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CYBER SECURITY COMPETITION FOR GIRLS GOES REGIONAL

- **NCSC's CyberFirst Girls' Competition will feature regional heats for the first time**
- **New format aims to tap into potential of girls across the country**
- **Less than 50 days until registration opens for new-look contest**

SCHOOLGIRLS will be able to test their cyber skills against those of local rivals for the first time thanks to the introduction of regional heats in a flagship National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) competition.

The CyberFirst Girls' Competition is the NCSC's free to enter contest for girls aged 12 to 13, who are invited to form teams and take on a series of online puzzles and challenges related to cyber security.

The NCSC, which is a part of GCHQ, launched the competition in 2017 with the aim of developing the next generation of cyber security professionals and encouraging more women in particular to consider a future career in the industry. So far more than 24,000 girls have taken part.

Previously, the girls competed in an online round before the finalists met. For the 2020 competition, the opening round will be followed by eight semi-final heats taking place simultaneously from Scotland to the South West, with each regional winner meeting in the final.

Registration for the 2020 competition opens in less than 50 days' time, and it is hoped that the new regional focus will tap into even more of the country's potential cyber security talent.

Chris Ensor, NCSC Deputy Director for Growth, said:

"The CyberFirst Girls Competition is a great introduction for young people to cyber security, and since its launch it has gone from strength to strength.

"While the competition continues to grow in popularity, we want to make sure we're drawing on talent from all parts of the UK, and the introduction of regional semi-finals will help us do that.

"I hope this new format will encourage more schools than ever to get involved, and to help us build the diverse workforce so crucial to the nation's future cyber security."

Registration for the 2020 CyberFirst Girls Competition opens on Monday 2nd December and is open to girls from S2.

The highest scoring teams from the opening round will go through to the semi-finals, taking place on February 8th in Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, North of England, Midlands, South West, South East and London, with the final on 15th and 16th March in Wales.

12,000 pupils took part in the 2019 competition, which tested their skills on topics from logic and cryptography to networking and online safety. Of the girls who took part last year, 98% said they would like to learn more about cyber security.