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Leeds Manufacturing Festival

Leeds factories open doors to 10,000 school and college students as manufacturing festival launches



Business leaders from around 50 Leeds manufacturers have joined forces at Leeds City College Printworks Campus to launch an initiative aimed at showcasing the latest career opportunities available to young people across the city's modern manufacturing sector.

As the UK's third largest manufacturing centre, Leeds is home to more than 1,800 manufacturing firms, employing 26,000 people. The Leeds Manufacturing Festival, which runs until October, will include an extensive programme of events linking young people with potential employers.

Tie-ups between schools, colleges and Leeds businesses will see factory tours by students and manufacturers visiting schools, as well as taster days and work experience initiatives involving around 10,000 young people across the city.

Graham Cooper, one of the festival's organisers and director of high-tech printing products manufacturer Agfa Graphics in Leeds, said: "There's a misconception among young people, which I think comes from their parents and to some extent their

teachers, that manufacturing is no longer a viable career option in this country, that it's a dying industry.

"In fact, it is thriving and nowhere more so than here in Leeds, where there are some incredibly high-tech and exciting businesses that simply not enough people know about.

"The Leeds Manufacturing Festival is all about opening up manufacturing workplaces to young people and highlighting the exciting careers and job opportunities that are available right here in Leeds, covering a huge variety of different roles."

Ben Wilson, director of Leeds-based glass reinforced plastic moulds manufacturer MPM, said: "As a career option, manufacturing offers the satisfaction of actually making an end product, and there is a great deal of creativity that goes into the process, as well as practical or scientific skills.

"With higher apprenticeships offering the prospect of a degree that does not incur the debts involved in the university route, and a range of different training options available, we're urging young people to make sure their school or college is involved in the festival and find out more about the opportunities that manufacturing holds for them in Leeds."

Now in its second year, Leeds Manufacturing Festival is organised by the Leeds Manufacturing Alliance and Leeds Chamber of Commerce. Schools, manufacturing businesses and students can find out more about the festival, and how to get involved, at www.leedsmanufacturingfestival.co.uk .

Photo: Leeds Manufacturing Festival organisers prepare for the launch of the seven-month event.

Back row, from left: David Baggaley, Leeds City Council; Bill Jones, Leeds City College; Mike Rimmer, Brandon Medical; Guy Foster, Leeds Chamber of Commerce; Mitch Scott, Leeds City College; Cath Black, Sound Leisure; Ben Wilson MPM

Front row: Graham Cooper, Agfa Graphics