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Digital, Culture, Media and
Sport Committee

BBC Annual Report and Accounts 2018–19: TV licences for over 75s

Sixteenth Report of Session 2017–19

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to the report*

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The Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee

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Summary

The BBC's decision to restrict free TV licences for over 75s to those households in receipt of Pension Credit from 2020 has been met with widespread consternation, not least from people that will be directly affected by the changes.

In July 2015 the BBC had accepted the request made by the Government that it should take over the responsibility of funding free TV licences for all over 75s from 2020. It was estimated that this would cost around £745 million a year, and in return the Government introduced reforms to BBC funding, including an agreement that the overall licence fee should increase in line with the consumer price inflation index, which have been valued at £505 million.

Our predecessor Committee in its 2016 report on the BBC Charter renewal was critical of the rushed and secret nature of these negotiations. The BBC has complained about the approach taken by the Government, but we found little evidence of transparency in the Corporation's decision-making either.

The Committee believes that it was wrong of the then Government to seek to bounce the BBC into accepting these measures in the way it did. This was a flawed process on all sides. The next round of negotiations—due to take place in 2021—must be conducted in a wholly different way, with a sensible timescale, parliamentary oversight and meaningful involvement of licence fee payers. Between them, the Government and the BBC should agree a funding formula that maintains the free over 75s licence fees.

This dispute has also revealed a concerning picture about the overall finances of the BBC. It is clear that the value of the overall licence fee to the BBC is being eroded by rapidly increasing production costs, and this is a trend that is unlikely to change in the near future.

There is some evidence that the BBC is continuing to take steps to resolve the gender pay issues that we detailed in our 2018 report but there is still a long way to go. Many employees who have been treated unfairly are still waiting too long for an outcome. We will continue to keep a close interest in this issue.

The BBC has accepted responsibility for meeting the liabilities for contractors facing large tax bills as a consequence of working through Personal Service Companies. This is a welcome development. However, we remain concerned that this issue is one of many arising from poor management, leadership and governance at the BBC.

Introduction

1. Under the BBC Charter, the broadcaster is required to lay its Annual Report and Accounts before Parliament. The DCMS Committee scrutinises these reports annually to examine the extent to which the broadcaster is meeting its public service obligations. Our focus in this year’s inquiry was primarily on the BBC’s announcement of changes to the licence fee concession for people over 75. The BBC’s decision means that, from the summer of 2020, only households where a resident is both over 75 and in receipt of Pension Credit will be eligible for a free TV licence.

2. The report covers the background and implications of this important issue. In addition, we have used our 2019 inquiry to fulfil our commitment to return to the serious issues of equal pay and use of personal service companies that we raised in our 2018 report on the BBC.

1 TV licences for over 75s

3. Everyone in the UK who watches or records BBC television programmes as they are broadcast, or who watches or downloads BBC content on iPlayer, must be covered by a valid TV licence.¹ TV licences for people over 75 have been free since November 2000, and the cost was initially met by a grant made from the Department for Work and Pensions. In July 2015, a funding settlement was agreed between the Government and the BBC which meant that the BBC would take over the funding of free licences for the over 75s from June 2020. The Government has reduced the amount of money it provides during the interim period, with a view to providing no further funding from 2020.

4. In June 2019 the BBC announced changes to the scheme which mean that from June 2020 only a household with someone aged over 75 and who receives Pension Credit will be eligible for a free TV licence. The BBC estimates that approximately two-thirds of people over 75 currently claiming a free licence will no longer be eligible.²

5. The BBC undertook a comprehensive consultation exercise on the future licence fee structure for over 75s during 2018 and 2019, including commissioning external analysis of different policy options, conducting an equality impact assessment and running a 12-week public consultation.³ More than 190,000 people shared their views with the BBC, the largest response that the broadcaster has ever received.⁴ Separately, over 600,000 people took part in a campaign run by Age UK to retain free licences, the largest in the charity's history.⁵ It is clear that many people feel strongly about this issue. The aim of our inquiry was not to re-run the consultation that the BBC has undertaken—which BBC Chairman Sir David Clementi described as “almost without precedent”⁶—but, rather, to examine the decision-making behind the position that the BBC is currently in, the policy and legal framework for the concession, and how the proposed new scheme will work in practice.

Governance and oversight of the decision

6. The decision to pass responsibility for licence fee concessions from the Government to the BBC was taken as part of the broadcaster's 2015 funding settlement. Our predecessor committee scrutinised this process in detail at the time and expressed “dismay” that the negotiations were conducted in “a hasty and secretive manner”.⁷ This was the second time that such an abrupt negotiation had taken place. In 2010 the Government had previously proposed that the BBC take on responsibility for the over 75 licence fee concession which the BBC made clear was “wholly unacceptable”.⁸ Subsequently, “faced with a warning that Trust members would resign en bloc, the Government did not pursue the demand”.⁹

1 The legal basis for this requirement is set out in the [Communications Act 2003](#) and the [Communications \(Television Licensing\) Regulations 2004](#)

2 [BBC Age-related TV licence policy decision document](#) June 2019

3 [BBC Age-related TV licence policy decision document](#) June 2019

4 [BBC Age-related TV licence policy decision document](#) June 2019

5 Age UK [[BBR0013](#)] para 3.1, Q41

6 Q42

7 Culture, Media and Sport Committee First Report of Session 2015–16 [BBC Charter Review](#) HC 398 para 10

8 Culture, Media and Sport Committee First Report of Session 2015–16 [BBC Charter Review](#) HC 398 para 7

9 Culture, Media and Sport Committee First Report of Session 2015–16 [BBC Charter Review](#) HC 398 para 7

7. When the BBC Director-General Lord Hall gave evidence to the Committee on 17th July 2019, along with Sir David Clementi, we wanted to understand how the BBC had come to accept the Government’s licence fee proposals in July 2015. The Government first informed the BBC on 29th June of its intention to end its funding of free TV licences for the over 75s and transfer this liability to the Corporation from 2020. It was estimated that were the BBC to fully fund this measure that it would cost them approximately £745m a year by 2021/22.

8. Lord Hall told the Committee that discussions then took place “over a period of a few days behind closed doors. Nobody knew anything about it. It was just a few people negotiating something as fundamental as this”.¹⁰ Lord Hall was clear that, although he was involved at every stage of the negotiations with the Government, ultimately the decision to accept or reject the Government’s proposal was for the BBC Trust to make. He told the Committee that:

This is the Trust’s decision. The Trust was set up to be the governing body of the BBC. I communicated directly with Rona Fairhead¹¹ as Chair of the Trust. I was reporting into her. I made it very clear to the Chancellor of the Exchequer. This was a Trust decision. I had done my bit there with what I felt was the right thing to do. It was a Trust decision in the end to say yay or nay.¹²

9. There are published minutes available for meetings of the BBC Trust, the executive body for the broadcaster at the time, held on 29 June, 2 July, 3 July, 4 July, and 6 July 2015; the day that the final decision was made. In its initial discussion on 29 June the Trust “expressed serious concern about[...] [the proposal’s] impact on the BBC’s independence and the scale of its potential impact on BBC services”.¹³

10. On 2 July the Trust agreed that if the Government’s proposal were to “go ahead without mitigation, it was likely to have a significant impact on BBC services, unless there was a meaningful increase in the licence fee”.¹⁴ At a meeting on 3 July between Rona Fairhead and Lord Hall, with the then Chancellor of the Exchequer an agreement was reached on what ‘mitigation’ could be provided to the BBC. Three key measures were agreed to bolster the financial position of the Corporation:

- The Government agreed to bring forward legislation to modernise the licence fee to cover all public service broadcast catch-up TV. However, in subsequent legislation the Government only included iPlayer in the provisions, meaning that the income to the BBC was lower than expected at around £45 million a year by 2021/22.
- The Government returned the proportion of licence fee money that they had used to fund the roll-out of broadband to the broadcaster, worth £150 million a year by 2021/22.

10 Q1

11 Ms Fairhead was Chair of the BBC Trust from 2014 to 2016.

12 Q8

13 [Minutes of the BBC Trust meeting held on Monday 29 June 2015](#) [accessed on 11 September 2019]

14 [Minutes of the BBC Trust meeting held on Thursday 2 July 2015](#) [accessed on 11 September 2019]

- There were increases to the licence fee linked to inflation, which will be worth £310 million a year by 2021/22.¹⁵

11. The minutes of a conference call between members of the board of BBC Trust the following day, 4 July, note that: “Having spoken to the Chairman [of the BBC Trust] and consulted with key executives, the Director-General [Lord Hall] agreed that he would recommend the deal to his Executive Board”. It is further minuted that: “Trust members then considered the impact of the arrangements and concluded that they would need to discuss them with the Director-General and Managing Director of Finance and Operations on 6 July. Members agreed that a key question would be whether the financial impact of the settlement could be absorbed by efficiency savings or whether it would require changes to the BBC services”.¹⁶

12. The Trust meeting on 6 July would be the final BBC meeting to agree the Government’s proposals on the licence fee and where the Director-General would address the “key question” about the impact on the BBC’s finances. The minutes of the meeting record that the BBC Executive Board’s position was “to accept the Government’s decision to transfer the cost of the over 75s TV licences to the BBC, on the basis of the Government’s proposed mitigations and its support for the BBC’s long-term financial stability. The Director-General said the Executive would work to develop a strategic plan so the BBC was ready to live within the new financial parameters and deliver the further savings and changes to its services which would be required in the next Charter period”.¹⁷

13. Following guidance given by the Director-General, the members of the BBC Trust agreed that as a consequence of the mitigations offered and because “what the Government had said about linking the licence fee to CPI would provide the BBC with a sufficient degree of financial stability, the Trust would not oppose the change being made to the over 75s concession”.¹⁸ This point was reiterated by Rona Fairhead in her letter to the Government on behalf of the Trust, sent that same day, which confirmed that as a consequence of the mitigations that had been offered, “and in particular with the assurance that the licence fee (of £145.50) will rise in line with CPI over the next Charter Period, we will not oppose the change being made. The BBC Executive Board has confirmed to the Trust that it accepts the decision on this basis”.¹⁹ In a press statement made following its announcement, Lord Hall described the financial settlement reached between the BBC and the Government as “a strong deal” and said that “the Government’s decision here to put the cost of the over 75s on us has been more than matched by the deal coming back for the BBC”.²⁰

14. The BBC now states that even with the mitigations offered by the Government, continuing to fund licences for all over 75s “would require unprecedented closures of services, including BBC Two, BBC Four, the BBC News Channel, the BBC Scotland channel, Radio 5live and 5live Sports Extra, and a number of local radio stations”.²¹ However this is radically different to both what it said at the time and the advice given by the Director-General to the BBC Trust board on 6 July 2015. It may well be that the reason

15 BBC supplementary written evidence [BBR0040]

16 [Minutes of the BBC Trust meeting held on Saturday 4 July 2015](#) [accessed on 11 September 2019]

17 [Minutes of the BBC Trust meeting held on Monday 6 July](#) [accessed on 11 September 2019]

18 [Minutes of the BBC Trust meeting held on Monday 6 July](#) [accessed on 11 September 2019]

19 [Letter from Rona Fairhead to Chancellor of the Exchequer and Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport](#) 6 July 2015

20 The Guardian [Tony Hall rejects claims licence fee deal turns BBC into a branch of the DWP](#) 7 July 2015

21 BBC [Age-related TV licence policy decision document](#) June 2019

for this disparity is that the BBC never intended to fully fund the over 75s licences beyond 2020, but unsurprisingly this is not reflected in the minutes of their meetings at the time of the negotiations. When the Committee asked Lord Hall about the reassurances he had given to the Trust about the BBC’s finances at the meeting of the 6 July he said that the minutes of the meeting were “inadequate”.²²

15. The decision of the BBC Trust to “not oppose” the phasing out of Government funding for the free licence fees for the over 75s was based on the advice it received from the Director-General, who had also told them that he would be recommending the deal to his own Executive Board. The BBC told us “during the period between 29 June and 7 July 2015, the BBC Executive Board²³ met five times either in full or in part”.²⁴ However, the only publicly available minutes of meetings of the BBC Executive Board during this period are from 7 July 2015, which is after the decision had already been made. In further written evidence to our inquiry the BBC shared the minutes of an Executive Board meeting held on 29 June 2015 which state “the Executive Board noted and discussed the latest activity regarding Charter Review and discussed the future funding of the BBC”.²⁵ There are no further published records available, including of which members of the Executive Board were involved in the discussions.

16. In its written evidence, the National Union of Journalists commented:

The licence fee pot has been seen an easy touch for cash grabs by the government. Passing on its responsibilities to the BBC in licence-fee settlements in the past decade has seen budgets cut by one-fifth. This has included making the BBC cover the costs of digital switchover from analogue TV; rural broadband rollout; local TV; funding of Welsh-language channel S4C, paying for the World Service and Monitoring Service; financing journalists employed by local newspapers to cover local democracy, funding commercial broadcasters to make children’s TV and radio.²⁶

17. There is no transparency about the 2015 negotiations between the BBC and the Government over future funding and the licence fee concession. The criticism that funding negotiations should not have happened “behind closed doors” applies as much to the BBC as it does to the Government. It is regrettable that the minutes of the meetings that took place during the funding settlement agreement period are incomplete. The significance of these discussions and decisions means that they should have been properly recorded, regardless of the urgency of the situation.

18. The Committee shares concerns raised by the BBC that this was a flawed process on all sides that gave no opportunity for consultation with licence fee payers. It was wrong of the then Government to seek to bounce the BBC into accepting these measures in the way it did.

19. The Committee acknowledges that the BBC now operates under a new governance structure where the Trust and the Executive have now been combined into a single Unitary Board. However, we believe that the Director-General should have sought

22 Q100

23 The BBC Executive Board comprises the most senior managers at the broadcaster.

24 BBC additional further supplementary written evidence [BBR0041]

25 BBC additional further supplementary written evidence [BBR0042]

26 NUJ [BBR0015] para 8

the formal agreement of the Executive Board, as he said he was going to do on 4 July 2015, before recommending to the Trust the deal struck between the Government and the BBC. We would hope that the new Unitary Board will follow a more clear and accountable process in agreeing the next licence fee settlement with the Government.

20. *In response to this report the Government and the BBC should set out the steps that they are taking to ensure that the licence fee negotiations in 2021 are conducted in a wholly different way, with a sensible timescale, parliamentary oversight and involvement of licence fee payers.* Transparency is key to upholding the high standards that the public expect from the BBC, and to ensure that the BBC does not become an easy source of funds for the Government to draw upon to cover shortfalls in other areas of public expenditure.

The consequences of the deal

21. The settlement that the BBC reached with the Government in 2015 was based on a phasing-out of Government funding for the over 75 licence fee concession over the following five years. There have been reductions in the amount provided by the Government annually, and the cost will fully transfer to the BBC in 2020.

22. In response to an oral question in July 2019, the then Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport Rt Hon Jeremy Wright QC MP outlined how the BBC has been making an increasing contribution to the concession. He said:

Last year and this financial year, the BBC has been sharing with the Government the cost of the over 75 licence concession. Last year, the cost of the concession was £677 million. The Government paid £468 and the BBC paid £209 million. This financial year, the cost is £700 million. The Government paid £247 million and the BBC paid £453 million. The cost of the concession as the BBC intends to operate it from 2020 onwards is, by its estimate, £260 million. That is substantially less than the BBC is paying towards to the concession this financial year. The BBC would say, and I would agree with it, that it is able to supply a good service this year while still paying £453 million towards that concession.²⁷

23. The aim of the measures outlined in paragraph 10, which will be worth £505 million annually,²⁸ was to help the broadcaster offset the cost of the over 75 licence fee concession, and anticipated inflationary costs. Indeed, the BBC's contribution to the cost of meeting the over 75 concession will in fact fall from £453 million this year to an estimated 3260 million next year. However, the BBC told us that inflationary costs have been higher than expected, with an anticipated £470 million a year increase in costs by 2020/21, and that the 2015 measures do not generate enough money to cover the £750 million annual cost of the over 75 concession. Lord Hall told us: “we entered into it thinking that, if we could reform—and that was a big question because we had to go through a consultation and it might have gone the other way—and if other things to do with CPI or with inflation in the media industry and other things worked out okay, we could probably get through. That is what we thought. But, as you have been suggesting, life does not work out like that”.²⁹

27 HC Deb [TV Licences for over 75s](#) 4 July 2019 Col 1239 [Commons oral answer]

28 All figures taken from BBC supplementary written evidence [\[BBR0040\]](#)

29 Q24

24. Lord Hall told us the BBC “did not get our numbers wrong”³⁰ as it could not have foreseen that the Government would not cover all public service broadcast TV, and “did not reckon at that time with quite the inflation that would come from Netflix and others”.³¹ Written evidence supplied to the Committee by the BBC states that production costs for high-end drama have risen by 60% over the last five years.³² The most recent figures from Ofcom indicate that younger audiences now spend on average more than twice as much time each day watching YouTube than they do watching BBC1, BBC2, ITV1, Channel 4 and Channel 5 combined.³³

25. In response to the tapering off of the money that the Government provides towards the over 75 concession, the BBC has been spending reserves that it built up earlier in the funding settlement period. Chief Financial Officer Glyn Isherwood told us “we are currently using some of the cash reserves built up at the start of the charter period. We are drawing down those. In each year, we are running at a deficit. We did that in 2018–19. We will do that in 2019–20. We need to reverse that and get income to sustain our services and build up our cash reserves”.³⁴

26. It is clear from some of the written evidence that we have received that people currently eligible for the concession have not been expecting to make any changes to their household finances. Members of the public who contacted us described the decision as a “cruel blow”,³⁵ “wrong”,³⁶ said that they were “angered”³⁷ and told us the changes “impose an additional financial burden we cannot afford”.³⁸ A number of pieces of evidence also raised the issue of BBC salaries as a way to offset some of the costs. At the launch of the 2018/19 Annual Report David Clementi commented “it is clear from this report that even if we employed no stars paid more than £150,000 per annum that would save around £20m, a fraction of the £745m and rising we would need if we extended the concession to all”.³⁹

27. We accept that the BBC could not necessarily have anticipated the fluctuation in income that has occurred since the financial settlement was agreed in 2015. However, the fact that the broadcaster has been using reserves to cover the shortfall demonstrates that these events did not occur suddenly. The BBC could have acted earlier to communicate the likelihood that they would not be able to fund a full licence fee concession for people over 75 from 2020. The evidence that we have received indicates that the outcome of the consultation was a surprise to people who will be affected, and the handling of the announcement has served to erode public confidence in the way that the BBC spends its money.

28. The debate on the funding of TV licences for the over 75s has also uncovered a more disturbing picture of the BBCs overall finances which will no doubt come under more scrutiny during the next licence fee review. The BBC’s income from the licence fee even with an annual inflationary price increase is not keeping pace with the rising costs of production, and this problem is only likely to get worse.

30 Q27

31 Q27

32 BBC supplementary written evidence [BBR0040]

33 Ofcom [Media Nations 2019](#) 7 August 2019

34 Q60

35 Mrs Maureen Jones [BBR0011]

36 Violet Streeter [BBR0020]

37 Colin South [BBR0001]

38 Rev. James Lee [BBR0025]

39 The Telegraph [BBC hands stars £11m pay rise - while cutting free licences for over-75s](#) 2 July 2019

29. As a result of rising costs and changing viewing habits, particularly amongst the under 34s who now spend on average more than twice as much time each day watching YouTube than they do BBC 1, BBC2, ITV 1, Channel 4 and Channel 5 combined, there is a danger that the value of the licence fee will continue to diminish in the coming years.

The policy framework

30. Following the BBC’s June 2019 announcement on the future of the over 75 concession, the then Prime Minister’s Official Spokesman commented “we are very disappointed with this decision. We have been clear that we expected the BBC to continue this concession”.⁴⁰ In August 2019 Prime Minister Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP stated “the BBC received a settlement that was conditional upon their paying for TV licences for the over-75s. They should cough up”.⁴¹

31. However, Lord Hall told us:

The idea that we are not honouring the original agreement is wrong and I really refute that and I resent it. We are absolutely honouring the agreement we came to with George Osborne and John Whittingdale to the T. Honestly, if you want to come out and say things like, “You are not honouring the agreement”, you are wrong. It is absolutely crucial that I establish this because we are carrying out what the Government said we should do to the T.⁴²

Sir David Clementi echoed Lord Hall’s words: “We have followed the Digital Economy Act,⁴³ agreed by this Parliament, agreed in the 2015 settlement. We have followed it to the letter”.⁴⁴

32. Following the oral evidence session, the BBC sent us the correspondence between the Corporation and the Government at the time of the 2015 settlement. A letter from the BBC to the Government on 6 July 2015 states that the Executive Board “accepts the decision to transfer the cost of the over 75s TV licences, on the agreed terms”.⁴⁵ A letter in response from the then Chancellor of the Exchequer Rt Hon George Osborne MP and the then Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport Rt Hon John Whittingdale MP states: “At your request the BBC will take responsibility for this policy following that, and is of course able to ask for voluntary payment of the licence fee before that from over 75s”.⁴⁶ Lord Hall told us “everybody knew that reform was likely, not inevitable but likely”.⁴⁷

40 The Telegraph [Theresa May urges BBC to rethink plan to scrap free TV licences for most over-75s](#) 10 June 2019

41 The Guardian [Boris Johnson says BBC should ‘cough up’ for TV licences of over-75s](#) 26 August 2019

42 Q19

43 Section 89 of the Digital Economy Act sets out that responsibility for the cost of the concession will fully transfer to the BBC in June 2020. House of Commons Library [Free TV Licences for the over 75s](#) Briefing Paper 4955, 29 August 2019

44 Q42

45 BBC supplementary written evidence [\[BBR0040\]](#)

46 Ibid

47 Q30

33. The correspondence makes clear that responsibility for the policy was passed to the BBC with effect from 2020, that the BBC had the powers to make changes to the fee structure, and that this was at the BBC’s request. However, Lord Hall told us that the BBC had taken on the policy “really unwillingly”⁴⁸ and “we had no choice whatsoever other than to take that on”.⁴⁹ In their evidence, production company Stonehenge Films said: “this was not the BBC’s decision. It was an action forced upon it by government—attempting to shift the blame for what was likely to be a deeply unpopular cut in services onto another public institution”.⁵⁰

34. In its 2017 General Election manifesto, the Conservative party stated that it would “maintain all other pensioner benefits, including free bus passes, eye tests, prescriptions and TV licences, for the duration of this Parliament”.⁵¹ However, in follow up correspondence, the Government confirmed to the BBC that it “retains the power to maintain free TV licences for over 75s until 2020, when the power transfers to the BBC. Any change proposed by the BBC would of course require consultation with the public”.⁵² Mr Clementi told us that the implications of the manifesto wording are “a matter for you [the Committee] and a matter for the Government”.⁵³

35. In its decision document, the BBC states:

The BBC Board’s view is that it is a matter for Government whether, in the light of the BBC Board’s decision, Government would now wish to pay the additional costs to ensure that all over 75s could continue to receive a free TV licence. Or it could take back responsibility for the over 75s concession in its entirety, and pay for it in full. The Board is satisfied that, in summary, the BBC cannot afford to do this without making the BBC substantially worse for audiences. It has done all it can reasonably to protect the poorest over 75s. The Board has made its decision, in the discharge of its statutory functions.⁵⁴

36. Charity Independent Age commented that it is “inappropriate” for the BBC to be making the decision on licence fee concessions. They noted that:

Changes to benefits should be made with an understanding of the overall context and impact on those affected, and should not be made in isolation or on a piecemeal basis. It is up to the Government to carry out this assessment and decide the future of free TV licences for over 75s. We would not expect reforms to universal benefits, such as Winter Fuel Payments and concessionary bus travel, to be determined by anyone other than the Government. The same should be expected for free TV licences.⁵⁵

48 Q14

49 Q15

50 Stonehenge Films [BBR0005], Stonehenge Films was set up by writer and director Pete Kosminsky

51 The Conservative and Unionist Party Manifesto 2017 [Forward, together: our plan for a stronger Britain and a prosperous future](#) page 66

52 BBC further supplementary written evidence [BBR0041]

53 Q41

54 BBC [Age-related TV licence policy decision document](#) June 2019

55 Independent Age [BBR0036] para 6

Age UK commented: “It is the role of Government to provide this support. It is not appropriate for the BBC, as a public service broadcaster, to be placed in a position where it has to decide who should receive concessions or to implement a means-tested system”.⁵⁶ In his evidence Lord Hall acknowledged that the licence fee concession “is a welfare benefit administered by the Government”.⁵⁷ The current concession is listed as a “benefit” on the Government’s own website.⁵⁸

37. We support the BBC’s statement that it has fulfilled its obligations as set out in the Digital Economy Act. It is clear from the correspondence between the Government and the BBC in 2015 that there was no automatic assumption that the BBC would continue to bear the costs of a blanket licence fee exemption for over 75s. For Government Ministers to suggest otherwise is disingenuous.

38. However, the BBC gave the impression in evidence before the Committee that they took on responsibility for the policy with reluctance, while the correspondence from 2015 indicates that this was a responsibility they requested. These are mutually exclusive outcomes.

39. Whatever assumptions were made in 2015 about the funding of free licence fees for all of the over 75s, this is clearly not a sustainable proposition for the BBC alone. The Government should set out proposals for how it can support this measure in the future, alongside the commitment that has been made by the BBC.

Implementation

40. The BBC estimates that implementing its decision on changes to licence fees for over 75s will mean that, based on current take-up of Pension Credit, 3.75 million households will need to pay.⁵⁹ Of the 1.5 million households that are eligible for Pension Credit, and would therefore receive a free TV licence, the BBC estimates that 900,000 households will apply for the concession.⁶⁰ This would cost the broadcaster £250 million a year.

41. However, the cost could rise significantly if there are increases in take-up of Pension Credit. There is some evidence that this may happen given that, over the last year, the BBC issued a substantial number of licence fee refunds to people over 75 who realised that they were eligible for a free licence following the increase in communication around the BBC’s consultation on this issue. In 2018–19, the BBC issued approximately £4 million more in licence fee refunds than in 2017–18, and of this £4 million increase, £3.2 million of refunds were to over 75 households.⁶¹ BBC Policy Director Clare Sumner told us “part of the greatest problem with Pension Credit take-up [...] is around the visibility of Pension Credit. Over the last few weeks, I would suggest, the visibility of Pension Credit has definitely gone up”.⁶² Charity Independent Age told us that the BBC’s plans to increase take-up of Pension Credit are “well-meaning” but the impact is likely to be short-term given that “successive governments have failed to increase take-up for Pension Credit beyond 64%, at best, in almost ten years, with the take-up rate essentially flat-lining since 2009/10”.⁶³

56 Age UK [BBR0013] para 2.1

57 Q87

58 Gov.uk [Get a free or discounted TV licence](#) (accessed on 26 September 2019)

59 BBC [Age-related TV licence policy decision document](#) June 2019, page 24

60 BBC [Age-related TV licence policy decision document](#) June 2019, page 25

61 BBC [Television Licence Fee Trust Statement for the Year Ending 31 March 2019](#) page 36

62 Q45

63 Independent Age [BBR0036] para 10

42. The BBC has asked their licence fee unit, TVL, to develop an independent self-verification system which means people can use proof of being in receipt of Pension Credit, such as a letter from the Department for Work and Pensions, to access a free TV licence. TVL will also signpost people who may be eligible for Pension Credit but are not currently in receipt of it to relevant Government agencies.⁶⁴ Age UK commented: “in order to get their free licence, low income 75+ year olds will need to fully understand what is required of them, have retained papers, have access to copying facilities and feel comfortable about sharing this financial information with the BBC. We believe it is unlikely that everyone receiving Pension Credit will do this, especially as people do not always know the names of the benefits they receive”.⁶⁵

43. The BBC told us that their estimate of the new scheme costing £248 million is based on 75% take-up of Pension Credit.⁶⁶ The cost for the Government of providing the benefit to this proportion of people is around £680 million.⁶⁷ Lord Hall commented that an increase in take-up to 77%-78% would mean that the cost to the Government would be higher than if they “were to plug the gap” by restoring a universal free TV licence for all over 75 households.⁶⁸

44. In terms of the system for collecting licence fees from those people over 75 who will be required to pay from June 2020, Ms Sumner told us “the first transition year will cost around £38 million[...] Then the running cost of that will be around £13 million. These are estimates, just in those broad ballpark terms”.⁶⁹ The BBC will recruit a new team to “pay support visits” to affected households to help them understand the new system and how to apply. Ms Sumner added “that will be a different cohort of people to the inquiry officers, who enforce the licence fee. We have decided, which is why there are costs involved in this, to employ a specific group of people and also add more people to our telephone hotlines, who will be dealing with this cohort of people”.⁷⁰ She also confirmed that the broadcaster will work alongside older people’s charities to communicate the changes.⁷¹ In further written evidence following the session the BBC told us that people providing this support “will not arrive unannounced—we will always contact people several times by letter first. They will not be involved in enforcement action”.⁷²

45. One of the criticisms of using Pension Credit as the mechanism to determine eligibility for a free TV licence is that this penalises people whose income is marginally above the threshold to receive the benefit, but not by enough to offset the cost of an annual licence.⁷³ Ms Sumner told us that the BBC has recognised “that to pay the licence fee in one go may be difficult” and so has set up instalment schemes “where people can choose to pay as little as £3 a week”.⁷⁴ However, Independent Age told us that: “many older people are struggling to pay for essential costs, such as a weekly food shop or household bills. Under the BBC’s planned changes, these people will also have to bear the additional cost of a TV licence—a cost which could be unmanageable for the poorest pensioners”.⁷⁵

64 BBC [Age-related TV licence policy decision document](#) June 2019 page 26

65 Age UK [[BBR0013](#)] para 5.8

66 Q82 [Clare Sumner]

67 Q82 [Clare Sumner]

68 Q81

69 Q70, Q71

70 Q75

71 Q77

72 BBC supplementary written evidence [[BBR0040](#)]

73 Age UK [[BBR0013](#)] para 5.7

74 Q79

75 Independent Age [[BBR0036](#)] para 9

46. The written evidence that we received expressed concern about the possible prosecution of those people currently in receipt of a licence fee exemption who will have to pay in the future. In his submission, Gerald Wilson asked whether the BBC is “prepared to criminalise” the potentially “hundreds of thousands of older pensioners” who may refuse to pay the new fee.⁷⁶ Ms Sumner told us that the BBC has costed for an 8% licence fee evasion rate for over 75s, compared to the average evasion rate of 6.5%.⁷⁷

47. While we appreciate the statements that the BBC has made to us in oral and written evidence about the implementation of licence fee collection from eligible people over 75, there remains an overall lack of clarity for the public on this issue. *The BBC should set out, in a single consumer-facing publication, how the scheme will work, what support is available, and what the implications of non-payment or evasion will be, before the end of December 2019.*

48. There are potentially far-reaching unintended consequences arising from the licence fee decision. We are faced with the absurd situation whereby the BBC is being pushed into individuals’ decisions about their uptake of welfare payments. The logic of the BBC’s policy is that it is now administering the welfare benefits that should rightly only ever be implemented by the Government. The Corporation must nevertheless now execute the policy for which they took on responsibility. This is an invidious position for the BBC to put itself in.

49. *It is not the BBC’s role to become involved in take-up of Pension Credit. The broadcaster must ensure that its implementation plans do not result in more licence fee income being diverted to activities that are rightly the responsibility of the Department of Work and Pensions. In response to this report the Government should set out what impact an increase in take-up of Pension Credit would have on the wider social security budget, and the BBC should provide a detailed breakdown of the estimated £38 million transition costs of the first year of the new scheme.*

76 Gerald Wilson [BBR003]

77 Q74

2 BBC pay

50. In 2018, we took evidence from current and former staff at the BBC on employment issues. We made a series of recommendations including calling on the broadcaster to: put transparent pay structures in place; set targets to increase the number of female top earners; complete outstanding equal pay cases as a matter of urgency; and offer compensation to those people who are facing large liabilities as a result of being required to use a Personal Service Company. The BBC responded to our recommendations in January 2019, but this response was neither complete nor satisfactory. The Committee therefore resolved to return to the issues that we raised in 2018 in our 2019 scrutiny of the BBC’s Annual Report and Accounts.⁷⁸ These issues remain of ongoing interest for 2020 and beyond.

Equal pay

51. In 2018 we found evidence of pay discrimination at the BBC, with examples of women with the same or similar skills, experience and profile working in comparable jobs to men, but earning far less.⁷⁹ We were also told that pay structures at the BBC were unfair, opaque and unclear. In our January 2019 report we indicated that there were a number of areas where further transparency and faster progress was required.⁸⁰

52. In the 2018–19 Annual Report and Accounts, the BBC confirmed that it had updated its terms and conditions for all staff and finalised a new career path framework. The Corporation said that it has had “a significant focus on ensuring we move beyond past concerns” during the year.⁸¹ In his evidence, BBC Chief Financial Officer Glyn Isherwood confirmed that the number of published pay ranges had been reduced from 6,000 to 500. This makes it easier for people to work out what they are being paid, and increases transparency.⁸² The BBC has now also introduced gender pay splits to show any differences between how men and women are paid within a given job pay range. This was a recommendation that we made in our September 2018 report; we were pleased that the BBC has now “taken that on board”.⁸³

53. When we took evidence from the BBC in 2018, the broadcaster told us that it was dealing with 200 informal grievances relating to equal pay and a further 78 formal grievances. Mr Isherwood confirmed that this has now been reduced to 108 total grievances, of which 25 are at an informal stage,⁸⁴ and that two equal pay cases are in the early stages of a tribunal process.⁸⁵ Mr Isherwood confirmed that the process has “taken us longer than we anticipated”⁸⁶ but that the time taken has improved since last year. However, the target of resolving cases within a 90 day time limit continues to not be met.

78 Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee Seventh Report of Sessions 2017–19 [BBC Annual Report and Accounts 2017–18: Equal Pay at the BBC: BBC Response to the Committee’s Sixth Report of Session 2017–19 HC1875](#)

79 Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee Sixth Report of Session 2017–19 [BBC Annual Report and Accounts 2017–18: Equal pay at the BBC HC993 Chapter 2](#)

80 Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee Seventh Report of Sessions 2017–19 [BBC Annual Report and Accounts 2017–18: Equal Pay at the BBC: BBC Response to the Committee’s Sixth Report of Session 2017–19 HC1875](#)

81 [BBC Group Annual Report and Accounts 2018/19](#) page 79

82 Q166

83 Q167

84 Q162

85 BBC further supplementary written evidence [[BBR0041](#)]

86 Q164

54. We are pleased to note that the BBC has acted on our recommendation to include a gender split in pay ranges so that people can see how men and women are being paid at the level they are working within. We expect the BBC to include an update on the impact of this change in its next annual report, and to take further, timely action on fair pay in the wake of damage to its reputation as a result of the findings in our 2018 inquiry.

Personal Service Companies

55. In our report on the 2017–18 BBC Annual Report and Accounts, we examined the issue of Personal Service Companies (PSCs), a vehicle whereby individuals or groups of individuals register themselves as a limited company. Legislation (known as IR35) has existed since 2000 to make sure that individuals providing their services through PSCs pay broadly similar PAYE and national insurance contributions as they would do if they were employed directly by their clients. Historically, the BBC followed a policy to engage presenters via PSCs where contracts were longer than six months or worth more than £10K, meaning that in 2012 the BBC had over 6,000 contracts with PSCs.⁸⁷

56. In 2018 we found evidence that presenters felt “forced” to register themselves as PSCs in order to continue receiving work from the BBC.⁸⁸ HMRC subsequently launched an investigation into many current and former BBC presenters over claims that they paid incorrect taxes while contracted via a PSC. Presenters told us that they have suffered severe emotional and financial stress as a result. In our 2018 report, we called upon the BBC to find a satisfactory solution to this situation, including compensation for losses and extending full employment rights to people working solely on behalf of the BBC.⁸⁹ In April 2019 the Public Accounts Committee examined the issue of personal service companies, finding that the “BBC’s approach to hiring freelancers has been fractured, chaotic and muddled”.⁹⁰ It called upon the BBC to clearly set out how it would deal with the people affected to date and how governance and management arrangements would ensure proper oversight of such issues in the future.

57. Before the publication of our last report, the BBC had engaged the Centre for Effective Dispute Resolution to oversee a process to ascertain whether there were circumstances in which financial liability arising from misclassification of tax and National Insurance Contributions in PSCs should be the responsibility of the BBC. The process would be undertaken on a case by case basis. At the time, the broadcaster commented that there is a “very high hurdle where [the use of] public money is concerned”.⁹¹

87 All figures taken from Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee Sixth Report of Session 2017–19 [BBC Annual Report and Accounts 2017–18: Equal pay at the BBC](#) HC993

88 Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee Sixth Report of Session 2017–19 [BBC Annual Report and Accounts 2017–18: Equal pay at the BBC](#) HC993 para 71

89 Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee Sixth Report of Session 2017–19 [BBC Annual Report and Accounts 2017–18: Equal pay at the BBC](#) HC993

90 Public Accounts Committee Ninetieth Report of Session 2017–19 [BBC and Personal Service Companies](#) HC 1522

91 BBC Media Centre [BBC and Personal Service Companies](#) 19 March 2018

58. However, in the 2018–19 Annual Report and Accounts, the BBC stated that it has been engaging in discussions with HMRC about finding an overall settlement “which can provide certainty about the tax treatment of BBC fees paid to presenters”.⁹² The broadcaster has therefore earmarked £12 million to make payments to HMRC in cases “where it would be reasonable for the BBC to bear the cost” of any tax and National Insurance due as a result of employment status miscalculation.⁹³

59. Lord Hall told us: “We want to get a deal with HMRC to be able to bundle these cases up and deal with it, essentially”.⁹⁴ Mr Isherwood commented:

There clearly is a dispute around what tax is owed due to the status classification of presenters over a period of time, looking back in history. That dispute exists between presenters, ourselves and HMRC. We accept that we have a role to play in resolving those issues[...] we are doing it in the most pragmatic way, which ultimately delivers value for money for licence fee payers.⁹⁵

60. The National Audit Office, which audits all BBC Group accounts, has determined that the £12 million allocation is “*ex gratia*” because the BBC are making this provision even though there is not a legal obligation on them to do so.⁹⁶ Gareth Davies, the Comptroller and Auditor General,⁹⁷ states:

I consider that the BBC, in committing to making such payments to HMRC is settling, *ex gratia*, the tax liabilities of third parties. I therefore consider that this expenditure does not accord with the BBC’s Charter obligations with respect to the principle of regularity and have qualified my opinion on regularity accordingly.⁹⁸

In his evidence Lord Hall told us he was “not happy” with this qualification and reiterated that this is a decision that has been approved by the BBC Board. He said: “we want to solve the issue of PSCs and our presenters who find themselves, because of the change in the HMRC rules and the CEST test⁹⁹ and all of that, in a difficult position. We set aside money for that. We think as a board we are right and we are disappointed that the NAO should take this issue”.¹⁰⁰

61. The BBC confirmed to us that they do see themselves as bearing responsibility, irrespective of the legal position. Mr Isherwood said “we are accepting that we played a role in presenters setting up PSCs and we have a role to play in closing this issue.”¹⁰¹ Lord Hall commented that “the PSC problem is a historical problem”¹⁰² and Mr Isherwood told us that the reason why this decision has been made now because previously there wasn’t “sufficient engagement with our presenters around some of these issues”.¹⁰³

92 BBC [Group Annual Report and Accounts 2018/19](#) page 93

93 BBC [Group Annual Report and Accounts 2018/19](#) page 93

94 Q115

95 Q119

96 BBC [Group Annual Report and Accounts 2018/19](#) page 185

97 The Comptroller and Auditor General lead the National Audit Office and certifies the accounts of government departments and public bodies. He is an officer of the House of Commons.

98 BBC [Group Annual Report and Accounts 2018/19](#) page 185

99 The [Check Employment for Tax Status](#) test was created by HMRC in 2017 to enable people to assess whether they should be classed as employed or self-employed for tax purposes.

100 Q118

101 Q136

102 Q153

103 Q122

62. The BBC has calculated that the sum of £12 million will be required by “looking at all individuals affected and then applying assumptions, based on conversations with HMRC; recent tax tribunal rulings; and the advice of external advisors”.¹⁰⁴ Mr Isherwood told us that he has “a high degree of confidence that we made the right provision”,¹⁰⁵ but that there could be a variation of 20% above or below this sum.¹⁰⁶ The BBC has not made any calculation of the cost of the resources that they have put in to resolving this issue.¹⁰⁷

63. It is welcome that the BBC is now taking long overdue action on the issue of Personal Service Companies and has accepted that they bear responsibility. We expect the broadcaster to ensure that the earmarked funds are used to support those presenters who told us they were facing “life-changing” liabilities as a priority, rather than higher paid presenters who are likely to be more able to manage uncertainty in future income.

64. Lord Hall told us that the BBC is resolving a “historical problem” but the reason that these issues occurred, in part, was poor oversight and consistency from the top of the organisation. We are concerned that the issues we identified regarding equal pay arose for the same reasons, and that future issues may emerge as a result of the same management and governance approach. It should not take a select committee to bring systemic staff problems to light. In response to this report the BBC should set out the governance and leadership lessons that it has learnt from “historical problems” and the changes that it has made to its management as a result.

104 BBC [Group Annual Report and Accounts 2018/19](#) page 93

105 Q126

106 Q128

107 Q151

Conclusions and recommendations

TV licences for over 75s

1. There is no transparency about the 2015 negotiations between the BBC and the Government over future funding and the licence fee concession. The criticism that funding negotiations should not have happened “behind closed doors” applies as much to the BBC as it does to the Government. It is regrettable that the minutes of the meetings that took place during the funding settlement agreement period are incomplete. The significance of these discussions and decisions means that they should have been properly recorded, regardless of the urgency of the situation. (Paragraph 17)
2. The Committee shares concerns raised by the BBC that this was a flawed process on all sides that gave no opportunity for consultation with licence fee payers. It was wrong of the then Government to seek to bounce the BBC into accepting these measures in the way it did. (Paragraph 18)
3. The Committee acknowledges that the BBC now operates under a new governance structure where the Trust and the Executive have now been combined into a single Unitary Board. However, we believe that the Director-General should have sought the formal agreement of the Executive Board, as he said he was going to do on 4 July 2015, before recommending to the Trust the deal struck between the Government and the BBC. We would hope that the new Unitary Board will follow a more clear and accountable process in agreeing the next licence fee settlement with the Government. (Paragraph 19)
4. *In response to this report the Government and the BBC should set out the steps that they are taking to ensure that the licence fee negotiations in 2021 are conducted in a wholly different way, with a sensible timescale, parliamentary oversight and involvement of licence fee payers.* Transparency is key to upholding the high standards that the public expect from the BBC, and to ensure that the BBC does not become an easy source of funds for the Government to draw upon to cover shortfalls in other areas of public expenditure. (Paragraph 20)
5. We accept that the BBC could not necessarily have anticipated the fluctuation in income that has occurred since the financial settlement was agreed in 2015. However, the fact that the broadcaster has been using reserves to cover the shortfall demonstrates that these events did not occur suddenly. The BBC could have acted earlier to communicate the likelihood that they would not be able to fund a full licence fee concession for people over 75 from 2020. The evidence that we have received indicates that the outcome of the consultation was a surprise to people who will be affected, and the handling of the announcement has served to erode public confidence in the way that the BBC spends its money. (Paragraph 27)
6. The debate on the funding of TV licences for the over 75s has also uncovered a more disturbing picture of the BBCs overall finances which will no doubt come under more scrutiny during the next licence fee review. The BBC’s income from

the licence fee even with an annual inflationary price increase is not keeping pace with the rising costs of production, and this problem is only likely to get worse. (Paragraph 28)

7. As a result of rising costs and changing viewing habits, particularly amongst the under 34s who now spend on average more than twice as much time each day watching YouTube than they do BBC 1, BBC2, ITV 1, Channel 4 and Channel 5 combined, there is a danger that the value of the licence fee will continue to diminish in the coming years. (Paragraph 29)
8. We support the BBC's statement that it has fulfilled its obligations as set out in the Digital Economy Act. It is clear from the correspondence between the Government and the BBC in 2015 that there was no automatic assumption that the BBC would continue to bear the costs of a blanket licence fee exemption for over 75s. For Government Ministers to suggest otherwise is disingenuous. (Paragraph 37)
9. However, the BBC gave the impression in evidence before the Committee that they took on responsibility for the policy with reluctance, while the correspondence from 2015 indicates that this was a responsibility they requested. These are mutually exclusive outcomes. (Paragraph 38)
10. Whatever assumptions were made in 2015 about the funding of free licence fees for all of the over 75s, this is clearly not a sustainable proposition for the BBC alone. *The Government should set out proposals for how it can support this measure in the future, alongside the commitment that has been made by the BBC.* (Paragraph 39)
11. While we appreciate the statements that the BBC has made to us in oral and written evidence about the implementation of licence fee collection from eligible people over 75, there remains an overall lack of clarity for the public on this issue. *The BBC should set out, in a single consumer-facing publication, how the scheme will work, what support is available, and what the implications of non-payment or evasion will be, before the end of December 2019.* (Paragraph 47)
12. There are potentially far-reaching unintended consequences arising from the licence fee decision. We are faced with the absurd situation whereby the BBC is being pushed into individuals' decisions about their uptake of welfare payments. The logic of the BBC's policy is that it is now administering the welfare benefits that should rightly only ever be implemented by the Government. The Corporation must nevertheless now execute the policy for which they took on responsibility. This is an invidious position for the BBC to put itself in. (Paragraph 48)
13. *It is not the BBC's role to become involved in take-up of Pension Credit. The broadcaster must ensure that its implementation plans do not result in more licence fee income being diverted to activities that are rightly the responsibility of the Department of Work and Pensions. In response to this report the Government should set out what impact an increase in take-up of Pension Credit would have on the wider social security budget, and the BBC should provide a detailed breakdown of the estimated £38 million transition costs of the first year of the new scheme.* (Paragraph 49)

BBC pay

14. We are pleased to note that the BBC has acted on our recommendation to include a gender split in pay ranges so that people can see how men and women are being paid at the level they are working within. *We expect the BBC to include an update on the impact of this change in its next annual report, and to take further, timely action on fair pay in the wake of damage to its reputation as a result of the findings in our 2018 inquiry.* (Paragraph 54)
15. It is welcome that the BBC is now taking long overdue action on the issue of Personal Service Companies and has accepted that they bear responsibility. *We expect the broadcaster to ensure that the earmarked funds are used to support those presenters who told us they were facing “life-changing” liabilities as a priority, rather than higher paid presenters who are likely to be more able to manage uncertainty in future income.* (Paragraph 63)
16. Lord Hall told us that the BBC is resolving a “historical problem” but the reason that these issues occurred, in part, was poor oversight and consistency from the top of the organisation. We are concerned that the issues we identified regarding equal pay arose for the same reasons, and that future issues may emerge as a result of the same management and governance approach. It should not take a select committee to bring systemic staff problems to light. *In response to this report the BBC should set out the governance and leadership lessons that it has learnt from “historical problems” and the changes that it has made to its management as a result.* (Paragraph 64)

Formal minutes

Tuesday 8 October 2019

Damian Collins, in the Chair

Philip Davies	Jo Stevens
Julian Knight	Giles Watling
Ian C Lucas	

Draft Report (*BBC Annual Report and Accounts 2018–19: TV licences for over 75s*), proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

Ordered, That the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 64 read and agreed to.

Summary agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the Sixteenth Report of the Committee to the House.

Ordered, That the Chair make the Report to the House.

Ordered, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available, in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order No.134.

[Adjourned till Wednesday 16 October 2019 at 2.00 p.m.]

Witnesses

The following witnesses gave evidence. Transcripts can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

Wednesday 17 July 2019

Lord Tony Hall, Director General, **Sir David Clementi**, Chairman, **Clare Sumner**, Director, Policy, and **Glyn Isherwood**, Chief Financial Officer, BBC;
Lord Tony Hall, Director General, **David Jordan**, Director, Editorial Policy and Standards, and **Patrick Holland**, Controller of BBC Two, BBC

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Published written evidence

The following written evidence was received and can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

BBR numbers are generated by the evidence processing system and so may not be complete.

- 1 Abbott, Mrs Phillipa ([BBR0032](#))
- 2 Age UK ([BBR0013](#))
- 3 Allan further supplementary, Robin ([BBR0028](#))
- 4 Allan further supplementary, Robin ([BBR0039](#))
- 5 Allan supplementary, Robin ([BBR0018](#))
- 6 Allan, Robin ([BBR0017](#))
- 7 AudioUK ([BBR0007](#))
- 8 Barwise, Professor Patrick ([BBR0033](#))
- 9 BBC further supplementary written evidence ([BBR0041](#))
- 10 BBC supplementary ([BBR0040](#))
- 11 Beveridge, Professor Robert ([BBR0021](#))
- 12 Blacklock, Derek ([BBR0002](#))
- 13 Cartlidge, Nigel ([BBR0038](#))
- 14 COBA ([BBR0029](#))
- 15 Covington, Mr Anthony ([BBR0014](#))
- 16 Deakin, Mr John ([BBR0006](#))
- 17 Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport ([BBR0037](#))
- 18 Harrison, Mr Leonard ([BBR0031](#))
- 19 Independent Age ([BBR0036](#))
- 20 Jones, Eric & Joyce ([BBR0024](#))
- 21 Jones, Mrs Maureen ([BBR0011](#))
- 22 Lee, Mrs Bryony ([BBR0026](#))
- 23 Lee, Rev. James ([BBR0025](#))
- 24 Macfarlane, Peter ([BBR0019](#))
- 25 Mackenzie, David ([BBR0022](#))
- 26 McHugh, John ([BBR0016](#))
- 27 National Union of Journalists ([BBR0015](#))
- 28 Parker, Mr David ([BBR0034](#))
- 29 Paterson, Alexander & Marianne ([BBR0027](#))
- 30 Rolph, Nick ([BBR0023](#))
- 31 South, Colin ([BBR0001](#))
- 32 Stonehenge Films ([BBR0005](#))
- 33 Streeter, Violet ([BBR0020](#))

34 Teledwyr Annibynnol Cymru ([BBR0004](#))

35 Wilbye, John ([BBR0030](#))

36 Wilson, Gerald ([BBR0003](#))

List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

All publications from the Committee are available on the [publications page](#) of the Committee's website. The reference number of the Government's response to each Report is printed in brackets after the HC printing number.

Session 2017–19

First Report	Appointment of the Chair of Ofcom	HC 508
Second Report	The potential impact of Brexit on the creative industries, tourism and the digital single market	HC 365 (HC 1141)
Third Report	Appointment of the Chair of the Charity Commission	HC 509 (HC 908)
Fourth Report	Combatting doping in sport	HC 366 (HC 1050)
Fifth Report	Disinformation and 'fake news': Interim Report	HC 363 (HC 1630)
Sixth Report	BBC Annual Report and Accounts 2017–18: Equal pay at the BBC	HC 993
Seventh Report	BBC Annual Report and Accounts 2017–18: Equal Pay at the BBC: BBC Response to the Committee's Sixth Report of Session 2017–19	HC 1875
Eighth Report	Disinformation and 'fake news': Final Report	HC 1791 (HC 2184)
Ninth Report	Live Music	HC 733 (HC 2555)
Tenth Report	The launch of the Sub-Committee on Disinformation	HC 2090
Eleventh Report	Changing Lives: the social impact of participation in culture and sport	HC 734 (HC 2597)
Twelfth Report	The Online Harms White Paper	HC 2431 (HC 2501)
Thirteenth Report	Lessons from the First World War Centenary	HC 2001
Fourteenth Report	Garden design and tourism	HC 2002
Fifteenth Report	Immersive and addictive technologies	HC 1846
First Special Report	Appointment of the Chair of the Charity Commission: Government Response to the Committee's Third Report of Session 2017–19	HC 908
Second Special Report	Combatting doping in sport: Government Response to the Committee's Fourth Report of Session 2017–19	HC 1050

Third Special Report	Failure of a witness to answer an Order of the Committee: conduct of Mr Dominic Cummings	HC 1115
Fourth Special Report	The potential impact of Brexit on the creative industries, tourism and the digital single market: Government Response to the Committee's Second Report of Session 2017–19	HC 1141
Fifth Special Report	Disinformation and 'fake news': Government Response to the Committee's Fifth Report of Session 2017–19	HC 1630
Sixth Special Report	Mr Kramer's failure to comply with the Committee's Order of the 19 November 2018	
Seventh Special Report	Disinformation and 'fake news': Final Report: Government Response to the Committee's Eighth Report of Session 2017–19 Electoral Commission response to Disinformation Report	HC 2184
Eighth Special Report	Live Music: Government Response to the Committee's Ninth Report of Session 2017–19	HC 2555
Ninth Special Report	Changing Lives: the social impact of participation in culture and sport: Government Response to the Committee's Eleventh Report of Session 2017–19	HC 2597
Tenth Special Report	The Online Harms White Paper: Government Response to the Committee's Twelfth Report of Session 2017–19	HC 2501