



BGS CONSULTATION RESPONSE TO BBC AGE-RELATED TV LICENCE POLICY

British Geriatrics Society (BGS) is responding to this consultation because our aim is to improve health outcomes for older people.

BGS believes that the BBC should be **copying** the current concession, meaning that all households with someone over 75 would get a free TV licence.

As noted by the BBC, the current concession was introduced to help relieve pensioner poverty, which remains an issue among many older people. The BBC also says that it recognises that there is evidence that access to television can be especially important for people in older age groups, and that it is "credible that television can be a form of companionship."

The BGS has seen growing evidence that loneliness in older people can have a major negative impact on both mental and physical health. The effect is comparable to the impact of other well-known risk factors such as obesity and cigarette smoking. It is associated with an increased risk of developing coronary heart disease and stroke, an increased risk of blood pressure, and puts individuals at greater risk of cognitive decline. People who are lonely are also more prone to depression.

We believe that **any** change to the current arrangements would have a detrimental effect on the health of many thousands of isolated older people who may choose to forgo access to television if they have to pay the full licence fee.

Older people living with long term-health conditions who are unable to leave their own homes can be excluded from other initiatives designed to tackle loneliness and social isolation. For those people, their ability to continue to engage with the world around them through access to the media would be removed. We are therefore deeply concerned about the changes being proposed.

We would be happy to meet with the BBC to discuss the implications in more detail if that would be helpful.

Submitted on behalf of the British Geriatrics Society (BGS) on 11 February 2019