CYBER AWARE

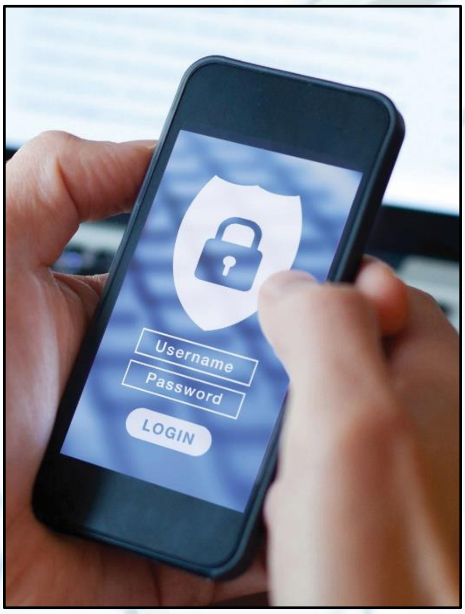
south east
Regional Organised Crime Unit

# How strong is your password?

## Newsletter – February 2020

The cyber landscape continues to evolve at an unprecedented rate. Many people are unaware of the threats posed by increasingly fast computers and legions of cyber criminals operating across the globe. Weak passwords allow cyber criminals easy access to online accounts and a high percentage of crimes the CCU deals with each week could be prevented if passwords were strong and secure.

If you are reading this newsletter, chances are you probably have several online accounts such as e-mail, social media, shopping, banking and possibly remote access to your business. Having a weak password makes it easy for criminals to access your accounts and we are encouraging everyone to make some changes to strengthen their online security.



### How long should my password be?

- Any password of less than 9 characters is vulnerable to what is called ‘brute force cracking’. This is where a computer tries every possible combination of letters to match a given password. For good security, passwords should be over 12 characters long.

### Can I use a single word for my password?

- Using a single word for a password makes it more vulnerable to a ‘dictionary attack’ – another form of brute force cracking where long lists of previously used passwords are used to try and match the password. Even long, single words are vulnerable so creating more complex passwords can help prevent them being compromised.

### How do I create a strong password?

- Strong passwords will consist of at least 3 random words, be longer than 12 characters and include numbers, symbols and capital letters.

GOOD
DurbanPalmMountain

BETTER
**DurbanPa1mM0unTa1n**

BEST
**~DurbanPa1mM0unTa1n!**

### Can I reuse my password?

- Every password should be different – especially your e-mail account password. When account information is lost in a data breach, criminals will try and crack the associated passwords, and then use the credentials to try and log into other accounts. Having different passwords will prevent them from being successful.

## Useful Links

SEROCU: www.serocu.police.uk/individuals

NCSC: www.ncsc.gov.uk

*Are you interested in a free cyber awareness presentation? Our Protect & Prepare team can deliver presentations to businesses and other groups (20+ attendees) across Surrey & Sussex. These are approximately 90 minutes in duration and cover a wide range of cyber topics. If you are interested, please e-mail CyberCrimeUnit@surrey.pnn.police.uk.*

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### How do I remember lots of passwords?

- Many people have multiple online accounts, so remembering all the associated passwords can be difficult. Password manager software can be used to store all your passwords across all your devices, meaning you only need to remember the password to get into your password manager. Create a strong password based on this guidance to maximise the chances of keeping it safe. 2-factor-authentication can also be used for extra security. Research reputable security software and choose the best option for your needs.

### What is 2-factor-authentication (2FA)?

- 2-factor-authentication (or 2-step-verification) adds an additional layer of security to the authentication process by making it harder to gain access to devices and accounts. It significantly decreases the risk of a hacker accessing your online accounts by combining your password (something you know) with a second factor, like your mobile phone (something you have). After inputting your username and password, a message is sent via text or an app to confirm you are the rightful user. 2FA significantly enhances the security of online accounts and many e-mail providers, social media platforms, banks and shopping sites offer this service. Visit www.telesign.com/turnon2fa for more information.

### How do I know if my password has been compromised?

- You may not know if your password has been compromised, meaning it can be too late to act. It is therefore important to make sure your passwords are strong when you create them. Data breaches happen regularly, so it is important to check if you have been affected. A website called haveibeenpwned.com provides information about breaches and could advise you if your username and password has been compromised.

### Is there anything else I need to know?

- Many devices such as routers or IP cameras have a default username and password. As soon as you install these on to your network, make sure you change the default password to prevent anyone else accessing them.

Remember, criminals will try and get your passwords by any means possible.  Our next newsletter will look at phishing and how that is used to trick you.  In the meantime, let’s start by implementing some simple but important password changes and frustrate those cyber criminals!

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