Easy Read message

In February 2024 NHS Dumfries and Galloway computer systems were accessed by cyber criminals. Information held in those systems was copied by the criminals. This did not affect people's care or treatment.

No information was deleted or changed. The cyber criminals published people's confidential information on the internet on 6 May 2024.
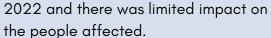
Some information about you and/or people you care for is likely to have been published online. This is a serious breach of privacy and security.
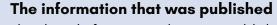
More detail about what you can do to protect your information/systems is shown in the Risk section below.

A cyber security expert has advised that a similar situation happened in Australia in 2022 and there was limited impact on the people affected.
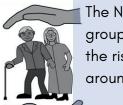
The information that was published

The data/information that was published on the internet included people's x-rays, test results and letters between health and care professionals. Letters about complaints were also published.
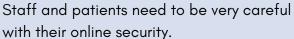
Our biggest concern is for vulnerable groups of people. If criminals have access to their information, it may put these groups at higher risk.
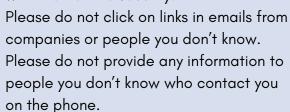
The NHS will contact people in these groups to make sure they are aware of the risks and take extra care/precautions around their cyber security and safety.

The potential risks

Security

Staff and patients need to be very careful with their online security.

Please do not click on links in emails from companies or people you don't know.

Please do not provide any information to people you don't know who contact you on the phone.

If you think something is suspicious, contact Police Scotland on 101.

Make sure you change passwords regularly and ensure they are strong, such as 3 random words.

Where risks to people's safety have been identified, changes have been made quickly to protect them.

Extortion

Where someone threatens to publish sensitive, private information if a person does not give them money. This is a crime.

Any unauthorised access to someone's personal information is a breach of the Data Protection Act.

If this happens to you or someone you know please contact Police Scotland right away on 101.

Anxiety/worry

We understand this situation could cause people to worry and/or experience anxiety. If you feel you need some support with this, please access the helpline on www.nhsdg.co.uk/cyberattack or phone 01387 216 777, Monday to Friday 9 am to 6 pm and Saturday 9 am to 1 pm.

More information

The webpage provides information about the cyber-attack including some 'Frequently Asked Questions'. This might be helpful if there is anything you are not sure about.

What we are doing now

Senior NHS staff continue to respond to the attack with support from Police Scotland, the National Crime Agency, the National Cyber Security Centre and the Scottish Government.

We may contact you again by letter, through a scheduled appointment or by telephone. If you are in any doubt about who is contacting you, please contact us on 01387 246246 to check.

Cyber Attack: Frequently Asked Questions

WHEN AND HOW DID THE CYBER ATTACK TAKE PLACE?
Cyber criminals launched an attack on NHS Dumfries and Galloway's IT systems in February. We do not know why the criminals targeted us. The attack remains the focus of a criminal investigation. Police Scotland have advised us that we cannot disclose how the cyber criminals gained access to our systems, explaining that this is 'specialist knowledge' which may feature in any prosecution. On 15 March 2024, with our systems now secured, we publicly announced the cyber attack, noted that this was a very serious situation and asked everyone to look out for suspicious activity such as unusual emails or people calling up claiming to have their data or other NHS data. We asked everyone to report any incident like this to Police Scotland by calling 101.

WHAT AGENCIES ARE INVOLVED IN THE RESPONSE? NHS Dumfries and Galloway was quickly working alongside national agencies like Police Scotland, The National Crime Agency, The National Cyber Security Centre and The Scottish Government – taking their advice and direction.

WHAT DATA WAS ACCESSED? What the cyber criminals were generally able to access was millions of very small, separate pieces of data – examples include individual letters from consultants to patients, letters between consultants, test results, x-rays, etc. On 27 March 2024 the cyber criminals published onto the Internet a small 'proof pack' of data relating to six patients. They published this to prove that they had been successful in copying data from our systems, and they threatened to publish more. On Monday 6 May 2024, the cyber criminals then carried out their threat and published millions of pieces of copied NHS data on the internet.

WHY DID THEY PUBLISH THE DATA? We are advised by partner agencies that the cyber criminals very likely published the data to demonstrate to any future victims that they will carry out any threats they make unless their demands are met.

WHEN WILL I FIND OUT IF MY DATA HAS BEEN PUBLISHED? Identifying data which was taken, working through the millions of documents to find identifiable individuals and then assembling all their data is a massive undertaking. Progress has been made quickly thanks to the use of software in support, but with a decision to focus this work on 'high-risk' data which often relates to particularly vulnerable people. Because of this, it's likely that the majority of communications to the public will continue to remain general – rather than targeted to specific people.

COULD THIS CYBER ATTACK HAPPEN AGAIN? Our IT teams and other specialist agencies have advised that our IT systems are as secure as they can be, but we are monitoring the situation and continue to advise everyone to be on their guard. We continue to work with partner agencies on the response to this situation, and the continuing criminal investigation.

IS IT ILLEGAL FOR SOMEONE TO LOOK AT OR SHARE THE DATA?
A Police Scotland spokesman statement reads: "Members of the public should not attempt to access or share any leaked data as you may be committing an offence under the Data Protection Act."

WHERE CAN I GET MORE HELP?
The web-page www.nhsdg.co.uk/cyberattack hosts all the updates about the attack. A manned helpline is also running, which can be reached by calling 01387 216 777, operating Monday to Friday 9 am to 6 pm, and Saturday 9 am to 1 pm.