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Freedom of Information Act Disclosure log - Reply Extract

You asked

I would like to make a Freedom of Information request relating to cyber attacks to your organisation

By cyber attack I am referring to the unauthorised access or deliberate disruption of a computer system or a device.

Types of cyber attack could include, but are not limited to: ransomware, denial of service, phishing and spear phishing etc

By data, I am referring to any information held on your computer systems or devices

Please could you answer the following:-

1. Does your organisation keep an incident log of cyber attacks?
2. How many cyber attacks - attempted and successful - were recorded against your organisation in the last three financial years, year-by-year (ie 2014/15, 2015/16, 2016/17)?
3. Where cyber attacks were successful, what kind of data and what amount of data, if any, was lost or stolen? Was it confidential?
4. For each case, please confirm:- the type of attack (eg ransomware, denial of service etc)
5. What demand, if any, was made to resolve the attack? Did the organisation comply?
6. Whether the attack was reported to police or other responsible authority? Was the attacker traced/convicted?

Please can you provide this information in Excel spreadsheet format

Our response

Beyond the information published on the Trust's website, we are not able to provide further information. Please refer to our legal statement as exemptions apply to the questions you have asked.

Our legal statement relating to the use of exemptions

Introduction

Section 31 and 38 apply to all of the questions you have asked. We are sorry that we cannot be more helpful, but trust that you will understand our approach in light of the risks associated with responding, particularly in light of recent national news events about cybercrime.

We have for some time adopted a similar approach to all requests about our integrated network security and believe this is necessary in maintaining the highest levels of security.

Exemptions applied

Section 31.-(1) (a) the prevention or detection of crime applies, as does 31.-(3) neither confirming nor denying we hold the information requested.

Section 38-(1) (a) and (b) the Health and Safety exemption applies. Additionally section 38.-(2) applies in that we are neither confirming nor denying we hold the information requested.

Exemptions use rationale

This disclosure would prejudice the prevention and detection of crime and any information, albeit confirming what we hold or do not hold could assist criminals and place our patients and staff at harm. The Trust has provided a more detailed rationale below for each exemption used and applied them following the careful consideration of submissions made to a Public Interest Test in deciding the outcome of our response to you.

Section 31 – Law enforcement- prevention of crime

We consider this exemption applies because disclosing details of our security arrangements could prejudice the security and integrity of the Trust's network and increase the risk of unauthorised access to information held by the Trust, much of which is confidential and sensitive. The level of detail that would be released would enable external parties, who are not privy to the confidential aspects of Trust's IT systems, knowledge of our security equipment and by association its integrated network security. The Trust employs a range of security tools to mitigate the risk from different types of security threats. Firewalls, Intruder Detection Devices Antivirus and other products form a mesh of security that protects the Plymouth NHS Network and data, the more of these vectors that are known, the weaker the security of the network protection. There is a real risk that this knowledge could assist external parties in attempting a cyber-attack/hack into the Plymouth NHS Network. The anticipated harm from this is a breach of data protection (failure to protect information resulting in an unauthorised disclosure), data loss, and disruption to patient care through a loss of IT services. The severity of harm is extensive with millions of patient records put at risk of unauthorised disclosure.

Section 38 Health and Safety

Such disclosures also endanger the physical or mental health and safety of patients and staff. The dangers have become self-evident from recent events reported in the news, including delays to treatment and diagnostics to name but a few. Any failure of our infrastructure endangers both the physical and mental health of our patients and exposes them to danger.