

**Campaigning for the rights of older people**

**\*\*NEWS UPDATE*– Immediate Release*\*\***

*NPC writes to Prime Minister Boris Johnson*

**PM & BBC must find long term solution to free TV licences for oldest & most vulnerable**



**The NPC is appealing to the Prime Minister and the BBC to look beyond another extension of the free TV licence for over 75’s and seek a permanent solution.**

Everyone over 75 was due to start paying the £157.50 licence fee from 1st August – extended from 1st June - to continue watching TV, unless they can prove they are on Pension Credit.

It has now been reported that the BBC is planning another extension to the free licence until at least October.

The NPC has now written to Prime Minister Boris Johnson and Department of Culture and Media Secretary, Oliver Dowden, urging them to negotiate a long term deal on the benefit with the BBC, who have been handed responsibility for it by the government.

Every MP will also receive a letter from the NPC asking that they press for a solution to avoid our oldest and most vulnerable being forced to switch off, when many - particularly those living alone - may still be fearful of going out because of Covid-19.

Jan Shortt, General Secretary of the NPC said members across the UK plan to support the call to action by writing to their local MP’s on the issue.

She commented: “Millions of pensioners may still face the decision on whether to eat, heat their homes or buy a TV licence. In the 21st century that choice should never have to be made.

“The NPC hopes that negotiations will take place which allow both the government and the BBC to show their support for vulnerable older people and put bold words into positive action.”

Prime Minister Boris Johnson has already stated that it is “crucial” to retain the benefit, while dozens of Ministers and MP’s on all sides have also voiced support for it. But so far, the only concession was the delay in the introduction of the fee payment from 1st June to 1st August, and now October.

**It is feared that tens of thousands of older people will be pushed into poverty if they are forced to pay to keep their televisions – often their only link with the outside world.**

Commenting, Jan Shortt said: “There are now 1.9 million pensioners living in poverty in the UK (Age UK).  It is expected that a further 50,000 and possibly more, who are not on pension credit will be pushed into poverty.  It is of no use to them to have access to a ‘simple repayment scheme’ for the TV licence fee if the money is not there in the first place.

“There are fundamental issues around the government abdicating its responsibilities for an element of universal entitlements that supplements the poorest state pension in the economically developed world. We believe that social welfare is the sole remit of the government in power, not an unelected, Broadcasting Company.”

*\*The full text of the letters to the Prime Minister, the Culture Secretary Oliver Dowden, and all other Members of Parliament are attached.*

**Ends**

For more information please contact:

**Beverley Morrison**

Campaign & Media Officer

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**National Pensioners Convention**

**​Telephone: 0208 425 2367 *or* 07588 779515**

[**bevmorrison@npcuk.org**](mailto:bevmorrison@npcuk.org) **or** [**info@npcuk.org**](mailto:info@npcuk.org)

**\*The National Pensioners Convention***was set up in 1979 to champion the rights and welfare of the UK’s older people. It now represents more than 1.5 million people in over 1,000 different organisations across the UK and holds an Annual Convention – a pensioners’ parliament - to debate issues affecting older people****.***

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