

UK financial services industry collaborates to test real-world cyber readiness

Lloyds Banking Group, Hack The Box, and Google Cloud Security host the first UK Financial Services Security Hackathon

LONDON, UNITED KINGDOM, May 6, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Over the course of two days (April 27-28), banks, fintech companies, technology providers, and regulators from across the UK financial ecosystem came together for a cybersecurity competition designed to test real-world readiness, decision-making under pressure, and the ability to defend critical financial infrastructure against sophisticated attacks.



The trophy awarded by Lloyds Banking Group, Hack The Box and Google Cloud Security at the UK's first Financial Services Security Hackathon

Hosted by Lloyds Banking Group, [Hack The Box](#), and Google Cloud Security, the UK Financial Services Security Hackathon brought together 33 teams from 16 organisations. Each team consisted of two individuals, reflecting the need for tight collaboration under pressure.

The Nine Lives With Zero Days team, made up of a Machine Learning engineer and a senior Penetration Tester, was crowned winner at the end of the competition. This highlights the growing convergence of artificial intelligence and cybersecurity skills in modern defence strategies.

Their win underscored a central theme of the event - that while AI is becoming an increasingly powerful force in cybersecurity, human expertise remains at the core. AI can accelerate repetitive or clearly defined tasks, but real-world defence relies on context, judgement, adaptability and the ability to navigate multiple possible paths. Hands-on experience is what builds the instincts and decision-making that tools alone cannot replace.

Matt Rowe, Chief Security Officer of Lloyds Banking Group, said: "This event demonstrated how simulated real-life exercises help organisations strengthen defensive capabilities, improve readiness under pressure, and build stronger collaboration across the wider financial services ecosystem. In a highly connected sector, resilience depends not only on individual organisations,



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*Nikos Fountas, Chief
Operating Officer of Hack The
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but on how effectively we prepare and respond together.”

Participants tackled challenges across web exploitation, digital forensics, OSINT investigations, cryptography and payment systems security, competing to uncover vulnerabilities and secure systems under pressure. The challenges also reflected the role of AI in both attack and defence scenarios, allowing teams to combine technical cybersecurity expertise with emerging AI capabilities.

The event also highlighted the importance of measurable cyber readiness in financial services, where highly interconnected systems, evolving threats and rapid

incident escalation mean performance in the first hours of an attack can be critical.

Nikos Fountas, Chief Operating Officer of Hack The Box, said: “Cybersecurity is not just about what teams know, it is about what they can do when it matters most. Exercises like this move organisations from static training to proving real-world readiness. They prepare security professionals, test judgment under pressure, and benchmark performance against peers across the industry.

“As AI becomes more capable, the human element is still critical. It is much like chess. Although machines can outperform humans, people continue to study and play because the value lies in the thinking process - the pattern recognition, creativity, and decision-making. In cybersecurity, it is these instincts and the ability to make the right decisions under pressure that ultimately strengthen resilience.”

The winning ‘Nine Lives With Zero Days’ team said: “We are shocked and thrilled to win, and it has not yet sunk in. The two days have been both amazing and challenging. And the AI challenges were our favourite.”

About Hack The Box

Hack The Box is the leading cyber readiness platform for the agentic era, battle-testing and upskilling both humans and AI agents to enhance organizational cyber resilience. Trusted by the Fortune 500, government agencies, and MSSPs, the platform delivers threat-informed learning paths consisting of real-world scenarios in gamified labs and live-fire simulations that build and validate offensive and defensive cyber capabilities. With a loyal community of more than 4 million members and 800+ enterprise customers, Hack The Box empowers teams and intelligent systems alike to strengthen cyber defenses and reduce breach risk effectively. For more information, visit hackthebox.com.

Tracey Treanor
PRPR Limited
+44 1442 245030
[email us here](#)

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