

MERGER CONSULTATION



KEY INFORMATION

Reaching a Decision of Merger

There will not be a customer vote on the merger as the final decision rests with the Boards of Bespoke Supportive Tenancies (BeST) and Westmoreland Supported Housing. However, your opinions matter and we will ensure your thoughts are taken into account by both Boards before a final decision is made.

When the Merger would Happen

If approved, the new housing association resulting from the merger would likely come into effect by the end of September 2025.

Costs of Merger

While both businesses would initially incur business related costs as a result of merger, we wish to assure you that there will not be a direct impact to your rent. We anticipate any related costs would be outweighed by the merger's benefits and borne by both organisations.

Minimising the Impact

You are at the heart of our decision-making. As merger discussions progress, there would be no changes to the services you receive. Both associations prioritise delivering quality services and homes while striving for continuous improvement. Although we acknowledge there may be some minor disruptions, we would maintain service delivery throughout the merger process.

Regulation

The new housing association would be regulated by the Regulator of Social Housing. You would retain the right to raise complaints with the Housing Ombudsman and would be protected by the standards set by the Regulator of Social Housing. Your rights as our tenant will be protected.



About Westmoreland Supported Housing

Westmoreland Supported Housing provides specialist social housing and advice for those vulnerable people in our society in need of long-term care and support. It provides homes and support to around 900 people across England and Wales. Westmoreland Supported Housing has experienced similar regulatory issues to BeST. It believes a merger would help improve its offer to its customers and achieve regulatory compliance and increase our financial strength and viability.

Why we are considering a Merger with Westmoreland Supported Housing

In recent years, despite several key improvements, BeST's performance has not achieved the levels it had aimed for. Partnering with Westmoreland Supported Housing will improve our offer to customers and help to close the gap to regulatory compliance and increase our financial strength and viability.

How the Merger would affect You

Your landlord

Following the merger, your landlord would become part of the new merged housing association.

Your rent and service charge

Your rent and service charge would not change as a direct result of the merger. These would

continue to be reviewed annually in the same manner as they are now. Your current rights would remain protected.

Your care

Your care provider would not be affected by the merger. Your care provider would continue to deliver the same level of care you currently receive.

Your tenancy agreement

The merger would not affect your relationship with us as a customer (tenant). You would continue to live in your current home. Your rights and the terms of your current agreement would remain unchanged. Existing customers (tenants) would not be required to sign a new agreement. All terms and conditions would transfer seamlessly, meaning there is no need for a new document to be signed. Your rights and obligations would remain unchanged.

Repairs and maintenance to your home

Delivering quality services remains a priority and we expect to improve our responsiveness to repairs.

Getting in contact

You would continue to reach us as you do now, whether by phone, email or through our website. We would notify you of any changes to contact details, such as telephone numbers or email addresses once the merger takes place.

Roles of employees

Where possible, you would still have the same familiar faces and there would be no changes in the management of your home. Most staff would transition to the new organisation, continuing to provide services to you. While staffing arrangements may evolve over time, we would always keep you informed of any new contacts.

Housing Benefit and Universal Credit

Claims for Housing Benefit and Universal Credit would remain unchanged. We would continue to provide support with benefit submissions for our customers.

Your questions on our proposed merger

1. Will there be any changes to my tenancy?

No. There will be no changes. You will have the same tenancy, home and services as you do now.

2. Will there be any changes to my service charges or rent?

No. Your rent and service charge will stay the same and will continue to be reviewed yearly every April. If you are entitled to Housing Benefit, it will be paid in the same way as it is now. If you pay your own rent or pay for utilities, you can continue to pay in the same way as you do now.

3. Is the repairs contractor changing and will the way I report repairs change?

Not straight away. Both of us use the same repairs contractor currently and repairs will continue as they do now - If there is a change at a later date we will ensure you have the details in advance.

4. Will my Housing Officer change?

We do not know at this stage. One of the good things about the proposed merger is that we will have more Housing Officers with properties concentrated in a smaller area – if your Housing Officer needs to change, we will let you know nearer the time.

5. Will my care and support provider change?

No. Your care and support provider will stay the same.

6. Will we be letting our care and support providers know?

Yes. We have contacted our care and support providers. We will keep them updated.

7. Will my cleaning and gardening service change?

No. If we do need to change this, we will always speak to you first.



8. If BeST merge, will my landlord be called BeST or Westmoreland Supported Housing?

This has not been decided yet. If BeST and Westmoreland Supported Housing decide to merge, we can choose to take either name or we could be known by a new name. We will let you know once this has been decided.

9. Will individuals be able to get involved as they do now?

Yes. We will continue to provide opportunities for tenants across the country to have their say. This will include meetings and activities.



10. What if I have any more questions?

If you have any other questions, please ask. You can do this by:

- Sending an email to MergerConsultations@bestha.co.uk
- Phoning us on 0161 786 6000 option 6
- Or, if you need assistance, please ask your Housing Officer, care staff or family member to help.

You can also join a Teams information session – details are on the website <https://www.bestha.co.uk/merger-consultations.php> or via the QR code below.

We would also love you to tell us what you think about the proposed merger. You can contact us in the same way.

An Easy Read version of this letter is available on our website, or you can request it by emailing the email address MergerConsultations@bestha.co.uk, by calling us on 0161 786 6000 option 6 or you can request one from your Housing Officer.

