[Free cyber skills training for thousands of school pupils](#)

- Cyber Explorers will teach 11 to 14-year-olds essential digital skills to meet demand for future talent in the cyber security sector

- Schools in Newport, Newry, Inverclyde, Birmingham and Bradford among first areas to benefit from extra learning events

Thousands of secondary school students will learn essential cyber security skills for free through a new online learning platform being rolled out in schools across the country.

The move is part of government plans to create a highly-skilled and more diverse pipeline of talent for the UK's fast-growing and in-demand cyber security industry.

Cyber Explorers aims to introduce 30,000 11 to 14-year-olds to important security concepts such as open-source intelligence, digital forensics and social engineering.

Along with the help of both the friendly Cyber Ranger and the knowledgeable Cyber Squad, students will explore a variety of scenarios and collect virtual badges for making smarter choices online. Using characters, quizzes and activities, the free website will show students how digital, computing and cyber skills can lead to a range of career paths, including social media content creation, sports technology and medical research. Brand new content and characters will launch over the coming weeks.

Last week [new data](#) published by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport showed cyber security in the UK is growing from strength to strength. The sector is now worth more than £10 billion and more than 6,000 new jobs were created last year.

But only a third of companies are confident they will be able to access the digital skills they need in the years to come. The lack of relevant training is a barrier, keeping young people from some of the country's most innovative and exciting careers.

Cyber Minister Julia Lopez said:

> For years the UK has led the world in cyber security but we're now looking ahead to the future. This sector is home to some of our most exciting, innovative jobs and they must be open to everyone.
>
> Cyber Explorers will give thousands of young people the opportunity to learn digital skills they need for the modern workplace and get

the best possible start on their journey towards a career in cyber.

Girls and students from low socioeconomic backgrounds are underrepresented in IT courses at GCSE and equivalent levels and the trend continues into today's cyber workforce. Just 16 per cent of roles in the sector are filled by women and many senior roles are not fully representative of wider society.

Designed to engage younger students before they choose subjects for their GCSEs and equivalent qualifications, Cyber Explorers aims to improve the diversity of pupils picking computer science courses at Key Stage 4.

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Steve Barclay, said:

> The UK's cyber security industry is growing from strength to strength and we must continue to unlock the opportunities it brings to our economy by investing in the right skills and training.
>
> Cyber Explorers is a fantastic opportunity to encourage a new generation to learn the essential digital skills they need for the future and get the best possible start to their careers, as well as meet demand for future talent in the sector.

Suitable for in-classroom teaching, after school clubs and independent learning at home, the programme has been specifically developed to help teachers and parents introduce digital skills to young people while complementing the wider school curriculum.

The new platform is being rolled out as part of the government's National Cyber Strategy. It will complement the existing CyberFirst programme of activities led by the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC).

A series of events will be run by local businesses and networks in Newport, Birmingham, Bradford, Newry and Inverclyde to ensure young people from ethnic minority and socially deprived backgrounds have the support and access they need to benefit from the programme.

Chris Ensor, NCSC Deputy Director for Cyber Growth, said:

> Cyber security is a growing industry in the UK, with a huge variety of exciting career paths on offer that help defend our digital world.
>
> Supporting young people to develop cyber skills is vital for addressing the sector's skills gap and for keeping the UK the safest place to live and work online.
>
> Cyber Explorers will play a key role in making cyber more accessible to young people, complementing the wider CyberFirst programme and inspiring students to pursue careers in the field.

ENDS

Notes for Editors

About Cyber Explorers

- Cyber Explorers is the latest HM Government backed initiative to complement the existing CyberFirst programme of activities, which is led by the National Cyber Security Centre. It is ensuring more opportunity through education, providing the right skills, and retraining and helping to develop societal infrastructure.

- Cyber Explorers can be accessed through schools. Teachers can register for their students to gain access to the platform at www.cyberexplorers.co.uk.

About the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) – a part of GCHQ

- The NCSC is the UK's lead technical authority on cyber security and offers unrivalled real-time threat analysis, defence against national cyber attacks and tailored advice to victims when incidents do happen. The NCSC leads the CyberFirst programme which offers a range of activities for young people to learn about the exciting world of cyber security, including free courses for all age groups from 11-17 and a university bursary and apprenticeship scheme.