

# Police raise awareness of Ransomware attacks



During October, Police Scotland's Cybercrime Prevention Team is raising awareness of Ransomware attacks as part of European Cyber Security Month.

Ransomware is malicious software designed to block access to a computer system until a sum of money is paid. It is increasingly used by cyber criminals to exploit money from individuals and businesses.

James Archbold of the Cybercrime Prevention Team explains: "Criminals will use various means to deceive members of the public or businesses into downloading software to disable their computer system. The user is then instructed to pay a ransom to have their computer unlocked.

"My first advice is not to pay the ransom. There is no guarantee that you will get access to your data or device and your device will still be infected.

"Additionally, if you receive a phone call offering help to clean up your computer, hang up immediately. This is a common tactic used by cyber criminals.

"In some instances, devices can be unlocked by utilising a free, Police and industry backed Europol initiative, No More

Ransom, [www.nomoreransom.org](http://www.nomoreransom.org).

“Otherwise it is best to run a full scan using your antivirus software and follow any instructions it provides, alternatively you will have to undertake a factory reset of your device. “To reduce the likelihood of becoming victim to this sort of crime make regular backups of important information on your computer. Keep your operating system and software (apps) up to date. Don’t put off applying updates, they contain patches that keep your device secure, including protection from ransomware and viruses.

“Make sure your antivirus product is turned on and up to date. Windows has a built in malware protection tool (Microsoft Defender) which is suitable for this purpose. Avoid downloading unofficial apps.

“For further information about protecting yourself from Ransomware attacks see our cyber security section of our [website](#).

“If you think you may have been subject to a ransomware attack to contact Police Scotland on 101.”