

# Public Service Pensioners' Council

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Sir David Clementi  
Chairman, BBC Board  
BBC Broadcasting House  
Portland Place  
London  
W1A 1AA

13 July 2020

Dear Sir David

## **BBC ANNOUNCEMENT OF WITHDRAWAL OF TV LICENCE CONCESSION FROM 1 AUGUST**

On behalf of the Public Service Pensioners' Council, representing over 1 million retired public servants, I wish to register our deep disappointment about the decision you announced on 9 July to withdraw the free tv licence concession from over 3 Million pensioners over age 75 who do not claim pension credit.

The TV licence concession is hugely important to many older people, for helping to fight feelings of loneliness. The isolation experienced during the Covid-19 has made this even more apparent. We appreciate the considerable financial pressures that the BBC are under at this time. However, this is not the solution. This should have been a decision taken by Government rather than the BBC Board.

The Corporation should not have agreed to fund this concession as part of the 2015 review of the licence fee and left itself in the position of having to withdraw an important Universal Pensioner Benefit. Such non-means tested benefits, were introduced in response to the the acknowledged relative low value of the basic State Pension relative to earnings in this country. .

I would also highlight the following points:

- The BBC is an unelected body and should not have been expected to make crucial decisions about a benefit that thousands of older people rely on.
- Removing the concession from over 3 million over-75 year olds 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. Whilst the BBC has highlighted that 1.5 million of the 3.75 million over-75's are eligible to claim pension credits, the take up rate is only around 60% primarily because of the perceived stigma of many older people to claim a means-tested benefit.

**General Secretary: David Luxton**

PSPC urge the BBC to reflect on the response to your announcement last week and use your undoubted influence leverage with DCMS and the Government to have the funding of the free tv licence concession taken back to Government. This would enable the BBC to focus on its primary purpose as a public service broadcaster to inform, educate, and entertain, and not act as an agent of the welfare state, which must continue to be a responsibility of the Government.

I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely

**David Luxton**  
General Secretary  
Public Service Pensioners` Council

(Sent by email 13-7-20)