

Making the UK the safest place to live and do business online

The NCSC's Chief Executive Ciaran Martin outlines why the UK needs a National Cyber Security Centre.

Ciaran Martin

Welcome to GCHQ's new National Cyber Security Centre.

Why are we here? Over the last five or so years, GCHQ has achieved a great deal in cyber security. Working with our colleagues in the intelligence community, law enforcement, elsewhere in Government, internationally and, crucially, with the private sector, we have raised the awareness of cyber attacks, developed capabilities to detect and try to thwart the worst attacks, and pointed individuals and organisations towards cyber security advice, guidance and services they can trust.

But it's hard to say that we - as a nation - are getting ahead of the threat. We are the most heavily digitalised economy in the G7 and that is a good thing. But too many low-level cyber attacks continue to get through. And if we don't do more, this will become a serious threat to our wellbeing and prosperity.

At one end of the spectrum, nearly all of our critical services are now connected to the internet - some obviously so, some less obviously. This helps all of us: these services are more dynamic, more cost effective and more responsive. But with this comes vulnerabilities and the NCSC is here to work with the owners of those services and systems to make them as safe and resilient as possible.

The other end of the spectrum is crucial, too. If you talk to small businesses and other organisations and individuals who have been the victims of cyber attacks, you'll know that the effects can be devastating. If you are a small outfit with 100 customers and you lose their data, or lose several days of business, or are forced to pay a ransom running into thousands of pounds, it will have a huge impact on you, your business and your life.

These attacks are often unsophisticated and some, though not all, are relatively small scale. The NCSC can't respond to each and every one of them. But what we

can do is give you the right advice, and work through our brilliant technologists to produce new ways of working that will help protect UK businesses and citizens automatically.

We bring together expertise from CESG (the information assurance arm of GCHQ); the cyber elements of the Centre for the Protection of National Infrastructure; CERT-UK; and the Centre for Cyber Assessment to provide a single point of contact for SMEs, larger organisations, government agencies and departments.

Our advice is simple. Have a look around at what the NCSC is saying and work out which bits are most relevant to you. Then focus on getting the basics right. You can't defend against every attack, but by working out what you care about the most, storing it carefully, monitoring it, and having basic protections in place will make it that bit harder for an attacker to get through. And that matters.

GCHQ – our parent organisation – will continue to defend the UK day and night against the major threats we face from across the world, hostile states and serious organised criminals.

Our commitment to you – the taxpayer who pays for us – is to do our best each and every day in support of this vital mission. We want to work with you to help make the UK the safest place to live and do business online. So thank you for engaging with us.

Ciaran Martin
CEO of the NCSC



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