

THIRD AGE TRUST

Response to the BBC Consultation [via email]

The Third Age Trust works with over 1000 member learning co-operative charities and organisations in the United Kingdom. They are called the University of the Third Age (U3As). Founded in 1983, the Trust works with all member U3As in the United Kingdom, it is a support, development and advisory agency for member U3As. To achieve this it centres its work on key aims which are to facilitate the growth of the U3A movement; to provide support for management and learning in U3As; to raise the profile of the U3A movement and to promote the benefits of learning in later life through self-help learning. They developed three guiding principles for the development of U3As which have provided resilience for the movement since inception, and enabled its significant growth to becoming a movement of 420,000 mainly older people in 2018.

The U3As vary in size from 30 people to 3000 people, with an average size of between 100 and 500 members. They comprise of learning groups (interest groups) which are chosen, led and developed by participants. There are over 30,000 interest groups in the United Kingdom, covering a diverse range of topic areas, from art appreciation, to Japanese to zoology. The charities are self-funding with each participant contributing a yearly amount averaging between £15 and £30. The U3A interest groups meet in members' homes, local halls and community facilities such as places of worship. The learning model is based on peer to peer learning. Members learn subjects together. They choose the subject areas, the content and the pace. Each person contributes to the learning process, and each contribution is equal in value and relevance. Any member in a U3A can start an interest group.

This is the Third Age Trusts' response to the BBC consultation. It is submissions from local U3As. It is not an aggregated view.

The Trust received a number of responses from members. These are outlined below.

- 1. Our feelings are that commercialism should be kept off the BBC at all costs but that there should be some form of rationalisation. Means testing is costly in itself and families containing an elderly resident benefit jointly and thus unfairly. However, as people get older, they are often alone with perhaps only the TV (BBC in particular) to enhance their lives. We feel therefore that the free licence should be retained for those over 80 whilst agreeing that there will still be some who have the means to pay but little can be done about this anomaly.*
- 2. I think that older people in particular, benefit from many of the services that the BBC provides. I think that the paramount consideration should be to retain the quality and breadth of the provision while ensuring that those on limited incomes do not lose out. The option of means testing at 75 does this.*

3. *I think the licence should be for the 80's and over as in line with the winter fuel payments, my 87 year old mum has the TV on day & night its her companion when no visitors or myself are with her*
4. *Having spoken informally to friends and colleagues, there is overwhelming support for the BBC to continue to provide free TV licences for the over 75s.*
5. *Not all pensioners watch telly or are able to use a bus pass. I would strongly support scrapping all so called benefits and paying all pensioners a pension equal to 30 hours at the minimum wage per week. The reduction in highly paid civil servants who administer all these schemes would go a long way to paying for this.*
6. *I believe the licence should remain free for those aged 80 plus if we have to economise and those of retirement age if on state pension only or terminal condition.*
7. *The radio & television are often the only companions some folk over the age of 75 have. A large number of these might find it difficult to pay a licence fee and so become even more isolated and lonely. Please do not make them pay a licence fee.*
8. *In recognition of the fact that the scheme will take money from other BBC activities I feel that the scheme should be retained but only for households where all individuals are aged 75 or over. As the scheme stands at the moment the household only needs to have one individual for the entire household to qualify so this includes all households where elderly relatives are living with younger family members, many of whom will be working and capable of paying for a TV licence.*
9. *Make the BBC iPlayer a subscription service. For those with a TV licence that would be their subscription fee. For those without a TV licence iPlayer could operate on a pay per view system similar to commercial streaming businesses. This would generate additional income for the BBC, some of which could be offset against the concessionary licence scheme for those aged 75 and over.*
10. *I do not see why we should benefit from a free licence at an expense to the BBC. Most of us pensioners can well afford to pay for a licence, and those who can't should be given an allowance through the tax system. This would probably save money in administration, too.*

11. Surely it is a very paltry act to take back yet another benefit enjoyed by our over 75s. We no longer have subsidised further education and many of us cannot afford to pay the exorbitant fees for these classes. Now those of us on just the old age pension will find it hard to afford the tv licence . Television is a life saver for so many lonely elderly people.

12. We are against the proposal to scrap free TV for the over 75's.

13. Along with many that have commented on the BBC plan to remove the free TV licences for over 75's I would agree with those who advocate continuing with the free licences as most people receiving them have paid taxes for 50 years or more and in their later years, need and deserve to be able to use their televisions to combat loneliness and compensate for

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Chief Executive
The Third Age Trust