Community Security Operations Centre

Initiative

It is well recognised that neurodiverse people can make a valuable contribution to the cyber security ecosystem - even criminals know this and will lead them astray. In this project, we tailor training and opportunities at people on the autistic spectrum, and use empathy and care to nurture their special talents and to protect them to the level that is right for their abilities. With the inspiration of Dr Emma Philpott of the SME-security specialist company IASME and founder of the Community Interest Company, the UK Cyber Security Forum we created the Community Security Operations Centre (CSOC) concept with neurodiversity in mind. The programme has two strands, (i) a training and education programme which includes the type of ‘ethical hacking’ and cyber security skills set you might expect in many establishments and (ii) dedicated attention from a specialist in training neurodiverse candidates for the workplace and to educate the workplace in how to care and support neurodiverse employees in their employment. We also have the local Regional Organised Crime Unit visiting regularly to discuss the opportunities for the candidates and keep them clear on the right side of the law.

Candidates trained through our programme work as analysts in our CSOC. This is a simple and growing operation to enable vulnerable people like themselves or the elderly, or those with learning difficulties, be significantly safer online.

How Daniel has made a difference

The CSOC initiative started only 6 months ago, but 20 unemployed, neurodiverse people (aged 17 to 49) have already engaged with the training, of which 14 have completed training and are now integrated into running the CSOC. We have engaged with the professional cyber security community and developed good working relationships, including the provision of free training and reverse training, where neurodiverse people are given the opportunity to educate our visiting trainers and spread an appreciation of this talent pool back into the industry. This is an area championed at the highest levels of GCHQ and an exemplary realisation of their aspirations. The activity of the CSOC itself is a contribution to a more secure digital ecosystem, making it more inclusive for employment and reducing the risk of digital exclusion for vulnerable people who are easy targets to cyber attacks. The appreciation of reduced scale needs of smaller entities who must manage equally-concerning risk-at-scale was the result of a Technology Strategy Board supported research project. CSOC is connected with this earlier collaboration with the University of Worcester which resulted in a commercial spin-off which itself is proud of its diverse employment record.

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