



House of Commons
Digital, Culture, Media and
Sport Committee

The launch of the Sub-Committee on Disinformation

Tenth Report of Session 2017–19

*Report, together with formal minutes relating
to the report*

*Ordered by the House of Commons
to be printed 26 March 2019*

The Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee

The Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration and policy of the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and its associated public bodies.

Current membership

[Damian Collins MP](#) (*Conservative, Folkestone and Hythe*) (Chair)

[Clive Efford MP](#) (*Labour, Eltham*)

[Julie Elliott MP](#) (*Labour, Sunderland Central*)

[Paul Farrelly MP](#) (*Labour, Newcastle-under-Lyme*)

[Simon Hart MP](#) (*Conservative, Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire*)

[Julian Knight MP](#) (*Conservative, Solihull*)

[Ian C. Lucas MP](#) (*Labour, Wrexham*)

[Brendan O'Hara MP](#) (*Scottish National Party, Argyll and Bute*)

[Rebecca Pow MP](#) (*Conservative, Taunton Deane*)

[Jo Stevens MP](#) (*Labour, Cardiff Central*)

[Giles Watling MP](#) (*Conservative, Clacton*)

Powers

The Committee is one of the departmental select committees, the powers of which are set out in House of Commons Standing Orders, principally in SO No 152. These are available on the internet via www.parliament.uk.

Publication

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Committee reports are published on the Committee's website at www.parliament.uk/dcmscom and in print by Order of the House.

Evidence relating to this report is published on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are Chloe Challender (Clerk), Mems Ayinla (Second Clerk), Mubeen Bhutta (Second Clerk), Lois Jeary (Committee Specialist), Andy Boyd (Senior Committee Assistant), Keely Bishop (Committee Assistant), Lucy Dargahi (Media Officer) and Anne Peacock (Senior Media and Communications Officer).

Contacts

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You can follow the Committee on Twitter using [@CommonsCMS](#).

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The Sub-Committee on Disinformation

The Disinformation and ‘Fake News’ inquiry

1. The DCMS Committee held an extensive and high-profile inquiry into Disinformation and ‘Fake News’ between September 2017 and February 2019. The inquiry’s reach was wide and deep, covering individuals’ rights over their privacy, the effect of online content on people’s political choices, and digital interference in elections both in this country and across the world.

2. During the inquiry, we held 23 oral evidence sessions, taking evidence from 73 witnesses. We undertook many exchanges of public and private correspondence with individuals and organisations alongside.¹ We worked closely with other national parliaments, and held the first ‘international grand committee’, under which representatives of eight other parliaments sat with us in Westminster in a formal hearing. We published two landmark Reports, in July 2018 and February 2019.

3. In our Reports, we highlighted seven areas: the definition, role and legal liabilities of social media platforms; data misuse and targeting, based around the Facebook, Cambridge Analytica and Aggregate IQ allegations, including evidence from the documents we obtained from Six4Three about Facebook’s knowledge of and participation in data-sharing; political campaigning; Russian influence in political campaigns; SCL influence in foreign elections; and digital literacy. In our Final Report, we incorporated analysis by the consultancy firm, 89up, of the repository data we received from Chris Vickery, in relation to the AIQ database.

The Sub-Committee on Disinformation

4. As we stated upon publication on 18 February, “this is the Final Report in our inquiry, but it will not be the final word.”² We believe that there is a public interest in continuing our examination of the continuing threat posed by disinformation to democracies.

5. In order to do this, we are forming a new Sub-Committee on Disinformation. We are launching a new website and will hold evidence sessions in May 2019 with the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, Rt Hon Jeremy Wright QC MP, and with the Information Commissioner, Elizabeth Denham.³ Among other issues, we will discuss with them the Government’s response to our report on ‘Disinformation and ‘Fake News’’, and the White Paper on Online Harms, due to be published shortly.

6. All Members of the DCMS Committee will be able to attend the Sub-Committee. In addition, we plan to make use of the new Standing Order enabling us to invite members of any other select committee to attend any meeting of the Sub-Committee to ask questions of witnesses.⁴ In this way, the Sub-Committee will become Parliament’s ‘institutional home’ for matters concerning disinformation and data privacy; a focal point that will bring together those seeking to scrutinise and examine this threat to democracy.

1 Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee, Fifth Report of 2017–19, [Disinformation and ‘fake news’: Interim Report](#) (29 July 2018, HC 363) and [Final Report](#) (Eighth Report of 2017019, 17 February 2019, HC 1791)

2 [Final Report](#) (Eighth Report of 2017019, 17 February 2019, HC 1791), p.5

3 These sessions will take place on the 8 May and 14 May 2019, respectively.

4 [Standing Order No. 137A \(e\)](#)

Our workplan

7. The Sub-Committee will continue our important work underway with other national parliaments via the ‘international grand committee’. We are proud of the collaboration that we have begun. We look forward to visiting Ottawa and other capitals to participate in further meetings.⁵

8. In launching this Sub-Committee, we are creating a standing programme of work. It signals our commitment to continuing our rigorous scrutiny of democratic accountability, and to play our part in protecting individuals from the insidious onslaught of disinformation and digital disruption. We look forward to continuing the highly important work that we have begun.

5 This session will take place in the Canadian Parliament on 28 May 2019, hosted by The Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics.
<http://www.ourcommons.ca/DocumentViewer/en/42-1/ETHI/news-release/10318514>

Formal minutes

Tuesday 26 March 2019

Damian Collins, in the Chair

Clive Efford	Ian C Lucas
Julie Elliott	Brendan O'Hara
Paul Farrelly	Rebecca Pow
Simon Hart	Giles Watling
Julian Knight	

Draft Report (*The launch of the Sub-Committee on Disinformation*), proposed by the Chairman, brought up and read.

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

Paragraphs 1 to 8 read and agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the Tenth 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 Tuesday 2 April 2019 at 10.00 a.m.]

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
Ninth Report	Live Music	HC 733
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