



Information Policy and Compliance
bbc.co.uk/foi

27 April 2007

Dear Ms

Freedom of information request – RFI2007000349

Thank you for your request by e mail under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (“the Act”) dated 29 March 2007, seeking further information about TV Licensing. I have answered your question below.

Why [are] the payments now fortnightly, over 22 payments - making the licence now payable over a period of 10 months rather than 12?

“TV Licensing” is a trading name used by companies contracted by the BBC to administer the collection of television licence fees and enforcement of the television licensing system. The majority of the administration of TV Licensing is contracted to Capita Business Services Ltd, with the administration of our cash related payment schemes contracted to Revenues Management Services Ltd (RMS). PayPoint Network Ltd and PayPoint Collections Ltd are contracted to provide over-the-counter services. The marketing and public relations activities are contracted to the AMV Consortium. The consortium is made up of the following four companies: Abbott Mead Vickers BBDO Ltd, Fishburn Hedges Boys Williams Limited, PHD Media Limited and Proximity London Ltd. The BBC is a public authority in respect of its television licensing functions and retains overall responsibility.

I have investigated your request regarding your payment schedule with the Cash Easy Entry office and I will explain what has happened.

You quite rightly point out that the Cash Easy Entry scheme is designed to allow a person to pay for successive licences on a fortnightly basis over a period of 26 fortnights. However, legislation makes it clear that instalment payments must be completed within six calendar months after the issue of the new licence (in your case by February each year).



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

It is therefore the case that if payments are not completed or registered in time for that 'cut off' date, the following schedule must list only as many fortnights as are available until the following year's completion date.

I have been informed that the Cash Easy Entry office did not receive or record your final payment until March 2007 and therefore, allowing also for a period of notice, there were only 22 fortnights remaining until the following year's completion date. The initial schedule for your payment plan therefore reflected this and listed your final instalment as being due by 22 February 2008.

However, I understand that since this initial payment plan was sent, and subsequent to your Freedom of Information request to TV Licensing, you have been in further contact with the Cash Easy Entry office and they have now amended your plan to cover 25 fortnights.

I hope this answers your question. However, in your message you also referred to a number of other issues which, although not explicitly stated as questions, I feel it might be helpful to address.

- 1. Why the payment schedule dated 3rd March 2007 gave the total fee payment of £135.50 when it was not even announced in the Commons until 7 March 2007.*

As you know, the television licence fee was recently increased by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport from £131.50 for 2006-07 to £135.50 for 2007-08.

Although not laid before the House of Commons until March 2007 and not effective until 1 April 2007, an earlier announcement regarding the licence fee increase was made to the Commons by Tessa Jowell, Culture Secretary, on 18 January 2007. This announcement formed part of the decision on a general licence fee settlement for the BBC which covers the period up to April 2012.

An item on the general settlement, including information regarding the forthcoming licence fee increase for 2007-08, was posted on the BBC News website at the time of the announcement (see <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/entertainment/6274851.stm>). However, I am concerned by the fact that you were given no explanation of the fee increase as part of your Payment Plan and this is something we will be reviewing as a matter of urgency. Please accept my apologies for the confusion this has caused you.

- 2. You stated you were dissatisfied with Capita who appeared unable or unwilling to answer your query.*

I am very sorry to learn that you have not had the courtesy of a reply from our agents, TV Licensing, to your query about your new Cash Easy Entry payment schedule.

For information, I should correct your understanding that Capita were responsible for these matters. While Capita is one of the companies working under the banner of TV Licensing, they do not administer the Cash Easy Entry scheme. However, I understand your query has now been dealt with by the Cash Easy Entry office.

3. *You found it unfair that those on low incomes are required to pay over shorter period than Monthly DD customers.*

I can confirm that the payment constraints are exactly the same with Monthly Direct Debit. For example, if a Direct Debit customer applied late for an August expiry licence, they would still have to complete the payments for their licence by the following February.

Appeal rights

If you are not satisfied with this response you have the right to an internal review by a BBC senior manager or legal adviser. Please contact us at the address provided, explaining what you would like us to review and including your reference number. If you are not satisfied with the internal review, you can appeal to the Information Commissioner. The contact details are: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF, telephone 01625 545 700 or see <http://www.ico.gov.uk/>

I hope this response is helpful.

Yours sincerely,

Natalie Sauderson
Policy Adviser
BBC TV Licensing Management Team