

Internet safety laws strengthened to fight Russian and hostile state disinformation

- Social media platforms will have to proactively look for and remove disinformation from foreign state actors which harms the UK
- Firms failing to tackle online interference by rogue states face huge fines or being blocked

Social media platforms will have to proactively tackle Russian and other state-sponsored disinformation aimed at undermining the UK under changes ministers are making to new internet safety laws.

Many people are concerned about the threat that malicious state-linked disinformation poses to UK society and democracy, particularly following Russia's brutal invasion of Ukraine.

The government will table an amendment to link the National Security Bill with the Online Safety Bill – strengthening this landmark and pioneering internet legislation to make the UK the safest place in the world to go online. A new Foreign Interference Offence created by the National Security Bill will be added to the list of priority offences in the Online Safety Bill.

It means social media platforms, search engines and other apps and websites allowing people to post their own content will have a legal duty to take proactive, preventative action to identify and minimise people's exposure to state-sponsored or state-linked disinformation aimed at interfering with the UK.

This includes tackling material from fake accounts set up by individuals or groups acting on behalf of foreign states to influence democratic or legal processes, such as elections and court proceedings, or spread hacked information to undermine democratic institutions.

Digital Secretary Nadine Dorries said:

The invasion of Ukraine has yet again shown how readily Russia can and will weaponise social media to spread disinformation and lies about its barbaric actions, often targeting the very victims of its aggression. We cannot allow foreign states or their puppets to use the internet to conduct hostile online warfare unimpeded.

That's why we are strengthening our new internet safety protections to make sure social media firms identify and root out state-backed disinformation.

Security Minister Damian Hinds said:

Online information operations are now a core part of state threats activity. The aim can be variously to spread untruths, confuse, undermine confidence in democracy, or sow division in society.

Disinformation is often seeded by multiple fake personas, with the aim of getting real users, unwittingly, then to 'share' it. We need the big online platforms to do more to identify and disrupt this sort of coordinated inauthentic behaviour. That is what this proposed change in the law is about.

Platforms will need to do risk assessments for content which is illegal under the Foreign Interference Offence and put in place proportionate systems and processes to mitigate the possibility of users encountering this content.

This could include measures such as making it more difficult to create large scale fake accounts or tackling the use of bots in malicious disinformation campaigns. When moderating their sites, the firms will need to make judgments about the intended effect of content or behaviour which they have reasonable grounds to believe is state-sponsored disinformation and whether it amounts to misrepresentation.

These judgements could be based on patterns of behaviours and tactics used, or aided by relevant knowledge of the political and geopolitical context, for example narratives from state-backed media being amplified online.

To help platforms in carrying out this duty, companies will also be able to draw on the regulator Ofcom's codes of practice. Ofcom will have the power to fine companies failing to act up to ten per cent of their annual global turnover, force them to improve their practices and block non-compliant sites.

Foreign Interference Offence

Under the National Security Bill, which is due in Parliament for Committee Stage next week, a new offence of foreign interference is established to deter and disrupt state threats activity including state-linked disinformation which undermines the UK.

It will make it illegal for a person to engage in conduct for, on behalf of or with intent to benefit a foreign power in a way which interferes in UK rights, discredits our democratic intuitions, manipulates people's participation in them and undermines the safety or interests of the UK.

The offence includes conduct that involves making false or misleading misrepresentations, including using information which is true but presented in a misleading way or misrepresenting a person's identity

Online Safety Bill as drafted

As it is currently drafted, the Online Safety Bill will already force companies to take action on state-sponsored disinformation which is illegal and where there is harm to individuals – for example if it contains a threat to kill. Companies whose services are likely to be accessed by children will need to protect underage users from harmful misinformation and disinformation.

Additionally, Category 1 companies will need to address misinformation and disinformation which is harmful and could be accessed by adults – such as dangerous anti-vaccine theories or fake coronavirus cures. They will need to set out clearly whether this content is allowed in their terms of service, and enforce this consistently.

The Bill has strong protections for people's rights to freedom of expression. Clause 19 provides specific safeguards against the over-removal of content and requires platforms to have due regard for users' right to free expression. Companies will also have a duty to ensure they have effective and accessible reporting and redress mechanisms so that users can easily challenge wrongful content takedown decisions.

ENDS

Notes to Editor

- As the list of priority offences in Schedule 7 of the Online Safety Bill cannot include offences that are not yet law, the amendment has been tabled to the National Security Bill to ensure that once the Online Safety Bill gains Royal Assent, it contains the most up to date version of the Foreign Interference Offence.
- The list of priority offences, which can be further updated by regulations, already includes:
terrorism, child sexual abuse and exploitation, assisting suicide, threats to kill, public order offences, harassment and stalking, hate crime, the sale of illegal drugs and weapons, people trafficking offences, exploiting prostitutes for gain, extreme pornography, revenge pornography, proceeds of crime offences, and fraud offences.
- More information on the [Home Office's National Security Bill](#).

Second ballot of the 2022 Youth Mobility Scheme (YMS) for Hong Kong SAR passport holders

As in previous years there are a total of 1,000 places available to Hong Kong

SAR passport holders for 2022.

The majority of places were allocated in the first ballot in January this year, while the remaining places will be made available in this second ballot in July 2022. If your application is successful you will be able to live, work and study in the UK for up to 2 years.

How to apply for the ballot

If you would like to be in with the chance to apply for the scheme you should send one email per applicant to: hongkong.YMS2022@fcdo.gov.uk between midday (12pm) on Monday 25 July 2022 to midday on Wednesday 27 July 2022 (Hong Kong time).

The header or subject line of your email must contain your name, date of birth (DD/MM/YYYY) and passport number as shown in your passport.

This must be written in English only. For example: WONG Janet – 31/03/2000 – Passport123456789 The main body of your email should include the following information, written in English:

- Name
- Date of birth
- Passport Number
- Mobile phone number

The email account will only be open for 48 hours and all emails received within this timeframe will be sent an automated reply confirming receipt. Please remember to check your junk inboxes.

Once the ballot closes, allocations for the remaining places will be chosen at random by UKVI. If you have been successful a second email will be sent to you by Friday 29 July to confirm acceptance and provide further instructions on how to make an appointment, along with documentary evidence required to apply for your entry clearance.

Please note successful applicants must prepare online applications and online credit card payments no later than 30 August 2022. Failure to submit your payment online by this date will automatically remove your name from the list and your allocation will be retracted. After you have paid online you have 90 days to book your appointment at the Visa Application Centre (VAC) and submit your paperwork for consideration.

If you are a Hong Kong SAR passport holder living overseas you can also apply following the instructions above, and if you are chosen to apply you will be able to do so in your country/territory of residence. Applications cannot be submitted for the Youth Mobility Scheme in the UK.

If you are unsuccessful you will receive an email by 29 July and no further action is required.

Further information about the scheme [can be found on gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk/youth-mobility-scheme) and any enquiries relating to the application process, online application forms and questions

in general should be directed to the [UKVI International Enquiry Line](#).

Additional information

British National (Overseas) passport holders are already eligible to apply for a visa under the Youth Mobility Scheme to the UK and are not subject to any quota or sponsorship requirements.

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[Government pledges £233 million infrastructure funding to bring dockland site back to life](#)

Sitting within London's only Enterprise Zone at the Royal Docks, the Silvertown site in Newham has been derelict for the last 40 years and is one of the largest brownfield sites in London's historic docklands.

The major regeneration project will include improvements to the infrastructure around the site and will support The Silvertown Partnership (TSP), a joint venture between Lendlease and Starwood Capital, to build 6,000 new homes and support the creation of 1.8 million sq. ft of next-generation business workspace, alongside new space for cultural and community events and a vibrant new town centre for the Royal Docks.

Housing Minister Rt Hon Stuart Andrew MP said:

This major investment will revive London's historic docklands to deliver vital new homes, create jobs and boost the local economy with new state-of-the-art facilities.

Our brownfield first approach is key to our levelling up mission – regenerating disused land in our towns and cities into places people are proud to call home.

Homes England will provide loan financing to help tackle high up-front infrastructure costs. In particular this includes investment to support the delivery of a new pedestrian and cycle bridge across Royal Victoria Dock, linking the site to Custom House Crossrail, the restoration of the iconic Millennium Mills and the repair of the dock walls themselves, which have previously been a barrier to development of the scheme. Alongside this, new public realm will provide local people with access to the water at the Royal Docks via new bridges, wider canal walkways and jetties.

Peter Freeman, Chair of Homes England, said:

Our commitment to the Silvertown project is another example of how we can work with the private sector to bring forward large, complex sites and help to transform them into the places of the future.

This infrastructure funding will enable The Silvertown Partnership to create new communities in the heart of East London and bring swathes of derelict brownfield land back to life.

Working together with the Greater London Authority (GLA), TSP has committed that 50 per cent of homes within the neighbourhood will be affordable. The homes, which include London Affordable Rent and shared ownership, will form a central part of the new masterplan currently under consultation.

Enabling works to prepare the site for phase one of the plans have begun and the construction of new homes will start later this year.

Speaking on behalf of The Silvertown Partnership, Ed Mayes the Development Director for Silvertown, said:

It's very exciting that after lying dormant for the last 40 years Silvertown is now starting to come back to life, as a vibrant town centre for the Royal Docks and a new destination for Londoners. Silvertown is being revived and re-imagined as a waterside destination to deliver much needed new housing for Newham and the rejuvenation of the historic Millennium Mills. An iconic East London neighbourhood is about to awaken.

The Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, said:

I am delighted to see work getting underway at this landmark East London location that has vexed planners and politicians alike for the last 40 years.

The regeneration of this area is long overdue and I'm excited by the plans for Silvertown which respect its past whilst embracing East London's vibrant and creative future.

Not only will this project create a vibrant new neighbourhood with 50 per cent genuinely affordable homes but it will also create highly skilled jobs while supporting the regeneration of the Royal Docks as we build a better, fairer and more sustainable city for everyone.

The infrastructure loan for Silvertown is funded through the Home Building Fund, which provides infrastructure loans to help unlock and accelerate land for housing development.

ENDS

Notes to editors

- Silvertown, based in the London Borough of Newham, is one of the larger brownfield development sites in London's Docklands (c 61 acres) with an extensive water frontage. The site is owned by GLA, and The Silvertown Partnership are party to a development agreement to draw down land and develop it on a phased basis.
- In 2024 the new walking and cycling bridge, will link Silvertown to the Custom House Crossrail station, helping unlock the site for new residents and visitors.
- More information about the infrastructure finance available for the Home Building Fund is [available on gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk).

Second ballot of the 2022 Youth Mobility Scheme (YMS) for Taiwanese youth

As in previous years there are a total of 1,000 places available to Taiwanese youth for 2022.

The majority of places were allocated in the first ballot in January this year, while the remaining places will be made available in this second ballot in July 2022. If your application is successful you will be able to live, work and study in the UK for up to 2 years.

How to apply for the ballot

If you would like to be in with the chance to apply for the scheme you should send one email per applicant to: Taiwan.YMS2022@fcdo.gov.uk between midday (12pm) on Monday 25 July 2022 to midday (12pm) on Wednesday 27 July 2022 (Taiwan time).

The header or subject line of your email must contain your name, date of birth (DD/MM/YYYY) and passport number as shown in your passport.

This must be written in English only.

For example: WU Janice – 31/03/2000 – Passport123456789

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If you are a Taiwanese youth living overseas you can also apply following the instructions above, and if you are chosen to apply you will be able to do so in your location of residence. Applications cannot be submitted for the Youth Mobility Scheme in the UK.

If you're unsuccessful you will receive an email by 29 July and no further action is required.

Further information about the [Youth Mobility Scheme](#) and any enquiries relating to the application process, online application forms and questions in general should be directed to the [UKVI International Enquiry Line](#).