up to date Bathroom**
- ✓ **Comfortable Living**
- ✓ **Outdoor Space where possible**
- ✓ **Well-Maintained communal space where applicable**

We're committed to providing high-quality homes so you can live comfortably and securely.


Further information on WHQS2023 can be found on the Welsh Government Website

<https://www.gov.wales/welsh-housing-quality-standard-overview>

If you have any questions – here is how you can contact us

 **Email:** [Insert contact email]

 **Call us:** [Insert phone number]

 **Visit:** [Insert website]

Part 2 of statement only applicable if there is a Temporary Fail or Conditional Pass

We will always look for alternative solutions to make sure the home is as safe comfortable and well maintained as possible.

Welsh Government categorises such examples in two ways:

◆ **Temporary Fails** – These occur when **external factors** prevent the home from meeting WHQS. Conditional passes for this property include:


◆ **Conditional Passes** – These apply when work **cannot be completed** due to heritage considerations or physical limitations. The home meets the **WHQS standard**, but we continually review these cases to find solutions. Conditional passes for this property include:

Suitable external storage for cycles and equipment is not possible at this property.

What is next?

Where elements are partially compliant due to temporary fail, works will be planned as part of asset investment planning cycle, with the aim that the property is fully compliant for all elements applicable to the property by the 31st March 2034, as required under WHQS23.

If you have any questions – here is how you can contact us

 **Email:** [Insert contact email]

 **Call us:** [Insert phone number]

 **Visit:** [Insert website]