

BRIEFING: FREE TV LICENCES FOR OVER 75s

Later Life Ambitions (LLA) brings together the collective voices of over a quarter of a million 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.

LLA strongly disagrees with the decision to remove free TV licenses to most over 75s, for the following reasons:

- 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.
- Linking the free TV licence to Pension Credit is an inaccurate, untested and inappropriate measurement; not all pensioners that are eligible for Pension Credit claim this benefit.
- The Government should uphold the Conservative Party's 2017 manifesto commitment to maintain this benefit.

We believe the Government must take back responsibility for the free TV licence.

Our position is underpinned by the views of over 6,000 older people that took part in an LLA survey. This survey found that:

- 76% of respondents said that the responsibility for maintaining the benefit should be with the Government.
- Over 60% 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.
- 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"*.

There is a significant amount of opposition to the decision to remove the free TV licence to most over 75s. However, LLA is pleased by the growing number of Parliamentarians that are advocating for the Government to resume funding responsibility for this key support for older people.

We urge MPs to use the opportunity presented by this Westminster Hall debate to call for the free TV licence to remain for everyone over 75.

For more information about Later Life Ambitions, please contact laterlife@connectpa.co.uk.