Councils, help us improve your cyber security
The Local Government Association (LGA) has received funding from the Cabinet Office to work with local government to **improve councils’ cyber resilience**.

The first phase of this work is to carry out a **stocktake** of councils’ **existing cyber security arrangements** to understand what we already have in place and to help identify how we can best reinforce these measures to **prevent and mitigate against future cyber-attacks**.

We are already working with the National Cyber Security Centre, MHCLG, Socitm, Solace and the WARPS to plan the stocktake exercise. **We need your help to make sure your council knows this is coming and that they will need to respond.**
LGA support to councils

Cyber security is a growing concern for local government. Councils across the UK are at different stages on their digital journey, but all have taken steps to make more local public services available digitally, move their workforce online, or collaborate in innovative ways with partner organisations. Councils hold a large amount of sensitive data and assets of value to cyber criminals and hackers.

All councils have protocols, processes and guidance around data handling and sharing, particularly where this is especially sensitive or confidential. Most will also have a range of anti-virus tools in place across their systems, managed by their ICT teams.

Councils have invested in a range of measures to repel, block and isolate cyber-attacks:

• implementing firewalls and scanning software
• providing guidance and training for their workforce and councillors
• carrying out penetration tests and cyber resilience exercises to test their systems and processes
• applying regular patches and updates to software systems
• applying national guidance, eg cyber essentials
• meeting compliance standards to connect to central government private networks, eg PSN, N3, NHS mail, etc.

However, as we have seen through recent cyber-attacks including the WannaCry ransomware attack, those with criminal or hostile intent will continue to try to breach our security to steal the data we hold and/or damage our systems. Therefore, as a sector we need to continuously review, refresh and reinforce our approach to cyber security.
The LGA is helping councils to do this by:

- highlighting and promoting existing good practice, guidance and tools that can help councils mitigate against cyber threats
- raising issues and concerns from councils that impact on their ability to effectively protect themselves and their communities against cyber-attacks.

We also coordinate a number of boards where the issue of cyber security is raised, working with organisations like the National Cyber Security Centre, Solace and Socitm.

There are some simple steps you can take to protect your own organisation:

www.local.gov.uk/cyber-security

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**LGA cyber security stocktake**

You can also help us to help you. The LGA is soon to undertake a comprehensive ‘stocktake’ of cyber security arrangements across all councils in England.

Coming this summer, this aims to:

- capture your existing cyber security arrangements
- identify good practice – and those councils delivering it
- identify risks – and those councils at risk.

Working with a trusted research partner, we aim to build up a complete picture of where all councils in England are in terms of their cyber security arrangements. We want to clearly identify where good practice exists so we can highlight and share this with other councils, as well as identify those councils who might benefit from some additional support. This is not a naming and shaming exercise; we
want to help make every council as safe and secure as possible to enable them work more effectively with their communities, partners and government. We will use the findings of this work to inform and implement a plan of support, based on the LGA’s tried and tested sector-led improvement models.

What you can do

The stocktake exercise is likely to be carried out as an online questionnaire for your council to complete. Please encourage your organisation to take part. Only with all councils participating can we develop a clear view of where strengths and weaknesses lie across our sector and deliver the support needed.

Find out more

www.local.gov.uk/cyber-security
productivity@local.gov.uk

What’s in it for your council?

- The chance to receive some tailored support to quickly improve your cyber resilience and therefore mitigate a disruptive and costly attack.
- The chance to understand how your council is performing compared to your peers across the sector and to understand your organisation’s strengths and weaknesses around cyber security – for example you may have virus scanning tools in place, but if a cyber attacker broke through, what contingency plans are in place to enable your council to respond effectively?
- The chance to act as an exemplar of best practice in the sector, showcasing your council’s expertise and helping peers to learn from you and improve.