



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Lord Hall of Birkenhead
Director-General
BBC Broadcasting House
Portland Place
White City
London
W1A 1AA

6 February 2019

Dear Lord Hall

Re: TV Licences for the over-75s

I am writing in response to the public consultation into what the BBC should do when Government funding of licence fees for over-75s comes to an end in 2020.

I strongly believe that the Government should be funding TV Licences for the over-75s, and I am extremely concerned about the options the BBC are having to currently consider as alternatives, including scrapping licences altogether, raising the age threshold, or means-testing licences via Pension Credit.

I am sure you are aware that new figures produced by the House of Commons Library show that whichever option is chosen, millions of pensioners will lose their free licences, including more than 5,000 households in my Nottingham South constituency.

If the age threshold is raised to 80, for example, 1,680 of my constituents will lose their TV licence. If free TV licences are means-tested 3,810 will lose their free licences.

Many of my constituents have contacted me to tell me about their worries and how the proposed changes will affect them. Here are some examples:

'I live in a complex for elderly people and for some of them it is the only contact they have with the outside world for days at a time and some could not afford to buy a licence.'

'I am almost 83 years of age, disabled and living alone which means I get feeling very lonely and isolated. I do not get Pension Credit or other benefits so another expense to pay for would mean my TV would have to go.'

'They should be funded as the Government promised they should be.'

'Any increase would for many be impossible to meet, leaving no option but of no TV, which for many living alone would deprive them of their only contact with the outside world.'

This consultation comes at a time when too many older people are lonely and isolated – the Campaign to End Loneliness has found that 40 per cent of older people say their television is their main source of company. In addition, half of over 75s are living with a disability, and nearly a third are living in poverty.

It would be nothing short of a disaster for many of these people if they were to suddenly find themselves unable to watch TV without fear of prosecution.

So whilst your consultation seeks views on options for restricting access to free TV licences I find I cannot support any of them – although I am mindful of the wider impacts on the BBC and its services.

I hope you will consider the views of my constituents and over-75s around the country in your consultation and I look forward to hearing about an outcome which allows for the continuation of free TV licences.

Yours sincerely,

A black rectangular redaction box covering the signature of Lilian Greenwood MP.

Lilian Greenwood MP

Cc: Anne Bulford, Deputy Director-General

Sir David Clementi, Chairman