



National Audit Office

Report

by the Comptroller
and Auditor General

Cabinet Office

Update on the National Cyber Security Programme

Summary

The National Cyber Security Programme

1 The government's National Cyber Security Programme (the Programme) has a budget of £860 million and is running from April 2011 to March 2016. It has 4 objectives:

- Tackling cyber crime and making the United Kingdom one of the most secure places in the world to do business.
- Making the United Kingdom more resilient to cyber attack and better able to protect our interests in cyberspace.
- Helping to shape an open, vibrant and stable cyberspace which the United Kingdom public can use safely and that supports open societies.
- Building the United Kingdom's cross-cutting knowledge, skills and capability to underpin all our cyber security objectives.

2 A small programme team in the Office of Cyber Security and Information Assurance, in the Cabinet Office, manages the Programme. The team reports to the Deputy National Security Adviser, who is the Senior Responsible Owner for the Programme. The Cabinet Office allocates resources to delivery partners across the public, private and third sectors.

Background to our work

3 In November 2011, the government published the UK Cyber Security Strategy.¹ Since then, it has published 2 progress reviews, in December 2012 and December 2013, and several supporting documents. In February 2013, we published our landscape review of cyber security.² We described what different parts of government were doing to implement the Cyber Security Strategy and identified the challenges they faced in doing so.

4 Using our review, the Committee of Public Accounts held a hearing on 13 March 2013 on the subject of cyber security and took evidence from Cabinet Office officials. After the hearing, the Committee's Chair wrote to the Cabinet Office. The Chair noted 5 key challenges for government and asked us to give an update of the Programme after the government's next planned review. This report is our response.

1 The UK Cyber Security Strategy: Protecting and promoting the UK in a digital world, November 2011, available at: www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/60961/uk-cyber-security-strategy-final.pdf

2 Comptroller and Auditor General, *The UK cyber security strategy: Landscape review*, Session 2012-13, HC 890, National Audit Office, February 2013, available at: www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Cyber-security-Full-report.pdf

5 The evidence for this report is based on semi-structured interviews with Programme staff and delivery partners, financial analysis and document review, interviews with industry representatives, a round-table discussion with academics and a short survey of 34 stakeholders engaged with the Programme.³

Key findings

6 Overall, the government continues to make good progress in implementing the Programme, which is helping to build capability, mitigate risk and change attitudes, as well as taking advantage of opportunities for economic growth. But cyber threats continue to evolve and the government must increase the pace of change in some areas to meet its objectives. The government also needs to decide which initiatives should be mainstream activity across public sector organisations and which require the impetus and coordination that a successor programme might provide.

7 Findings in specific areas are as follows:

- The Programme's financial management and governance mechanisms are strong, and have improved over the Programme's life to date. The Programme is on track to spend its budget of £860 million by March 2016.
- The government has made good progress in improving its understanding of the most sophisticated threats to national security. This area scored the highest rating in our survey. However, there is a varied understanding of threats to wider public services.
- The government has made some progress in encouraging businesses and citizens to mitigate risks, particularly in getting larger companies to take action. It has had a limited impact with SMEs, where it has struggled to communicate guidance in a way that meets those businesses' needs.
- While UK cyber exports have increased by 22% between 2012 and 2013, progress in encouraging trade and exports in cyber products and services has been slow and is the area of poorest performance, scoring the lowest rating in our survey. The government's marketing strategy was delayed by 14 months and it has only recently agreed a methodology to measure progress towards the £2 billion export target announced at the end of 2013.
- The government has encouraged many education and training initiatives to stimulate the development of relevant skills but demand for those skills remains considerable.
- Cabinet Office is managing the Programme effectively but cannot yet demonstrate a clear link between the large number of individual outputs being delivered and an overall picture of benefits achieved. However, this challenge must be set against the inherent difficulty of measuring how safe the United Kingdom is in cyberspace.

³ We asked those responding to our survey to rank performance in each area of the Programme with a score between 1 and 5, where 1 = very poor performance and 5 = excellent performance. Further detail on this survey is contained in Appendix One.