

Press release: Record number of schoolgirls make digital waves but women still under-represented in the cyber security sector

- Women make up just 11% of the global cyber security workforce
- Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, David Lidington MP, calls for more to be done to encourage women into the cyber security industry
- As well as reaching out to the cyber-pros of tomorrow, NCSC launches new online training tool to meet security demands of today

Cyber-savvy female students who took part in an online competition founded by the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) were praised today in a speech by David Lidington. Speaking at the 'Women in Security Network' conference, the Minister for the Cabinet Office also warned that more needs to be done to open up opportunities in cyber security for women.

Nearly 12,000 girls aged 12 – 13 from across the UK took part in the competition in 2019, which was launched by the NCSC as part of the CyberFirst initiative. The competition breaks down gender barriers by encouraging girls to engage with cyber security before they make their GCSE choices, with over 24,000 female students having taken part since the competition was launched in 2016. Promising youngsters from across the UK have been attending cyber security courses throughout the year, with some securing bursaries and apprenticeships through the CyberFirst programme.

However, with women accounting for just 7% of the cyber security workforce across Europe, David Lidington called for more to be done to encourage women into the sector:

There remains a severe lack of diversity in the cyber industry. Cyber security is among the most important aspects of our national defence today, so we need talent from every part of society enriching our workforces.

Women have been pioneers in security and technology, and we want to see this reflected in the cyber security sector too.

As well as reaching out to the cyber professionals of tomorrow, the NCSC has developed an online learning tool to give workers of today the skills they need to protect themselves from potential cyber attacks.

Aimed at SMEs, charities and the voluntary sector, the brand new, targeted 30-minute programme 'Stay Safe Online: Top Tips for Staff' educates users

about how attacks happen, where vulnerabilities lie and how to defend themselves. During his speech, David Lidington said the new training package will empower any user – not just cyber experts – to play their part in boosting their organisations' cyber resilience.

Commenting on the new software, Clare Gardiner, NCSC Director of Engagement, said:

We all have a part to play in making the UK the safest place to live and work online. Employees are vital in helping keep their organisations' networks safe and need to be aware of how to protect themselves.

Our recent Cyber Survey discovered that 25% of organisations don't see cyber security as a top priority and we hope this tool will empower staff to start conversations around best practice.

Once people are more cyber literate as a whole, we hope to see this having a positive impact on the diversity of people that are interested in working in the sector.