Data Protection and Cyber Security

With the recent worldwide hacking scandal, WannaCry, it is more important than ever to ensure that your data is backed up, encrypted and stored safely.

WannaCry is a type of Trojan virus referred to as 'ransomware', which means hackers steal your information and hold it at ransom. It is estimated that nearly 57,000 computers, across more than 150 countries, were infected by the Friday and by Monday more than 200,000 systems around the world were infected.

It effectively encrypts some, or all, of the files on a computer and charges a fee to have them decrypted. The fine was set at $300 via bitcoin, doubling to $600 in three days. If the $600 is not paid within seven days, the files will be permanently deleted.

Almost $70,000 has been handed over to the hackers already.

How can you protect yourself?

Firstly, if you are ever affected, do not be tempted to pay the ransom. If you have back-ups of your data, the best thing to do is wipe your machine.

It is also important not to open any emails which seem suspicious. An example of this is when people receive emails or texts from 'HMRC' claiming that they can receive a tax refund. HMRC would only ever send something like this in the post – any other means is extremely likely to be a scam or a virus. If you receive anything that seems suspicious, do a quick search online to see if anyone else has received the same. If it is a bad email, it is likely others would have seen it before, and there are regularly chat feeds online warning people of scams.

The best thing to do is keep your security up to date. If it is not, then we recommend that you install any updates as soon as possible. You should also ensure that your data is backed up securely. The WannaCry virus is only affecting Microsoft computers, but there will be others which affect many more. Microsoft released an update back in March, but it's been noted that not many people installed the update - those numbers would probably have increased a little now.

If you are worried about your online security, speak to your IT service provider and they will help you update your systems and ensure everything is stored safely. We also have some information about moving your systems to the Cloud.