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21 May 2020

The Rt. Hon. Oliver Dowden CBE MP  
Secretary of State  
Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport  
100 Parliament Square  
Westminster  
London  
SW1A 2BQ

Dear Secretary of State,

**Re: Free TV licence for over 75s**

The National Pensioners Convention is the largest campaigning organisation for older people in the UK. We believe every pensioner has the right to choice, dignity, independence and security as an integral and valued member of society.

We were pleased that the BBC suspended the implementation of the free TV licence decision until 1 August. As you will see from the copy of our letter written to them today, the NPC is asking for the suspension to continue until at least the end of the year and better still until such time as the BBC charter is ready for renewal. Thank you for suggesting the same action even though no timescale was attached.

Given that older people have already been in lockdown due to COVID-19 longer than other age group and the indications are that they will remain so for some time to come, access to TV and radio is crucial. Isolation and loneliness was a major concern before the virus came to the UK – it is even more so now.

In November 2019 the Prime Minister was 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.

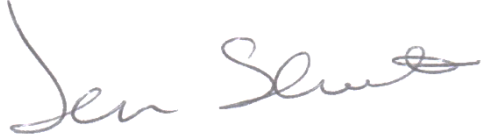
The NPC is looking to you as Secretary of State for DCMS to encourage the Prime Minister to act on that promise as a matter of urgency in order to ensure that those over 75 do not pay for their TV licence in the future.

Older people have borne the brunt of COVID-19 with the highest proportion of deaths being reported in the age groups 75-90. As we have suggested to the BBC, perhaps this is the time for kindness and understanding?

The ability for older people to pay their bills at this moment in time is significantly diminished and therefore the most logical and sensible solution would be for a joint message from the BBC and the DCMS (on behalf of the government) to state that over 75s need not worry about paying their licence fee.

We look forward to your response and will contact you again as and when we receive communication from the BBC and the Prime Minister.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in grey ink, appearing to read 'Jan Shortt', with a stylized flourish at the end.

**Jan Shortt**  
**General Secretary**

**Enc. Letter to Chairman of BBC**  
**Letter to the Prime Minister**