

The Oasis Centre - Cornwall

Registered Charity Number 1139355, founded to serve the communities in the parishes of St Columb Major, St Mawgan-in-Pydar, St Eval and St Ervan



Looking Out for Passwords

Number 25 in a series of notes on important issues.

Passwords are a common feature of our daily lives. We use them to gain access to banks and financial services and indeed almost anything connected with computers. The 'default' factory-set code in new equipment and appliances that we buy is another example. We know that we need good passwords and that we should keep them secret. We also know that this can be an unwelcome chore. Being human, we are tempted to cut corners as all criminals know.

Many commonly used passwords are not up to the job. A criminal, who has done a little research about us, can guess them easily. Examples are names of our close relatives or pets, our birthdays or telephone numbers or perhaps the sporting team we support or where we live or go on holiday. Sadly, some people are known to use the word 'password'!

Criminals also know about common substitutions (E=3, 5=S, o=0, etc) and the trick of typing the magic word one keyboard row higher. They may not however know or be able to discover the registration number of the car we sold several years ago or the last few digits of the telephone number of our first home. By the way, single words from a dictionary are not a good idea and we should never use a password more than once.

We are told that a good password should have at least six characters and preferably more. A combination of letters, numbers and keyboard symbols will be more secure and letters should be in a mixture of capitals and lowercase. This of course produces a complex mix that is difficult to memorise but, if you think of a phrase and take the first letter of each word, you will end up with something more memorable.

Other help is available by searching 'password generator' on the Internet. For example –

<https://www.comparethemarket.com/credit-cards/information/password-generator/>

<https://identitysafe.norton.com/password-generator/>

<https://lastpass.com/generatepassword.php>

<https://www.random.org/passwords/>

<https://www.grc.com/passwords.htm>

<https://www.dashlane.com/password-generator>

<http://www.dinopass.com/>

The last of these is designed for children.

Given the time and resources, any password can be cracked. It is said that a commercial password recovery toolkit available to criminals can be capable of testing 200,000 passwords per second! It is up to us therefore to guard our passwords and change them regularly.

Jeremy Simmonds, Chair, The Oasis Centre - Cornwall