



advice and support for older age
**Independent
Age**

**Independent Age's response to the BBC Age Related TV Licence
consultation**

January 2019



About Independent Age

We offer regular contact, a strong campaigning voice and free, impartial advice on the issues that matter to older people: care and support, money and benefits, health and mobility. A charity founded over 150 years ago, we are independent so older people can be too.

For more information, visit our website www.independentage.org

Registered charity number 210729

For more information about the submission please contact:



This document sets out Independent Age's response to BBC's current consultation on the future of the Age Related TV licence. It relates to Question 3 of the consultation only.

The government must take back responsibility for the concession

In Independent Age's view it is wholly inappropriate for the future of a benefit that impacts so many over 75s to be determined by the BBC. It was the government that took the decision to offer this benefit to the over 75s and it must be the government that decides if and how it should be reformed.

The analysis undertaken by Frontier Economics makes clear that the BBC is unable to maintain the concession without serious consequences for the breadth and quality of its output. This is a particular concern since we know that older people are disproportionate users of BBC services. While the concession is left in the hands of the BBC to determine, there is no opportunity for the package of benefits and entitlements to which older people are entitled to be considered in the round. Older people can only stand to lose out.

We are particularly concerned about the impact of changes to the concession on the poorest pensioners. While this is in theory could be dealt with by the proposal to link the free licence to Pension Credit, in reality this is highly problematic. The Department for Work and Pensions estimates show that nationally 40% (two in five) of those entitled to receive Pension Credit are not in receipt of the benefit. The reasons for not claiming can include a lack of awareness about the entitlement, a stigma associated with claiming, or the complexity of the form that must be completed. If a decision is taken to link the free TV licence to Pension Credit, not only will these people continue to lose out on vital financial support but they will also lose this much valued concession.

For these reasons we believe the government should take back responsibility for this concession. We have written to the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport to set out these concerns.

Accessing the consultation

We also have concerns about how easy it is for older people to engage with the consultation process. While paper forms of the consultation are available, we found that requesting one involved a lengthy automated phone call process. It also took three weeks to arrive. Given the large numbers of over 75s who are not online, we would hope that the consultation would have been designed to make offline participation as simple as possible.