

Get Safe Online

Get Safe Online was launched in November 2005 as a major public-private sector initiative to raise awareness of online security. It is aimed at consumers and micro-businesses. It runs as a company limited by guarantee. It is run as a not-for-profit organisation and relies on contributions from private and public sector organisations. Current sponsors are: Cabinet Office, HSBC, Paypal, Verisign, Gumtree, Cable and Wireless and Microsoft. It has a board of directors and an active steering group that meets on a monthly basis to set both the strategic and tactical aims and objectives for the initiative on an ongoing basis. The steering group comprises of the Cabinet Office, The Department for Business, Home Office Serious Organised Crime Agency (SOCA), HSBC, Cable & Wireless, PayPal, Microsoft, Gumtree Verisign, Ofcom and the National Fraud Authority.

The Get Safe Online initiative is largely Internet based. The website at (www.getsafeonline.org) is a one-stop-shop for reliable, independent and easily understood up-to-date information about online safety. It gives home users and small businesses the advice they need to use the Internet safely. It includes information on protecting your PC, yourself and your business as well as advice on topics such as Internet shopping, social networking sites, data theft and identity fraud.

The key messages of the initiative are that online sales and transactions are increasing at an incredible pace. Get Safe Online wants people to be able to continue using the Internet, enjoying the many benefits it has to offer, but also to be aware of the risks and take the steps necessary to protect themselves and their families online. In addition, people are increasingly opting to use the Internet when transacting or interacting with Government and it is important they are online safely and securely.

The Get Safe Online initiative provides a significant contribution to helping computer users and small businesses to take steps to protect themselves, not least because the Get Safe Online name and branding has significant potential and is easy for consumers to remember and therefore access. Government and the private sector will need to continue to work together to ensure that the potential of the Get Safe Online initiative is maximised.

Why is Government involved in Get Safe Online?

Commitment from the UK Government to the Get Safe Online initiative has been reinforced by its inclusion in numerous strategy and policy documents. The Digital Britain agenda, the National Information Assurance Strategy, the Cyber Security Strategy, the UK Council for Child Internet Safety strategy 'Click Clever, Click Safe' and the forthcoming Home Office e-Crime Strategy all include Get Safe Online as the preferred mechanism for raising awareness of internet safety issues with the general public.

This commitment recognises the immense value Get Safe Online's independent, accurate and clear messages provides for small businesses and the home ICT user. Working alongside

partners in the online banking, retail and ICT industries Get Safe Online is delivering on the UK Government's stated ambition to ensure that everyone can go about their legitimate business online with confidence and safety. Get Safe Online provides a platform for government and industry to work together to protect online customers and build a safe, secure and resilient internet which will in turn bring significant benefits for all internet users.

The Cabinet Office has been a long term partner of the initiative as it is clearly right that government works alongside industry to raise awareness of internet safety for people and businesses as we share an interest in making the internet a safer place to do business. The National Information Assurance Strategy produced in June 2007 and to be refreshed later this year, states that there must be a wider understanding of the importance of information assurance for the social and economic well-being of the nation. Get Safe Online helps to achieve this by alerting people to the various risks on the Internet and combining resources with well-known brand names to give the broadest reach to our target audience.

How can the Government help further?

The House of Lords Report on Personal Internet Security released in August 2007 praised Get Safe Online and called for more government support for the initiative. In addition, the recent National Audit Office Memorandum, 'Staying Safe Online', published in January 2010 recommended that the Government should work with Get Safe Online to identify a mechanism for providing more stable, predictable and adequate finance. It should simultaneously encourage the adoption of a medium-term strategy, outlining options depending on the level of funding available. Both of these recommendations have been welcomed and acted upon. Get Safe Online and its partners are now actively engaging with new sponsors within the public sector to continue to raise finance and support

On the 30th March 2010 the Home Office published the Cyber Crime Strategy.

<http://www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/cm78/7842/7842.asp>

The forward of the strategy states; "We will also do more to improve public awareness of cyber crime through working with Get Safe Online: what it looks like, who is doing it and what the public and business can do to protect themselves from cyber criminals."

The report goes on to mention 'Get Safe Online' no fewer than nineteen times which shows the Government's continued commitment to placing the GSO initiative at the forefront of their security awareness strategy i.e. educating computer users to the value of good internet and computer security.