

Campaign to Save the Over 75s TV Licence Briefing Paper January 2019



Introduction

In 2015, the Government announced that it would be passing over the responsibility for funding the concessionary TV licence for the over 75s to the BBC from 2020. Last November, the BBC launched a consultation on the future of the concession, and made it clear that the current arrangement was not to be considered. The purpose of this briefing is to therefore encourage members to take part in the BBC's consultation process and make the case for the free TV licence to continue.

The quickest way to take part is to fill in the online survey at:

<https://bbcconsultation.traverse.org.uk/>, but if you are not online you can still send your comments and views to Sir David Clementi Chairman, BBC Board, BBC Broadcasting House, Portland Place, London W1A 1AA. The deadline for the consultation is 12 February 2019.

Model answers

Please give the following answers to the online consultation form questions:

1. The BBC should be copying the current concession – tick number 1
2. (a) Tick None of these
2. (b) Tick I'm not in favour of this reform
2. (c) Tick I'm not in favour of this reform
2. (d) Tick None of these
2. (e) Leave blank
3. Other comments – include any or all of these points:
 - For many years the free TV licence has been part of the Department for Work and Pensions' (DWP) remit, and quite rightly has been seen as part of government's wider welfare role in tackling social isolation amongst the older generation.
 - Successive governments have avoided improving the state pension, and instead have offered older people individual concessions, such as the free TV licence for the over 75s. According to the OECD, the UK state pension is the least adequate in the developed world. Removing this concession, without addressing the value of the state pension is therefore grossly unfair.
 - In any democracy, access to information is crucial to enable citizens the opportunity to be informed and make decisions.
 - Loneliness among older people is now regarded as a growing problem. 1 in 4 pensioners view the TV as their main form of companionship.
 - The provision of such a concession should therefore be seen as playing a vital role in tackling this problem. However, the BBC has no such obligation or responsibility to tackle such issues. This is the responsibility of government.
 - As such, the concession is clearly funded from general taxation by society as a whole. This correctly reflects the obligations that we all have – including tax paying pensioners – to make a contribution towards benefits and services which we deem to be worthy.

- Around 6.5m older people have an income of less than £11,800 a year. The TV licence – as a proportion of income, therefore represents quite a considerable amount, and I have no doubt that if the concession were to be removed, many would simply be unable to pay.
- Means-testing a benefit costs ten times as much as it being paid universally, and experience shows that those who need it most, tend to be the ones who don't claim.
- The BBC also needs to look at its other areas of expenditure, such as the salaries paid to some of its top employees and on screen talent, before it makes a decision to cut this concession.

Next steps

In addition to the consultation, the NPC has also joined forces with Age UK and others to launch an online petition against the changes to the concession. Please sign it and encourage others to do so. It can be found here: www.ageuk.org.uk/typetition. A hard copy version is also available from the NPC office.

The Convention is also calling a national protest outside the Department for Culture, Media and Sport 100 Parliament Street (off Whitehall) for 12 noon on 7 March 2019. Please do your best to attend.

**National Pensioners Convention
Marchmont Community Centre
62 Marchmont Street
London
WC1N 1AB
www.npcuk.org**