Mid-West RSF:
Thanks for the update in regards to cyber security strategy. Just a few thoughts you may be aware that the MWRSF and the Limerick for IT network collaborated with University of Limerick in the development of the Level 8 Bsc in Cyber Security.

The consortia was put together by the Regional Skills Forum and consisted of both private sector organisations across industry and also public sector such as local authorities etc. The programme launched in June 2022 albeit late in the year for a September start however despite the growing risk of cyber-attack no public sector organisation has registered employees. The UL apprenticeship also provides an option for entry at Level 7 based on level of cyber skills knowledge to those looking to work and develop a career directly in this area.

This as you know is a Government funded programme so I think to drive numbers upskilling in this area the review should assess current provision in terms of programmes / courses and design a communication message around same. Equally the numbers registered on the Level 6 programme delivered by FIT are very low consistently. Therefore, should the review ask why despite programme provision the numbers enrolling our low across all courses and levels.

The consortia is an ideal platform to engage with in terms of future skills, research, technology trends etc and is chaired by John Gleeson site lead at Transact Campus in Limerick. I will bring this mid term review to the attention of the consortia,

North-East RSF:
In respect of the request to contribute to the National Strategy on the Development of the Cyber Security Industry, please find my comments and observations below.

In all my interactions with businesses in the North East, from a skills perspective Cyber Security skills do not appear to be a priority or on the agenda of the vast majority. This finding would support the actual need for this strategy to develop and Cyber Security Industry in Ireland.

Many businesses either have their 'heads in the sand' (particularly MSME's), do not understand the threat, outsource IT and security or rely on the IT vendors to look after IT and Cyber security, sometimes based on cloud architecture. Others hire from outside Ireland e.g. Poland, Estonia, Czech Republic etc. to look after their IT and Cyber needs.

Software Development, Business Analytics, Data Management, IT Systems Management, Website Management and Network Operations are the most sought after skills in this area.

Businesses appear to focus on cyber and IT security awareness, attack prevention and to this end provide internal awareness training to their employees through private providers.

On a separate note, the key to this industry is the need to increase awareness around cyber threats, weakness, IT security and the courses that exist to upskill industry in our economy.

Although from a national perspective and complemented by this strategy a lot of work is being done, much of the drive to create awareness and adoption of Cyber Security is for the most part on the international stage.

It seems that a whole Cyber ecosystem is required to facilitate,
- Cyber Digital Transformation and Change for business and individuals
- Cyber Skills Assessment & Hiring to Identify Cyber Talent (does not suit all aptitudes).
- Cyber Talent Development and Learning to train/practice in a unified way, ensuring retention and up to date skills

The Regional Skills Managers worked with Eoin Byrne in 2019/2020 (Cyber Skills Ireland) to identify, map and highlight course provision through a National Cyber Course Mapping exercise Course Finder - Cyber Ireland.

Cyber Ireland also have a dashboard to highlight Cyber careers profiling and a Cyber jobs board.

Separately and as discussed previously, the AMTCE in Dundalk are pursuing the delivery of Cyber related programmes through contracted training provision, namely CJH Networks, FIT and others. The courses on offer currently include,

- Digital and Cyber Awareness
- Cyber Security Apprenticeship

North-West
From the North West perspective I have attached the recent Cyber Security Skills Audit which was a partnership between the North West Regional Skills Forum and Cyber Ireland's North West Chapter. I am hosting a stakeholder meeting on Tuesday 24th January in Donegal with all the education & training providers and relevant agencies from the region to brief them on the recommendations from our skills audit and get buy in for a working group going forward. The skills audit will then be launched officially in the coming weeks.
In relation to North South collaboration, you will notice that the Skills Audit touches on our proximity to the North. NI Cyber will be in attendance at next week's stakeholder meeting as we're hoping to start collaborating with them.

South-West
IT@Cork Skillnet did a similar report that you did in the North-West. Link here: https://www.itcork.ie/whats-on/itcork-skillnet-cybersecurity-skills-development-strategy
Cyber Skills Ireland and Cyber Ireland both operate out of the South-West and I know you too have worked with them and no doubt they will be inputting directly into the strategy....

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Regional Skills Co-ordinator

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