

**Later Life Ambitions – email response**

### **Later Life Ambitions –TV licence concession for over-75s**

We are writing to express our concern about the BBC's consultation on free TV licence for over-75s. Later Life Ambitions strongly reject proposals to end or restrict the concession but feel that the survey does not allow for us to express our views properly in this regard.

Later Life Ambitions is a campaigning organisation that brings together the collective voices of over 250,000 pensioners through three organisations – the National Federation of Occupational Pensioners, the Civil Service Pensioners' Alliance and the National Association of Retired Police Officers. We campaign nationally, regionally and locally on a wide range of issues to improve the lives of our members, and older people more generally.

Lisa Ray, General Secretary of CSPA, one of the founding members of Later Life Ambitions was delighted to attend the BBC's roundtable event on 15 January to discuss the future funding of the concession. It was a valuable discussion, and we welcome the open and consultative approach taken by the BBC to engage with key stakeholders and groups concerned about the policy.

Later Life Ambitions strongly supports the work of the BBC and values the significant contribution it gives to public and cultural life in the UK and the benefits it provides for older people. We have enormous sympathy for the difficult position the BBC's has been put in and firmly believe that the funding of the concession should be the responsibility of Government.

Despite this, Later Life Ambitions does have outstanding concerns with regards to the wording and structure of the consultation. The proposals in the consultation are unhelpful and misleading. Respondents are restricted to answering in a specific way – forced to support unfair, damaging funding options. No option to reject the proposals is presented to respondents. We have consequently taken the decision not to formally respond to the survey and have subsequently set out our response in this letter.

To better understand our members views on the topic, Later Life Ambitions conducted a members' survey. We asked our members questions that were designed to mirror the BBC's consultation, asking their opinion on the specific alternative funding options presented in the consultation. Our survey ran between 27 November 2018 and 10 January 2019. Over 6,000 people responded to the survey, a record number, which clearly demonstrated the significant levels of concern our members have about the proposed changes. The results of the survey were:

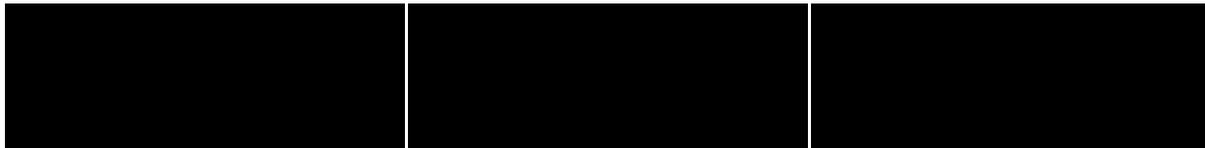
- 76% said that the responsibility for maintaining the benefit should be with the government.
- Over 60% of our members agreed that losing the concession would cause them to feel lonelier. Our members highlighted that television “helps enormously in combatting loneliness”, and many said they would “be alone without the concession”. 70% of our members also highlighted that their TV was their main means for staying up-to-date with news and current affairs – losing it would be “devastating”.

- The survey also showed that there is no consensus over which new proposed funding options should replace the current concession. When asked about the new proposals all the options received similar, low levels of support. 16% favoured linking free TV licences to over-75s who receive pension credit, 11% supported replacing the current system with a 50% concession for all over 75s, and 9% favoured linking free TV licences with anyone receiving pension credit, regardless of age.

While this is not a formal response to the consultation, we believe it summarises the concerns of our members, without having to select an option in the consultation document that we do not agree with. As outlined above, our primary message, which has the strong support of our members, is that the 2015 agreement made with the government should be renegotiated and the full concession continue to be funded.

We would to thank you again for allowing Later Life Ambitions to attend the roundtable on the future of the TV licence concession, and to express our disappointment with the position the BBC has been placed in. We hope this letter, and the findings of our survey, are of value. Finally, we would welcome your thoughts on our concerns about the wording and scope of the consultation

Yours sincerely,



Lisa Ray  
General Secretary  
Civil Service  
Pensioners' Alliance

Malcolm Booth  
CEO  
National Federation of  
Occupational Pensioners

Steve Edwards  
Chief Executive  
National Association of  
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