



Home Office

OFFICIAL

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The Rt Hon Dame Emily Thornberry DME MP
Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee

By Email Only
thornberrye@parliament.uk

26 January 2026

Dear Emily,

Thank you for your letter of 07 January, regarding your inquiry into the threat of disinformation targeting the UK and its overseas interests. I welcome your Committee's interest in this important area.

As your letter quite rightly describes, our democracy is under threat. Disinformation is particularly insidious as it seeks to undermine our institutions and divide our communities. It can exacerbate and polarise opinions in times of heightened tension and seeks to mislead the public in how they cast their votes in elections. Protecting our nation and way of life from these threats is an absolute priority for government.

This is why the Defending Democracy Taskforce (DDTF), which I chair, is driving forward a whole of government response to the full range of threats to our democracy through a renewed mandate from the Prime Minister. This includes disinformation which is a standing agenda item for the Taskforce.

The Taskforce meets regularly and brings together Ministers and senior officials from multiple government departments, including the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), the Department for Science, Innovation & Technology (DSIT), the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and Cabinet Office, alongside representatives from law enforcement, the Parliamentary authorities, the Electoral Commission, and the UK Intelligence Community.

At a recent meeting of the Taskforce, Minister Narayan from DSIT, set out his Department's response to information threats, which encompasses a range of issues including disinformation, and their work to counter the threat. I understand Minister Narayan will be providing a response to your letter to DSIT to set out the detail of their work, so I will not cover that here.

Members of the Taskforce are currently preparing for safe and secure local elections in England and in Scotland and Wales later this year. This includes ongoing engagement with Scottish and Welsh governments on ensuring resilience to disinformation. My officials are working closely with their colleagues to co-design how we will tackle these issues. As part of this, the Home Office is integrating Scotland and Wales into the established cross-HMG operational response to specific information operations that may target their elections. Initial discussions have also started with Northern Ireland, who have elections in 2027.

Countering information threats is a cross-government effort that draws on expertise from across departments and requires close collaboration. It would not be appropriate to disclose these operational capabilities in detail due to national security considerations.

The Home Office, in partnership with DSIT, also has a programme of work assessing deepfake detection technologies and creating an enduring framework for industry to adopt. This will strengthen Government and private sector capability to identify malicious synthetic media and better address both current and emerging AI-related real-world harms.

In addition, in my role as Minister for Security, I cover portfolios in both the Home Office and Cabinet Office, allowing me to better align operational and strategic levers to enable a more coordinated response in this space. I share joint responsibility for election security with the Minister for Building Safety, Fire, and Democracy. Together we oversee the Joint Election Security and Preparedness (JESP) Unit. During election periods, JESP stands up a cross-HMG Election Cell to respond to emerging threats, including disinformation, and is preparing to stand up this structure in readiness for the Local and Devolved Elections. Again, like DSIT, I understand MHCLG will provide a detailed response to your letter on their role in tackling threats to our democracy.

Thank you again for your attention to this vital matter, I look forward to receiving your final report and your recommendations in due course.

Very best wishes,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Dan Jarvis', with a horizontal line underneath.

Dan Jarvis MBE MP
Security Minister
Cabinet Office and Home Office



Foreign Affairs Committee

7 January 2026

Dan Jarvis MBE MP

Minister for Security, Home Office and Minister of State, Cabinet Office

Dear Dan

As you may be aware, the Foreign Affairs Committee has been conducting an inquiry into the growing threat of disinformation targeting the UK and its overseas interests.

Throughout this inquiry, we have gathered evidence from a wide range of experts on the impact of foreign interference on democracies. The lessons learned should form a key component in strengthening the UK's domestic resilience against such threats. While we welcome the announcement of an independent review, led by Philip Rycroft, into foreign financial interference in the UK's political and electoral systems, the Committee is increasingly concerned about the adequacy of the UK's domestic response to combating disinformation.

Countering information operations requires a coordinated, cross-government approach. However, the UK Government currently lacks a single department responsible for monitoring and countering malign actors disseminating disinformation against the UK and its overseas interests. This fragmented structure risks creating vulnerabilities that could be exploited by malign state and non-state actors. In its own written evidence to the Committee, the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office acknowledges this issue, stating: "There is more work to be done to cohere all relevant departments around agreed information threats approaches, supported by delineated remits and aligned structures [...] this parliamentary cycle presents an opportunity to further cohere a collective UK Government response."¹

Indeed, during our Ministerial session with Stephen Doughty MP on 6 January, numerous references were made to the various government departments and associated agencies who have specific responsibilities in relation to defending the UK's democratic institutions and processes.²

As such, I would be grateful if you could provide the Committee with an outline of your work to defend the UK from malign actors seeking to disrupt our democracy through disinformation. In particular, we

¹ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office [DIS0029]

² The oral evidence transcript can be found [here](#).



Foreign Affairs Committee

would welcome details of your activities working with the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office as well as work through the Defending Democracy Taskforce and the Joint Election Security and Preparedness Unit.

As is standard practice, I will be placing this letter and your response in the public domain. I would be grateful for your response to this letter by 16 January.

I am copying this letter to the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and Department for Science, Innovation and Technology.

Dame Emily Thornberry MP
Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee