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1 in 5 British schools and colleges have experienced a cyber-attack

- 71% of those who have been attacked received some form of malware
- Less than a third (29%) have cyber insurance
- Loss of data and cost biggest concerns for the sector

New research from specialist insurer, Ecclesiastical, has revealed that one in five British schools and colleges has been a victim of a cyber-attack.

Of those that had experienced a cyber-attack, 71% of organisations had received some form of malware, software which is specifically designed to disrupt, damage or gain authorised access to a computer system. Last year, for example, the WannaCry ransomware attack indiscriminately targeted hundreds of thousands of computers across the globe, most notably the NHS here in the UK.

Other common attacks experienced included phishing scams (50%) with 38% of schools and colleges also having experienced a denial of service attack and a third (33%) suffering a password attack.

When asked about the precautions they were taking to protect themselves almost two thirds (65%) said they had a cyber-security plan in place but less than a third (29%) had cyber insurance.

Loss of data (82%) and the costs involved in putting things right (47%) were seen as the biggest concern. However, 34% said that they were also worried about the reputational risk to individuals and the potential impact on public trust (37%).

Faith Parish, education director at Ecclesiastical, said: "Cyber cover should be considered as part of a holistic solution, not the single response. Having the right cover in place alongside, and in support of, an internal IT solution is vital."

At the end of 2017, parents were warned to take care when paying fees as cyber criminals tried to divert payments in to their own bank accounts. Already in 2018, it was reported that the CCTV systems of four UK schools had been hacked and live footage of staff and pupils was accessible on an American website.

Despite this, almost three quarters (74%) of schools and colleges said that they felt their organisation was fully prepared to deal with a cyber-attack. Those who did not feel confident cited lack of in-house knowledge, outdated software and only backing up data in one location as the main reasons why.

"Cyber criminals are developing and evolving their tactics all the time, so dealing with these threats often requires very specialist skills. When choosing cyber cover schools should look at what the cover

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provides carefully. Access to third party support, legal advice and specialist cyber advice is paramount when dealing with this type of incident, and is something that is often overlooked by those purchasing cover.” Faith added.

The research also revealed that only 14% have put the Government backed, Cyber Essentials Scheme in place and just 7% are developing or considering it.

*****ENDS*****

NOTES

1. Research was undertaken by FWD Research on behalf of Ecclesiastical Insurance. 120 education establishments were interviewed by telephone during November and December 2017.

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Notes to editors

1. Owned by a registered charity, Allchurches Trust, Ecclesiastical is a unique financial services organisation. With its main operations and headquarters in the UK, Ecclesiastical also operates in Australia, Canada and Ireland.
2. Ecclesiastical is a specialist insurer of the faith, heritage, fine art, charities, education and private client sectors.
3. Founded in 1887 to provide insurance for the Anglican Church, the company now offers a wide range of commercial insurances, as well as home insurance, selling through brokers and directly.
4. The Ecclesiastical Group also includes award-winning investment management business, EdenTree Investment Management, which provides a range of ethically screened investment funds.
5. Ecclesiastical is one of the UK's top five corporate donors to charity in the 2016-17 UK Guide to Company Giving. Other 2016 awards include Better Society Awards, Insurer of the Year and Post Magazine, Claims Awards, Customer Care winner.
6. In 2014, Ecclesiastical Insurance Group launched its vision to donate £50million to charity in a three-year period. In March 2016, the Group announced that it had reached its target almost a year ahead of schedule and that figure at the end of 2016 stood at £67m.

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7. Many businesses say they are different. Ecclesiastical really is. Find out why at www.ecclesiastical.com/ourstory