

MAKING MORE THAN PRODUCTS

HOW MANUFACTURERS ARE POWERING
COMMUNITIES, OPPORTUNITY AND GROWTH



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Foreword

by Stephen Phipson

In 2025, UK manufacturing accounted for £220bn of output, 2.6 million jobs and pay averaging 8% higher than the whole economy. The sector raced ahead in investment and, in some regions, provided over 1 in every 10 jobs. In the face of economic and geopolitical instability, manufacturers remained bulwarks of industry – demonstrating resilience in hardship and reinventing themselves to become more agile, flexible and sustainable.

But that's not all. Across the UK, manufacturers have made, and continue to make, connections throughout their communities. The new Prime Minister has highlighted the importance of 'good growth in every postcode', a mantle which manufacturers, from small rural communities to expansive populous cities, took up many years before political focus turned to devolution.

This report highlights the social value that manufacturers are adding in their local areas as they work with schools to run CV workshops, match-fund charitable work and rehabilitate former offenders. However, it also demonstrates how interconnected manufacturing is to

businesses across the UK. From farming to pharmacies, manufacturers design, make and sell products without which other industries would struggle to function.

As focus in Number 10 shifts to regional empowerment and reindustrialisation, Government needs a blueprint for industry best practice in local communities. While National Manufacturing Day stands out as a shining example of how manufacturers are working within their neighbourhoods to open their doors and bring forward opportunities, this report goes beyond the factory floor to reveal how generations of manufacturers are encouraging innovation and investment in people to 'bring back hope'.



Powering progress for young people

Across the UK, manufacturers are supporting young people with training and upskilling opportunities. Through both traditional apprenticeships and new qualifications like T Levels, businesses provide important access to the workplace for people from as young as 16. However, many manufacturers also offer pre-16 support, developing work experience pathways, organising and facilitating CV workshops and sponsoring youth competitions to develop entrepreneurial skills.

For any young person, the absence of any one of these can provide a hurdle to even accessing the career ladder, and for those who prefer not to take the 'academic path', it is critical that they are equipped with basic employability skills to allow them to pursue technical and career routes early. With proposed changes to the school

system on the horizon to 'value the hard hat every bit as much as the graduation cap' and tackle the youth unemployment crisis, we spoke to manufacturers who are already playing their part in driving down NEET rates about what lessons they've learned on the way.

TORNADO WIRE – CUMBRIA

Rebecca Galley is the CEO of Tornado Wire, a company which manufactures wire fencing for a range of different sectors, including agriculture, equestrian, forestry, infrastructure, and conservation. They employ around 110 people, with a range of facilities across the country in Cumbria, Alcester and Scotland.

With manufacturing operations in the town of Millom, Tornado Wire support their local community by offering work experience, mock interviews and visits on National Manufacturing Day from nearby primary and secondary schools. They've also taken on numerous apprentices in both technical and professional roles, such as production, engineering and maintenance, logistics and digital marketing, and offer training opportunities to existing staff, with options for skills development in energy management, AI leadership, mental health first aid and essential health and safety.

However, Tornado Wire don't simply support upskilling opportunities in their company, or even their sector. Through sponsorship of the Young Farmers Fencing Competition and Irish Stock Fencing Championships, they create space for young people working in agriculture to develop their skills in project management and delivery in a competitive environment. This helps to build cross-industry relationships and develop new talent, with the 2026 novice title won by an all women team.

As Tornado Wire continue to create opportunities for young people to enter and thrive in sectors that might otherwise remain unknown to them, the company is helping to showcase manufacturing across the UK and beyond.

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ADI GROUP – BIRMINGHAM

James Sopwith is the Group Strategic Account Director at adi Group, a multi-disciplinary engineering firm which provides solutions in key sectors from food and beverage, automotive and oil and gas to chemicals and life sciences. With more than 35 specialist divisions and over 700 employees, adi Group is well-placed to support the development of a range of local young people across multiple engineering disciplines.

For 12 years, the company has offered apprenticeships through its Academy, maintaining the pathway that its Founder and Chairman, Alan Lusty, pursued at the beginning of his career in manufacturing. However, this year, adi Group is celebrating the tenth anniversary of an additional educational project: the Pre-Apprenticeship Programme, with James leading the Programme for the last decade.

Delivered in partnership with King Edward VI King's Norton School for Boys, the programme takes a cohort of young people aged 14–16 and builds their confidence to achieve an Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies EAL-accredited qualification by the end of their two years with adi. Each week, pupils spend half a day at adi's Head Office, working in a real engineering environment to develop technical skills and understand the career routes available within modern engineering.

This passion for supporting young people into early careers led adi in 2014 to pledge to ensure 5% of its workforce were apprentices; by 2025, that figure had reached 11%, meaning 1 in every 10 workers was an apprentice. However, that's not all. Since its first pre-apprenticeship cohort, adi has invested in the future development of its new workforce – with former pre-apprentices and apprentices retained in the business and working towards supervisory and director roles.

adi Group emphasises that its commitment to community begins with its own people. As the company looks to develop the next generation of engineers, the team are building a future with the workforce at its foundation.



Building brighter futures through good work

Manufacturers aren't just offering training and upskilling to young people – they're working tirelessly to widen access to the sector for people from any and every background.

Manufacturing is unique in its capacity to provide a range of careers: from technical experts in niche engineering methods to teachers and mentors, HR specialists, project managers and even on-site caterers, there is a role in manufacturing for everyone.

While for many, entering or re-entering the workforce can be daunting, with roles for returners, prisoners on licence and those with disabilities made available by local businesses, manufacturers are creating space for those from underrepresented backgrounds to thrive at work.

With Government emphasis placed on ensuring higher employment rates and equal access to work, we spoke to manufacturers who are closely involved with employment support programmes to understand the value that they're adding back into their communities.

LISI AEROSPACE – RUGBY

Mark Capell (General Manager) and Kirstie Kennedy (HR Manager) are both senior leaders at LISI Aerospace, a company which manufactures products for commercial aircraft airframes. With quadruple gold status in the Investors in People, Next Gen Makers (Engineering Apprentice Programme), We Invest in People and Fair Chance Employment, LISI were trailblazers for ensuring employee wellbeing during the pandemic and remain so to this day.

Throughout COVID, LISI emphasised 'keeping a foot in the future' despite challenging times. They partnered first with Warwickshire Supported Employment Service (part of Work Well) to support work trials for people with ADHD and autism. By conducting introductory visits to the factory and making small reasonable adjustments, such as changes to shift patterns, LISI has retained two-thirds of the original triallists as part-time employees.

In addition, LISI has worked with the Fair Chance Employment Service to support a range of people from underrepresented backgrounds into manufacturing. This includes foreign nationals who are part of the Warwickshire resettlement programme, adults with a learning disability and/or autism, NEETs, care leavers and young carers, parents returning to work, older workers and former armed forces members, alongside those in these groups who have been recently made redundant.

They have had particular success with veterans, supporting them to transition into civilian life through work in manufacturing. With training given to managers, cell leaders and support teams, the company has enabled those with PTSD to re-enter employment. This training process has been replicated with menopause support programmes to retain women in the workforce, particularly on the factory floor, for those who are struggling with symptoms.

As LISI look to the future, they are keen to remain early adopters to support employee recruitment and retention from a range of diverse backgrounds and continue to inspire other businesses to do the same.

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PENNINE HEALTHCARE – DERBY

Graeme Cameron and Daniel Wilson are the respective CEO and Strategy, Marketing and Communications Director for Pennine Healthcare, a Derby-based medical devices manufacturer whose core philosophy is centred on protecting and improving life. With around 200 employees, Pennine have grown over the last 60 years and offer a Triple S Guarantee, ensuring security of supply, sustainability and safety in their processes and products, which equip the NHS every year.

Pennine began work with Tempus Novo, a charity supporting ex-offenders into employment, but now work directly with their local prison to place prisoners in the latter stages of their sentences (return on temporary licence or ROTL) within their clean room facility. They began with 3 workers, who completed a standard recruitment process (interviews and competency assessment) and then came to work as normal but returned to prison each evening. After early success, retaining several employees and enabling one to move closer to home after a year and a half to set up his own plumbing company in London, the company has increased its intake to 13 ROTL workers.

Throughout the process, Pennine emphasised the importance of balancing transparency in communications to current employees with respect for the privacy of participants in the new scheme. Though there was some initial hesitation, the hard work and voluntary disclosures of those on ROTL have been instrumental in easing concerns from the wider workforce and generating great support for the programme.

Looking ahead, Pennine plan to continue their work in rehabilitating offenders, providing meaningful employment opportunities and a foot in the door for those with untapped potential to progress and thrive for the rest of their lives.



Championing healthier workplaces

As the average age of the UK population continues to increase, so too does the length of people's working lives. In response, manufacturers nationwide are investing significantly in their workforce to support employee health and wellbeing, ensuring that those who wish to can stay in the sector for as long as they like.

By adapting roles to help to keep people in work, building in benefits to support fitness during the workday and taking on local pilots for employee wellbeing, manufacturers are doing their utmost to ensure that workers feel cared for by their employer within and

outside of the workplace. As Government looks to implement the recommendations of the Charlie Mayfield Review, we spoke to one of the leading SME employers in this space to discuss their participation in the Keep Britain Working Vanguard.

A&M EDM – BIRMINGHAM

Phil Calcutt is the Marketing Director for A&M EDM, a precision engineering SME which has grown from a two-person start-up to a company of 84 over the last 23 years. A&M manufacture components and tooling for a diverse range of sectors, from aerospace and automotive to propulsion systems and food production.

In late 2018, A&M supported the first West Midlands Combined Authority pilot of the 'Thrive at Work' programme – an accreditation scheme which aimed to recognise employers on a journey to improve their health and wellbeing provision. The company quickly achieved 'Bronze' status and has never looked back.

As pioneers in this area, A&M have built an on-site gym for employees, saving them travel time and the cost of a commercial membership, as well as organising a weekly physio drop-in, helping to proactively manage musculoskeletal concerns. In addition, the company has worked hard to build awareness of Mental Health Week, with appointed mental health champions in the workforce sharing their stories, alongside information and resources, on 'Time to Talk' day each year. They've also introduced flexible working, with 22% of staff taking advantage of these measures.

Last year, in recognition of their leading approach for SMEs, A&M were invited to join the Keep Britain Working Vanguard, and hosted Sir Charlie Mayfield for a visit. A&M have also been recipients of a number of prizes for their work in this area, including the Express & Star Employee Wellness Excellence Award.

However, the most important element of this investment has been the benefits of these activities on employee retention and reducing workplace absence. Not only have A&M achieved lower-than-average absence rates in their workforce, but above all, have supported staff with valuable skills and who still want to work well beyond retirement age to stay in employment.

As A&M continue to work on the Keep Britain Working Vanguard, they are working hard to communicate the SME voice and ensure that flexibility and simplicity are a clear priority.

Supporting causes that change lives

As we've seen above, many manufacturers are generous with their time, raising awareness of the sector through coordinating community visits like those on National Manufacturing Day or offering free support to schools with careers workshops. However, some businesses across the country are also able to lend a hand by donating directly to local and national causes, and making a genuine difference to charities which are close to employees' hearts.

Through organising sponsored events, offering days off for volunteering and even match-funding donations, local businesses are powering projects well beyond a manufacturing scope to support and uplift their local

communities. As the government looks to shape procurement around social value, we spoke to one of the leading automotive manufacturers in the UK about their work in building 'happiness for all'.



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TOYOTA MOTOR MANUFACTURING UK - BURNASTON AND DEESIDE

Julie Langley is a Specialist in the Business Strategy and External Relations Team at Toyota Motor Manufacturing UK Ltd. Toyota is a household name in the automotive industry, with around 3,000 employees in the UK split across two manufacturing facilities in Burnaston, Derbyshire and Deeside, North Wales.

As part of her role, Julie manages the Toyota Manufacturing UK Charitable Trust, delivering a foundational element of Toyota's 'best in town' philosophy. The Trust's main source of income is donations, given by organisations in exchange for their participation in Toyota's 'Lean Approach' Seminars, which deliver insights into the Toyota Production System as well as an opportunity to network with senior leaders in the company.

Over the course of the pandemic, Toyota innovated to keep up their charitable work, developing seminars in VR – something which they still offer a few times a year for global delegates.

Towards the end of the year, they invite charities and organisations to apply for community grants of up to £5,000 to support local projects. Following fundraising activities in 2025, 107 donations were made to 99 different charities and organisations.

However, this is not all that Toyota offer. Each year, Toyota employees are involved in the selection of the charity of the year, from one of three categories (health, road safety and inclusion/deprivation) which is given a one-off donation of £50,000. This year, the chosen charity was Help for Heroes.

In addition, Toyota employees can also apply for member grants, where twice a year, if an employee has a designated role within a local community group or charity, they can apply for up to £5,000 funding to support their organisation. Alternatively, if employees undertake a sponsored activity, the Trust will match up to £1,000 for a charity of their choice.

Last but not least each year, the Trust provides financial support for apprentices to undertake one week of much needed volunteering activity in the local community.

Funded by the Toyota Manufacturing UK Charitable Trust, the volunteering projects form part of the company's commitment to supporting the local community, whilst aiming to further develop the apprentices' interpersonal skills in teamwork and leadership. In June this year, the Trust provided £12,500 worth of funding to enable five groups of apprentices to make a difference by supporting five local projects, four local to Burnaston and one local to Deeside.

By developing multiple opportunities for staff to engage with and support their communities, TMUK are helping to improve employee wellbeing, create meaning through work and support a vibrant local community.

OVER A THIRD OF
MANUFACTURERS OFFER

**PAID TIME OFF
FOR VOLUNTEERING**



Creating a sustainable future

For years, manufacturers have been transforming their factories with new technology to support the green transition. Many have invested in energy efficiency measures or renewable energy sources, and others have developed waste reduction and circular economy strategies. All of these have helped to manage demand for an oversubscribed National Grid and some manufacturers have even been able to provide the excess energy generated and stored on-site to local power stations for use at peak times.

However, manufacturers aren't just changing processes, they're changing products. From semiconductors to plastic packaging, companies across the UK are redefining and advancing goods that consumers rely on everyday to become more

sustainable. As the new Prime Minister promises to 'meet the climate challenge' and attend COP31, we spoke to one of the manufacturers leading the charge by embedding carbon cutting practices across both their facilities and inventory.

PRAGMATIC SEMICONDUCTOR – DURHAM

Ravi Shankar Sundaram is Senior Director, Product Management at Pragmatic Semiconductor – a pioneer of ultra-thin, flexible semiconductors with sustainability at its heart.

With around 350 employees, Pragmatic is revolutionising the production of flexible semiconductors, beginning with changing the material used in their creation to enable connectivity in new places and spaces.

Traditionally, semiconductors are made using rigid silicon wafers, but Pragmatic's development of FlexICs – flexible thin-film microchips – takes a fundamentally different approach to chip manufacturing. While standard chip production takes months, with hundreds of process steps and requiring very high temperatures, Pragmatic manufactures its FlexICs in only 30 steps, with shorter production times and mostly room-temperature processes.

Pragmatic Park, the company's compact and efficient fabrication site – located in Durham, UK – is around ten times smaller than a traditional fabrication facility, and runs an end-to-end production model using renewable energy. This reduces cost, but most importantly, limits waste and reduces emissions for a carbon footprint that's orders of magnitude smaller than the industry standard.

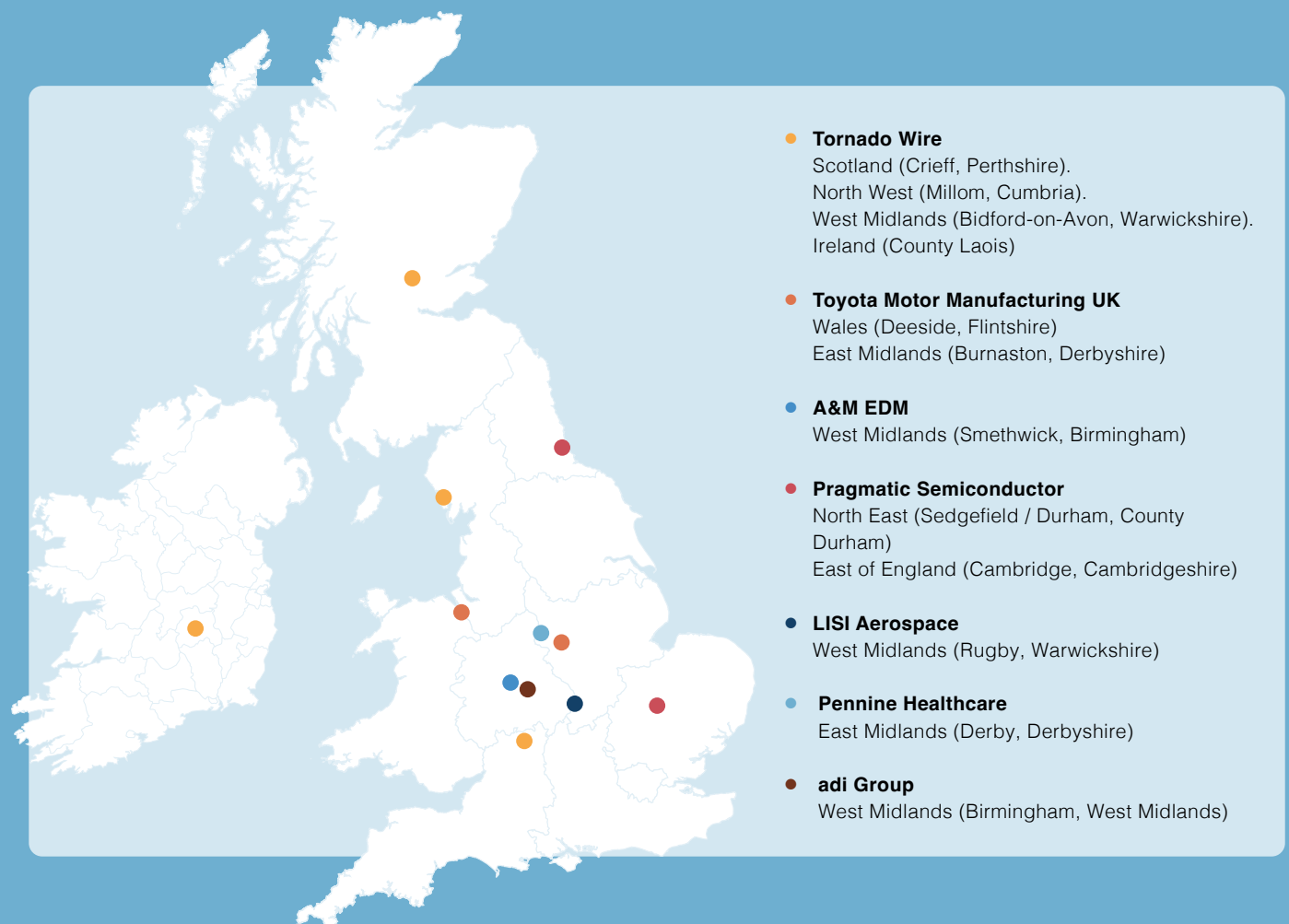
This makes FlexICs a sustainable option for many electronics applications, from item-level intelligence to design miniaturisation. Not only is this opening up new pathways for electronics, it is also helping to reduce the environmental impact of semiconductor production through an innovative process that slashes the use of energy, water and harmful chemicals.

As technology becomes more embedded in people's lives and demand for connected devices increases, Pragmatic demonstrates that smart, scalable technology can also be sustainable. From industrial and healthcare to consumer applications, Pragmatic is working hard to unlock entirely new possibilities for responsible innovation.

Conclusion

The value of manufacturing to the UK economy cannot be overstated, but neither can the value of manufacturing to the communities that each of the 130,000 manufacturers across the country serves. This report touches on only a tiny fraction of these businesses, but all have a wider story to tell than simply what they make and how.

From developing cutting edge technology and skills for a green revolution to working with Help for Heroes, manufacturers are playing their part in driving forward innovation and 'building... a sense of common purpose and positivity'. Today, as local businesses open their doors to their schools and residents, and as Government looks to empower communities, deliver change and foster a 'national sense of unity', there's a lot to learn from manufacturing.



About



Make UK is backing manufacturing – helping our sector to engineer a digital, global and green future. From the First Industrial Revolution to the emergence of the Fourth, the manufacturing sector has been the UK's economic engine and the world's workshop. The 20,000 manufacturers we represent have created the new technologies of today and are designing the innovations of tomorrow. By investing in their people, they continue to compete on a global stage, providing the solutions to the world's biggest challenges. Together, manufacturing is changing, adapting and transforming to meet the future needs of the UK economy. A forward-thinking, bold and versatile sector, manufacturers are engineering their own future.

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