



## Frequently asked questions for advisers



[tvlicensing.co.uk](http://tvlicensing.co.uk)



This guide for advisers aims to answer some of the additional questions you may have about TV Licensing.

If you need any more help regarding these issues, please contact our Campaign Office at **[campaignoffice@tvlicensing.co.uk](mailto:campaignoffice@tvlicensing.co.uk)**



## How is the licence fee spent?

The TV Licensing team collects around £3.7bn from licence fee payers each year, which forms the BBC's main source of funding. We try to collect the fee in the most efficient way, to allow as much money as possible to go towards the BBC's programmes and services. To see a breakdown of where exactly the money goes, visit [bbc.co.uk/annualreport](http://bbc.co.uk/annualreport)

## When is a licence needed?

A TV Licence is needed to watch or record live TV on *any* channel, and on any device – this includes online on a tablet or phone. You also need a TV Licence if you download or watch BBC programmes on BBC iPlayer.



## When is a licence not needed?

If you only ever watch on demand programmes from services such as Netflix, Amazon Prime, All4 or ITV Player, you do not need a licence.



# Payments and concessions

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## How can I make a payment on behalf of a client or customer?

Firstly, you'll need to pass our identification and verification process and become what is known as an "authorised nominee".

An authorised nominee can act on behalf of the licence holder, providing permission is given in writing. If it's a one-off transaction, a temporary nomination could be given by the licence holder. This consent can be given verbally.

The nominee would need to go through an identification process, which would require the following information about the licence holder:

- First initial
- Surname
- First line of their address
- Postcode
- TV Licence or reference number
- Their payment method

If you would like to speak to us on behalf of a client, we'd recommend asking them to be present while you make the call. This makes the ID process simpler and we can help you more effectively.

## How can my client make a payment on behalf of a family member?

Your client can pay for someone else's licence by using their own bank account or credit or debit card to do so. If they use someone else's card or bank details, we would need permission (either verbal or in writing) from the cardholder or bank account holder before we can proceed.

We could also proceed if we'd seen a power of attorney document or similar, giving the payer authority to act on another person's behalf.

## Why is there a £5 charge for quarterly Direct Debit customers?

Unlike utility and other consumer bills, which are usually paid for in arrears, the TV Licence fee is a fixed fee and is charged annually in advance. Because the licence fee can be paid in arrears under the quarterly Direct Debit scheme, this payment method comes with a £5 annual charge (£1.25 per quarter). This amount is prescribed by government and we advise customers of the charge whenever they choose this payment option. It's also outlined in the payment plan accompanying each new licence. If people would prefer not to pay this, then there are other payment options without the charge, including annual and monthly Direct Debit.

## **Why do people joining the monthly Direct Debit scheme or cash payment scheme pay for their full licence in the first six months?**

In the same way you need to pay for a driving licence before you drive a car, you can't watch TV without first paying for a TV Licence.

We offer a range of payment methods to help customers spread the cost. Customers joining the monthly Direct Debit scheme for the first time pay for their first licence in the first six months. Subsequent licence payments are smaller, and are spread over a 12-month period.

If this isn't suitable, we can work with your client to find another payment method that is best for them.

## **Is it possible for my client to take a "payment holiday" if they are experiencing difficulty or their circumstances have changed?**

As the requirement to hold a TV Licence is set in law, we are unable to offer a "payment holiday". However, our aim is to help customers stay licensed wherever possible and, if customers are experiencing payment difficulties, they need to phone us as soon as possible, as we may be able to help. We also have a process for considering reasonable adjustments, primarily for customers with disabilities, though this may also be considered for those who are particularly vulnerable, or have other specific needs.

## **My client has been unlicensed for a number of years. How does TV Licensing develop payment schedules for long-term unlicensed customers?**

For customers who tell us they've been watching TV without a licence, the licence would start from the day they contacted us and – instead of lasting a full year – would last a year from the date when the customer told us they started using TV without a licence. However, we would never go back more than 11 months.

If the customer joined a cash payment scheme, the first licence would need to be paid for within the first six months. After that, they will be able to spread the cost of the licence over a year, by paying six months in advance and six months in arrears.

## **My client can't afford the minimum weekly payment. What should they do?**

We offer a number of options to help customers spread the cost in a way that best works for them. We'd encourage anyone struggling to pay to contact us – we will try and help adjust payments to get the customer back on track. We want to help people remain licensed but, as a licence is a legal requirement, anyone who continues to watch live TV or BBC iPlayer without being covered by a licence risks prosecution and a fine.

Our payment plans are regulated by the government so, unlike utility companies for example, there are limits on our repayment options.

## **Does TV Licensing use debt collection agencies?**

Yes. akinika Debt Recovery Limited is the only debt collection agency used by TV Licensing and is regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA).

akinika will try to set realistic payment plans for our customers and will work with them to recover the money owed. They use a range of different ways of contacting customers, including by post and by phone, but they do not call at the customer's home. TV Licensing never use bailiffs. Courts do use bailiffs to collect fines, including fines for TV Licence evasion.

The customer only pays back the amount of missed payments they owe. akinika Debt Recovery Limited does not add any charges.

## **My client has received a suspicious email or text. How can I tell if it is from TV Licensing?**

Our official emails and text messages will always direct you to our official website ([tvlicensing.co.uk](http://tvlicensing.co.uk)) or our call centre. Anyone who has entered their details as a result of a fraudulent email or text should report the fraud to the Action Fraud Helpline. For more information, visit [tvlicensing.co.uk/faqs/FAQ233](http://tvlicensing.co.uk/faqs/FAQ233)

## **How much will the TV Licence cost in the coming years?**

The annual licence fee is currently £159.00. The government is responsible for setting the level of the licence fee, and has announced that the fee would rise in line with inflation for five years from 1 April 2017. We will continue to work with organisations across the UK to communicate these changes when they happen and bring your resources up-to-date.





# Enforcement

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## Can you detect customers watching TV online on a computer or tablet?

We've caught and prosecuted people watching on all sorts of devices. The vast majority of people are covered by a TV Licence, meaning they can watch on any device. Evasion is very low, at six or seven percent.

## Is it possible to wait until an enquiry officer visits and then buy a TV Licence?

Although our enquiry officers can take payments when they visit, this may not stop the risk of prosecution if the occupant has been watching live television without a licence.

To avoid the risk of prosecution, your client should buy a TV Licence as soon as they start watching television, whether it be live or on BBC iPlayer. There are many different ways to pay for a licence and these are outlined at [tvlicensing.co.uk/payinfo](http://tvlicensing.co.uk/payinfo)





## **What protocol does an enquiry officer have to follow?**

All our enquiry officers abide by rules of conduct, which means they need to be polite and courteous at all times. This means they'll do things like prove their identity and explain why they are visiting, take a statement if necessary, and never be intimidating.

All our officers carry ID as well as security cards with a helpline number (0300 790 6046) that people can call to check their identity.

## **My client has withdrawn the right of access to their property. Can TV Licensing still visit their home?**

In England, Wales and Northern Ireland we recognise that the common law right for TV Licensing's officers to visit your property may be withdrawn, but we'll use other methods of detection to check if a licence is needed. We do not recognise this withdrawal in Scotland as different laws apply.

## **My client has received a letter to say they will be prosecuted. Who can I speak to about this?**

If your client has received a notice and you'd like to talk to someone about it or about their circumstances, please call us on 0300 790 6112. If you're acting on behalf of your client, please ensure either they are with you when you call, or you can provide a signed client authority form.

Further information about our prosecution policy and our prosecution code can be found here: **[tvlicensing.co.uk/about/foi-policies-AB17](https://www.tvlicensing.co.uk/about/foi-policies-AB17)**

We only prosecute as a last resort when all our other options have been exhausted. We usually withdraw cases if it's the person's first offence and they've subsequently bought a licence or signed up to a payment plan and are maintaining payments. This doesn't apply if there are aggravating circumstances such as needing to use a search warrant to gain entry.

## **Can you be jailed for TV Licence evasion?**

No, you can't go to prison for TV Licence evasion. Evasion is a criminal offence and the maximum penalty is a £1,000 fine\*, plus court costs and a victim surcharge. A custodial sentence can be imposed as a result of non-payment of court fines, including fines for failure to have a TV Licence. However, this is imposed by the courts rarely and only when there has been a wilful or culpable refusal to pay the outstanding fine.

\* The maximum fine is £2,000 in Guernsey.



# Working with communities

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## **How do you support organisations in the community?**

We work with more than 450 organisations across the UK, building relationships to ensure people understand when a licence is needed and all the different ways to pay. We work nationally and regionally with money advice centres, minority ethnic groups, accessibility organisations, housing associations, business groups and local authorities in a variety of ways, including undertaking briefings with advisers and providing information leaflets. To find out more about the work we do, visit [tvlicensing.co.uk/communityinfo](https://www.tvlicensing.co.uk/communityinfo)

## **How does TV Licensing communicate with people who don't speak English as a first language?**

TV Licensing has an ongoing commitment to help everyone, regardless of language or background, understand the law and the many ways to pay for a TV Licence. To try to make sure everyone has fair access to important information on TV Licensing, we provide a range of multi-lingual resources online and in print, and we offer translation services over the telephone. You can find out more about these resources at [tvlicensing.co.uk/languages](https://www.tvlicensing.co.uk/languages)

## **Is my client exempt from paying for a TV Licence if they only ever watch satellite TV from another country?**

No, they will still need a licence, even if they only watch or record programmes broadcast from outside the UK. You need to be covered by a TV Licence to watch or record programmes as they're being shown on TV or live on an online TV service, or to watch BBC programmes on BBC iPlayer, no matter what device you use.

## **What allowances do you make for customers living with disability or mental health issues?**

We have a reasonable adjustments process and a vulnerable customers policy, which means we will adapt how we work with customers if they have disability or mental health issues. All staff are trained to identify people who require additional help. We work very closely with mental health and disability organisations and we're constantly looking at how we can improve our communications with vulnerable people. Contact us on 0300 790 6112 if you need advice or information about concessions such as the 50% discount for those who are blind (severely sight impaired) or on 0300 790 6076 if you are seeking a reasonable adjustment on behalf of a client or wish to speak to us on behalf of a vulnerable customer.





# Contacting TV Licensing

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## How can I find out about legislative changes and TV Licensing policy updates that may affect my clients?

We send out regular emails on legislative changes and TV Licensing policy updates, which you can subscribe to by emailing [campaignoffice@tvlicensing.co.uk](mailto:campaignoffice@tvlicensing.co.uk)

## Is there a free telephone number to contact TV Licensing?

All our numbers are charged at standard rate from all landlines and mobiles. Our telephone number is 0300 790 6071. Alternatively, customers can buy a licence, or tell us they don't need one on our website at [tvlicensing.co.uk/info](http://tvlicensing.co.uk/info)

## How can I speak directly to someone at TV Licensing on behalf of my client?

We are currently trialling a dedicated advisers' helpline with some national money advice organisations, which we hope to make more widely available in the future. In the meantime, if you need to speak to someone urgently, you can call our Campaign Office on **020 8752 6537**. Alternatively, your client can call our customer services number on **0300 790 6112**.

For community updates and news from TV Licensing, follow us on Twitter at [@tvlicensingnews](https://twitter.com/tvlicensingnews) and on YouTube at [youtube.com/tvlicensing](https://youtube.com/tvlicensing)



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