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Cyber Security Guide

For Small Businesses.



THE
**CYBER
RESILIENCE
CENTRE**
FOR THE NORTH WEST

**Affordable, professional
cyber security services
for your business.**

What is Cyber Security?



Cyber security is how individuals and organisations reduce the risk of becoming victims of a cyber-attack or online crime.

Cyber security is designed to protect the devices we all use (smartphones, laptops, tablets, and computers), and the services we access - both online and at work - from theft or damage.

It is also about preventing unauthorised access to the vast amounts of personal information we store on these devices and online.

From online banking and shopping to email and social media, it is more important than ever to take steps that can prevent cybercriminals from getting unauthorised access to our accounts, data, and devices.

Cybercrime takes many different forms. For example:

- **Ransomware**
- **Account compromise**
- **Business Email Compromise**

In this guide, we will provide simple advice on how to spot the signs of an attack, how you can protect your business and links to further free resources & support.

National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC)

The NCSC supports critical national infrastructure, the public sector, private industry, and SMEs as well as the general public. We will signpost to free [NCSC materials](#) in this guide where possible as a trusted source of support.

Ransomware

Ransomware is a type of malicious software (malware) that prevents a user from accessing a computer or the data that is stored on it.

The computer itself may become locked, or the data on it might be stolen, deleted or encrypted. Some ransomware will also try to spread to other machines including any backup storage devices connected to the network.

Ransomware attacks are typically carried out using malware disguised as a legitimate file that the user is tricked into downloading or opening when it arrives as an email attachment. A popup message or note is left on the computer asking for a payment to be made to regain access to the data.

However, even if a payment is made, there is no guarantee that the computer or files will be decrypted.

How to avoid Ransomware

The following steps will reduce the likelihood of your computer or device being infected with ransomware.

- Keep your operating system and apps up to date. Don't put off applying updates, they contain patches that keep your device secure.
- Make sure your antivirus is turned on and up to date.
- Provide security education and awareness training to your staff.
- Avoid downloading unofficial apps. Only use official app stores (like Google Play or the Apple App Store), which protect from viruses.
- The NCSC's Mobile Device Guidance provides advice on how to achieve this across a variety of platforms.

Ransomware

If you've already been infected, please refer to the below guidance on mitigating malware:

- Smaller organisations should refer to the [NCSC's Small Business Guide](#).
- Larger organisations/enterprises should refer to the [NCSC's Mobile Device Guidance](#).
- For information about protecting your devices at home, please read NCSC guidance especially written for [individuals and families](#).
- Files encrypted by most ransomware typically have no way of being decrypted by anyone other than the attacker.
- The [No More Ransom Project](#) run in partnership with Europol provides a collection of free decryption tools and other resources, which may help.

SHOULD I PAY THE RANSOM?

Police and partners, including the NCSC, encourage individuals/organisations **NOT TO PAY THE RANSOM.**

If you do pay the ransom:

- There is no guarantee that you will get access to your data or device.
- Your device will still be infected.
- You will be paying a criminal group.
- You're more likely to be targeted in the future.



Account Compromise

Whether it's your email, social media or some other type of online service, there are many things that can alert you to the fact that someone else is accessing your account.

Being locked out of the account is an obvious indication that something has gone wrong, but the signs can be more subtle. Things to look out for include logins or attempted logins from strange locations or at unusual times. Changes to your security settings and messages sent from your account that you don't recognise are also indications.

Once you realise your account has been hacked the NCSC have a [step by step guide](#) to help you regain control and protect yourself against future attacks.

How to avoid account compromise.

- Use a strong and separate password for each of your online accounts
- Follow NCSC guidance by using [3 random words](#)
- Use a [password manager](#)
- Save passwords to your internet browser.
- Turn on [2-factor-authentication](#) (2FA).



Business Email Compromise

Business email compromise (BEC) is a form of phishing attack where a criminal attempts to trick a senior executive (or budget holder) into transferring funds or revealing sensitive information.

The criminals behind BEC send convincing-looking emails that might request unusual payments or contain links to 'dodgy' websites. Some emails may contain viruses disguised as harmless attachments, which are activated when opened.

Unlike standard phishing emails that are sent out indiscriminately to millions of people, BEC attacks are crafted to appeal to specific individuals and can be even harder to detect. BEC is a threat to all organisations of all sizes and across all sectors, including non-profit organisations and charities.

What are the signs of business email compromise?

- Unsolicited email/phone call
- Pressure and a sense of urgency
- Unusual contact from a senior official
- Unusual request that contradicts internal processes
- Request for absolute confidentiality

What can I do to reduce the risk?

- Protect your account with a strong password.
- Use 2-factor-authentication (2FA).
- Review how you manage payment requests received by email to mitigate the risk of fraud.
- Check your e-mail rules regularly
- Check for compromised accounts at haveibeenpwned.com

Back-ups

Up-to-date backups are the most effective way of recovering from a ransomware attack, you should do the following.

- Make regular backups of your most important files - it will be different for every organisation - *check that you know how to restore files from the backup, and regularly test that it is working as expected.*
- Ensure you create offline backups that are kept separate, in a different location (ideally offsite), from your network and systems, or in a cloud service designed for this purpose, as ransomware actively targets backups to increase the likelihood of payment. NCSC blog on '[Offline backups in an online world](#)' provides useful additional advice for organisations.
- Make multiple copies of files using different backup solutions and storage locations.
- Make sure that the devices containing your backup (such as external hard drives and USB sticks) are not permanently connected to your network.
- Ensure that your cloud service protects previous versions of the backup from being immediately deleted and allows you to restore to them.
- Scan backups for malware before you restore files. Ransomware may have infiltrated your network over some time, and replicated to backups before being discovered.

Reporting & Useful Resources



How do I report a cybercrime?

If you are currently suffering a live cyber-attack, please call Action Fraud on **0300 123 2040** immediately. This service is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Alternatively, you can call the Police at any time on 101.

In an emergency, where there is a threat to life or a crime in progress, always phone 999.

Further resources (click the links below) :

- Free NWCRC Guidance
- Sign up for the free NWCRC newsletter
- The Cyber Essentials scheme
- NCSC Small Business Guide: for businesses, charities and schools with up to 250 employees
- Stay safe online: top tips for staff
- Protect devices from viruses and malware
- Phishing attacks: dealing with suspicious emails
- A guide to recovering your hacked online accounts
- Video conferencing: using services securely
- Bring Your Own Device
- Homeworking: managing the cyber risks
- Business email compromise: dealing with targeted phishing emails

About Us



The North West Cyber Resilience Centre is a not-for-profit partnership, which brings together the police, local government, academia and the business community.

As the trusted voice in cyber resilience, our vision is for every business to have access to the knowledge, skills and tools to help protect themselves from online crime

We achieve this by providing education, testing and training services, which are delivered by our team of trusted professionals, seconded police officers and ethical hacking students.

We have developed a number of membership packages, specifically designed to help small businesses become more resilient to online crime.

We also provide a small range of affordable professional cyber security services to test your vulnerability to an attack and ability to recover.

The NWCRC was established in 2019 as the first centre in the country and a pathfinder to the National Police Chief's Council and the Home Office.

We are proud to now form part of a national network of Cyber Resilience Centres, which exist to support the Police in keeping our business communities safe.

**Sign up for
free membership**

nwcrc.co.uk

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The North West Cyber Resilience Centre and north west police forces would like to thank the Scottish Business Resilience Centre for their assistance in the publication of this guide.



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