

The Rt Hon Jeremy Wright MP  
Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport  
Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport  
100 Parliament Street  
London  
SW1A 2BQ

Dear Secretary of State

**Later Life Ambitions – BBC consultation on the TV licence concession for over-75s**

We are writing to urge the government to continue funding the TV licence concession for over-75s. We believe that it is grossly unfair that the future funding of the concession has been pushed on to the BBC. The BBC is an unelected body and should not be expected to make crucial decisions about a benefit that thousands of older people rely on. Removing the concession will disadvantage many older people who suffer disproportionately from loneliness and social isolation.

We believe that the Treasury should continue subsidising the TV Licence concession for over-75s – transferring responsibility for this key benefit to the BBC would harm some of the most vulnerable in society. The government must prioritise implementing a revised funding formula that maintains the free TV license.

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.

The TV licence concession is hugely significant to over-75s. In a survey of our members that over 6000 older people responded to, more than three quarters said that the responsibility for maintaining the benefit should be with the government. Many stated that the government's behaviour was a "*disgrace*", "*deeply unfair*", and "*breaks a Conservative election pledge*". It was also repeatedly highlighted that it "*would not go unnoticed by older voters*".

As you will be aware, despite recent progress, a significant number of older people live on very low incomes and would struggle to pay the licence fee if required to do so. According to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, there are 1.9 million pensioners living in poverty, with the number increasing among single, renting, and BAME pensioners. Removing the concession will undoubtedly harm many of the most vulnerable in society. Means testing the concession is also inadequate. The example of pension credit shows that older, vulnerable people often fail to collect benefits because they are unable to properly engage with the necessary channels.

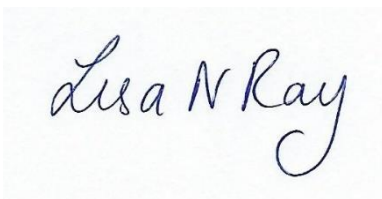
We are also concerned that removing or diluting the concession will increase the prevalence of loneliness in older people. Age UK estimates 2 million older people in the UK consistently feel lonely and over 60% of our members agreed that losing the concession would make this issue worse for them. Our 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"*.

Later Life Ambitions would like the government to uphold their 2017 manifesto commitment to maintain this benefit. Any of the new proposal would be harmful to some of the most vulnerable in society. Spending decisions are the responsibility of the government. Burdening the BBC, an unelected body, with the cost of this crucial benefit is an unprecedented and dangerous move.

We believe that it is grossly unfair that the future funding of the concession has been pushed on to the BBC. The cannot be expected to make crucial decisions about a benefit that thousands of older people rely on.

We hope that you will listen to the concerns of older people and are able to meet to discuss in more detail. If you are able, please liaise with Tristan Westgate on [t.westgate@connectpa.co.uk](mailto:t.westgate@connectpa.co.uk) or call 020 7592 9490.

Yours sincerely



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