



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Tony Hall
Director General
BBC
Broadcasting House
Portland Place
London
W1A 1AA

Our Ref: BJ/110219

11 February 2019

Dear Lord Hall,

RE: TV Licence for over 75s

I am writing to respond to the BBC's consultation on your age-related TV - Licence policy. I understand the BBC are currently consulting on whether to scrap free licences completely, halve the rate of the concession, raise the age threshold or means test them.

Free TV licences are an important benefit for older people who suffer disproportionately from loneliness and social isolation. The Campaign to End Loneliness found that 40% of older people say their television is their main source of company. Age UK has found that over two million over-75s would have to go without TV or cut back on essentials such as heating or eating if the concession is scrapped, and the change would push 50,000 pensioners below the poverty line.

In my constituency of Birmingham Selly Oak changes to the BBC's TV Licence for over 75s would affect 5,700 people, with 3,560 of those people aged 80 or older. If free TV licences are linked to Pension Credit, altogether 68% of the oldest citizens in my constituency would cease to qualify for a free TV Licence and they will pay a total of £583,940 a year.

If free TV licences are scrapped completely, this will cost over-75s in Birmingham Selly Oak a combined total of £857,850 a year and if the age threshold is raised to 80, over-75s will pay a combined total of £322,070 a year.

By outsourcing responsibility for paying for free TV licences, this Government will be saving £745 million across the UK in 2021/22. This is in addition to the £220 million the Government will be saving that same year through changes to pension credit. This money, nearly a billion pounds, is coming directly out of the pockets of pensioners.

There is plenty of evidence which demonstrates the vital role TV can play in combatting isolation and loneliness for older people. You cannot put a monetary value on that and frankly it is scandalous to think these changes could push 50,000 pensioners below the poverty line. I am opposing the three options the BBC have proposed, it is simply not right that at a time when pensioners are often faced between eating or heating their homes that the government is heaping more costs on some of our most vulnerable citizens.

Yours sincerely

Steve McCabe MP
Birmingham Selly Oak

