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21 May 2020

Sir David Clementi,
Chair, BBC Board
British Broadcasting Corporation
Portland Place
LONDON
W1A 1AA

Dear Sir David,

Re: Extension of Suspension of free TV licence for over 75s

It has been some time since we contacted you in regard to the decision to restrict the free TV licence to those over 75 on pension credit.

We were supportive of your move to suspend the implementation of your decision until 1 August. However, there is a great deal of confusion in that individuals are still receiving letters demanding payment of the licence fee whilst the country is in lockdown with COVID-19. It would be much appreciated if you could find a way of letting people know they should not worry about their TV licence fee whilst dealing with the outcomes of the virus.

Older people have been isolated from their friends and family and unable to do the things that would keep them both physically and mentally well for over 8 weeks now. During this time, the TV and radio will have been the only source of information they can access on the latest updates given by the government.

The NPC would like to propose that the BBC continue the suspension of the introduction of the policy of pension credit only access to a free TV licence until the end of the year. Better still, we would like it to remain until such time as the BBC Charter is up for review. At that point, if there is cause to believe that the free TV licence should be abandoned, then at least stakeholders will see an open and transparent debate and conclusion – something sadly missing from the current agreement.

Perhaps a public statement by yourself on behalf of the BBC extending the current period of suspension and also assuring individuals that if they are over 75 they should not be paying for a TV licence at this moment in time.

We understand that this is a difficult time for everyone, including the BBC. Older people have borne the brunt of COVID-19 with the highest proportion of deaths being reported in the age groups 75-90. Perhaps this is the time for kindness and understanding?

We have also written to the DCMS and the Prime Minister (copies enclosed) in an effort to get the Prime Minister to fulfil his promise made in November 2019. At that time, he is quoted as saying: *'it is crucial to retain the benefit'* and that he *'aimed to thrash out a new funding formula.'* Since then complete inactivity when there was enough time to do the work prior to the virus reaching the UK.

The NPC will continue to campaign for a free TV licence to be made available to all those over 75 in the UK and we will contact you again if and when we have a response from the DCMS and/or the Prime Minister.

Your sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jan Shortt', written in a cursive style.

Jan Shortt
General Secretary

Enc. Letter to Secretary of State, Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport
Letter to Prime Minister