

# How Made Smarter is helping North West SMEs embrace Chemistry 4.0

**MADE  
SMARTER**

The chemical sector, like every industry, is experiencing a tectonic shift as digitalisation drives the automation of processes and products. Technology adoption is enabling businesses to overcome technical challenges, accelerate processes, improve productivity, and become more sustainable. But for SMEs the capacity and speed of adoption presents barriers, from finance and a lack of digital skills, to uncertainty of where to start and the struggle to find the time to capitalise on opportunities.

Helping SMEs keep up with the pace became the foundation of the Made Smarter Adoption programme in the North West. Launched as a £20m government-funded industry-led pilot in 2019, it has since worked with more than 1,200 businesses, including many in the chemical sector, offering expert, impartial technology advice, digital transformation workshops to help manufacturers take their first steps, a leadership programme, and funded digital technology internships.

The programme has supported 201 technology projects which are forecast to deliver an additional £150M in GVA for the North West economy over the next three years, create over 920 new jobs, and upskill 1,764 existing roles.

Some have invested in technology to integrate systems, capture and analyse data, and even create simulations of their plants and processes. Others are using 3D-printing, automation, and robotics to solve business challenges and meet increased demand.

## Where to start

To help manufacturers select the right approach, how much to invest and which technologies will bring the greatest benefits, Made Smarter developed a Digital Transformation Workshop, an innovative, streamlined diagnostic of products, services, processes and people to find practical solutions to overcome challenges. The bespoke process is designed in a way that requires minimal time investment for manufacturers to turn the actions into results and leave them with an easy-to-use guide with recommended first steps and a digital roadmap.

HMG Paints, an independent paint manufacturer based in Manchester, used the process to accelerate a project to digitise its paper-based dispatch process, making it 40% more time efficient and reducing errors significantly. The timely investment also enabled the business to better cope with a surge in demand during the pandemic.

## Investing in tech

Armed with a digital roadmap, Made Smarter can help

manufacturers target the right technology to grow progressively and sustainably, avoiding the wasted time, effort and money.

Organica UK, a manufacturer of environmentally friendly household cleaning products, based in Birkenhead, invested in two technology projects which have created eight new jobs and supported its ambition to increase turnover from £5m to £8m.

Sensors now capture the volumes of ingredients going into and coming out of its blending tanks and other parts of its filling process, introducing real-time monitoring and analytics which have resulted in a 20% productivity increase. A second project will create a bespoke, cloud-based ERP solution to improve how it keeps track of orders, production and stock, and is forecast to improve efficiency by 25%, reduce energy consumption by 10% per ton of product, and reduce waste by up to 20%.

## Skills and leadership

Made Smarter is also supporting manufacturers to ensure they have the right skill sets to capitalise on these game-changing technologies.

The Made Smarter Leadership Programme was designed to equip SME managers and directors with the strategic view and skills needed to pursue smarter manufacturing, using a hybrid model of classroom learning and site visits.

Andrew Mooney, Managing Director of Actikem, a chemical manufacturer, based in Warrington, benefited from the programme which helped the business navigate the impact of the pandemic.

Made Smarter also offers specialist advice about organisational and workforce development, and fully funded Digital Technology Internships that enable university students and graduates the chance to work with businesses on their digital transformation.

Over 80% of SMEs working with Made Smarter to adopt technologies have seen a boost in productivity, and more than 25% reduced their carbon emissions. Businesses are also benefitting from increased revenue, profits and exports, and lower energy bills.

Such has been the success of the North West programme, it has been expanded to the North East, Yorkshire and the Humber, and the West Midlands regions, meaning more manufacturers can access support to adopt digital tools which will increase their growth, productivity, efficiency and create high value, well paid jobs of the future.

**For more information, visit [www.madesmarter.uk](http://www.madesmarter.uk)  
For all Made Smarter media enquiries contact Stuart Greer and Melanie Antao Fernandes at Antao Greer Communications on 07799 289650 or email [stuart@antaogreer.com](mailto:stuart@antaogreer.com) or [melanie@antaogreer.com](mailto:melanie@antaogreer.com)**

