



“SMEs are vital to the future of the economy of the whole country and it is imperative that we have a developing SME economy in the region. The university is a key anchor institution in the community and its commitment to Lancashire’s social and economic infrastructure is highlighted by the work of our Centre for SME Development.”

*David Taylor, CBE, Pro-Chancellor UCLan
and Chair of the University Board.*



Grow your business

INTRODUCTION

I feel fortunate to be introducing our 2018 Annual Review at the end of another highly successful year.

The University of Central Lancashire (UCLan) is a highly engaged civic university and plays a pivotal role in our regional economy contributing £100 million in Gross Value Added in the North West annually¹. We work very closely with our fellow “anchor institutions” such as the City Council and County Council towards a shared aspiration to keep wealth generation local and to be better neighbours to each other. Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs) are vital in providing local employment and generating local wealth but academic research shows that they can feel very isolated. The Centre for SME Development provides a focal point in the university where SMEs can connect, collaborate, network and learn so that whatever challenges they face and objectives they set, businesses can benefit from dialogue with us.

Our membership model is a reflection of our place-focused ethos and it is free to join our fast growing network of SMEs. UCLan has an enormous resource to share and we believe that everyone will benefit from the SME sector that we are nurturing. We are in constant dialogue with our members and what we offer is led by their needs, challenges and aspirations so that through sustained and on-going relationships we can continue to play a full part in shaping the local landscape in a positive way. The Centre for SME Development is a conduit to £21m of SME business support projects to address agendas such as new technology and digitisation, a place to network, learn and to benefit from our students and graduates.

The past year has been one of substantial progress. Business engagement and networking have continued apace. More students and graduates than ever have been guided and propelled into business. In keeping with the UK government’s Industrial Strategy White Paper² and the imperative to identify local strengths and challenges and the action needed to boost productivity, we have made a direct and significant impact on planning for improved performance in Lancashire.

We have generated a good deal of value and impact in our first two years as the Centre of SME Development. We are on a journey there is much we want to achieve. I hope that you enjoy reading in more detail about our progress and our plans and I very much hope that if you are an SME it will inspire you to join us and share the fabulous things that we do.

We’re looking forward to a very exciting third year of progress and I will be pleased to be sharing more updates in the future.



Professor Sue Smith
Chair of the Centre for SME Development, UCLan



1. Regeneris Consulting Limited (2015) *The Socio-economic Contribution of the University of Central Lancashire in Lancashire and the North West*
2. HM Government (2017): *Industrial Strategy: building a Britain fit for the future*

What a very busy and rewarding year I have had as Manager of the Centre for SME Development. We have welcomed even more SMEs through our doors than during our first year and we have continued to expand our offer to all types of businesses in our community.



from left to right, Val Moon, Eileen Ward, Sue Martin, Rebecca Bottomley, Alison Hitchen

I see it as a measure of our success that within a month of launching our formal membership offer to SMEs in October 2018, we had over 100 members. At the time of writing (early December) we are well on our way to having 250 members. This indicates that we are providing the support for development that is needed and so we will continue to listen to our members to help shape our provision in the future. If you would like to become member of our network, the membership form and other details can be found at the back of this report. Or, contact any member of our team (pictured above).

You will see from this report that we have deepened and broadened our ties both within the university and outside of it. We are working closely with Propeller (our student enterprise service) to ensure that we support the businesses and enterprises that our students set up and help them to thrive. In turn, we are working with our academics and researchers to share the great work that the University does with SMEs who can put it into action. One great example of this is the work of Dr Lowri Dowthwaite, who shared

her excellent workshop on happiness in the workplace with 65 attendees at our business breakfast in September. Dr Dowthwaite received a standing ovation from attendees but, most importantly, she provided businesses with the information that they needed to make changes in their approach to business that would encourage greater happiness and productivity. This is research into action that creates direct impact and we are delighted to be facilitating such connections.

Here's to our third year of progress.

Alison Hitchen
Centre for SME Development Manager, UCLan

SUPPORTING GROWTH IN LANCASHIRE

The University of Central Lancashire (UCLan) recognises the importance of the UK's Industrial Strategy White Paper² and its long-term plan to boost the productivity and earning power of people throughout the UK.

UCLan realises that universities are key to developing the capacity of the economy not only in respect of skills and innovative ability but also by encouraging and developing entrepreneurial facilities. UCLan understands that by being engaged with local Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs) and responding to their needs it is supporting the agenda of regional growth in Lancashire. The Centre for SME Development is the focal point for that work.

The Centre for SME Development focuses on creating synergies between SMEs, the academic community and the student/graduate body. We work on delivering world-class research and enterprise education and on connecting SMEs in the region into a network in order to deliver sustainable development for all concerned. By nurturing our collaborative relationships we wish to encourage a position where the enormous range of expertise, services and advice that is available via the university is harnessed to benefit our whole area.

- **We wish to increase SME engagement with UCLan**
- **Create economic and business impact via our activities**
- **Stimulate opportunities for applied research into SME specific issues**
- **Create student opportunities for enterprise activities and employability.**

HOW DOES THIS WORK FOR YOU?

1

You need help to grow/develop your SME and/or you'd like to network with others in the same position. You'd like to access help or funds or expertise.

2

You contact us:
sme@uclan.ac.uk
uclan.ac.uk/sme
01772 894321

3

You become a member of our network (no charge, there is a form at the back of this pack) and access support

4

You and your business develop together

2. HM Government (2017): Industrial Strategy: building a Britain fit for the future

WHAT YOU THOUGHT OF OUR EVENTS

WHERE DID WE ADD VALUE AND MAKE AN IMPACT?

500

Lancashire SME's

1000

People involved in activities

In the past year, via our quarterly Business Breakfasts and Twilight events, we have interacted with more than 500 Lancashire SMEs and involved more than 1000 people with our activities.

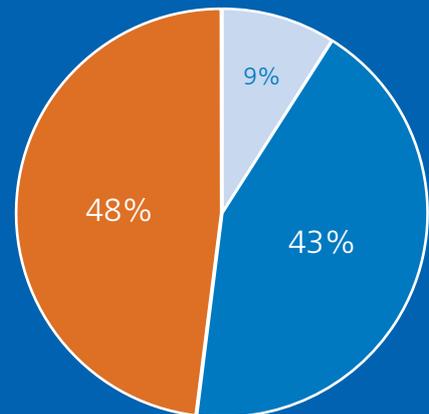
100% Of attendees found value

What you tell us guides everything that we do and 100% of attendees told us that they had taken value from our events.

We asked everyone who attended one of our events how valuable it had been.

Overall, how valuable did you find the event (%)?

Very Valuable Of Some Value Valuable



You saw immediate value saying things like:



"This event really made me think. It was very informative and useful"

"I really enjoyed it, a very friendly environment, thank-you. The speakers were excellent. "

"It was a very high standard of information, really good speakers."

Many of you saw potential value:



"It triggered lots of thoughts and ideas"

"We will be looking at becoming more energy efficient in our warehouse now"

"I can plan for GDPR on the back of this".

Sometimes, we could see that some value had been realised by your business:



"I connected to the Investment Readiness project and have some funding now!"

"I have a student intern in my business, she's saving me time and money"

"My business is a happier place to work"

CREATING IMPACT

and providing value for business in Lancashire

MICHELLE BONDESIO is a Communications & Behaviour Design Consultant and founder of “Growth Sessions” a business that has its focus on Digital Health and Wellbeing. This is her story...



I first heard about the Centre for SME Development in September 2017. I was on the verge of starting a new business after recovering from a period of ill health and needed guidance on my journey to launch. However being new to the region I didn't really have a professional support network so I thought that the Centre might be a good way to meet like-minded business people and establish relevant contacts.

My first Centre event was a really positive experience. Whilst there, I met UCLan staff and many local business owners and was bowled over by their friendliness and their willingness to offer help. As it was a breakfast event, the Centre also provided bacon butties which was an unexpected bonus. It was my first public, business-related experience after a long time away from networking events and it went so well that I decided to find out more about how the Centre might be able to support my work.

Michelle (first on the left) with Juliane Lowe and Elena Vasilieva from the Lancashire Forum team

For instance, as a direct result of my interactions with the Centre, I was encouraged to apply for the Lancashire Forum Creative, a business support initiative designed for Lancashire SMEs in the Digital and Creative sector. **Joining Lancashire Forum Creative was a total game changer for me.** Not only did I learn a vast amount through the workshops and from the other attendees, the experience also increased my confidence in my skills and abilities immensely. It helped me to position my business offerings in a more effective way and come up with some new service ideas. It also led me to understand my role and capability as a leader in the field of Digital Health (which is a relatively new field).

Talking with like-minded creative business people who are experiencing similar challenges (despite their businesses being quite different from mine), has **made me feel less 'alone' in my journey**; and being part of this community has positively influenced my health, wellbeing and confidence too. An added bonus is that these relationships and my participation in the group have created unexpected promotional opportunities and collaborations, both with other members and with UCLan. For example, towards the end of 2018, I'm running a workshop on digital health and wellbeing as part of Lancashire Forum Creative's "Wellbeing Think Tank" series.

My interactions with the Centre have changed me for the better. I wouldn't be where I am today without them. Since my first encounter with the Centre, I've attended many more of their breakfast and twilight events in addition to their other talks and masterclasses; and I've found each of them beneficial in helping me to develop my business skills and raise my awareness about current events and best practices. Taken together, these experiences have all contributed to me going self-employed in December 2017 and launching a brand new business service earlier this year. **In the space of a year, I've gone from being a rabbit in the headlights with low confidence, to wanting to contribute to as many conversations as possible.**

My relationship with the Centre has confirmed my understanding of what matters. It's all about putting people first, through communication, learning, connection and support. This is exemplified by the team who support and run the Centre, they're a lovely team of people doing good things to help others.

“
My interactions with the Centre have changed me for the better. I wouldn't be where I am today without them
”

If you're looking for ways to support and improve the wellbeing and performance of your team, connect with **Michelle Bondesio** here:

✉ hi@bondesio.com

in [/michellebondesio](https://www.linkedin.com/company/bondesio)

🐦 [@michbondesio](https://twitter.com/michbondesio)

📷 [@michbondesio](https://www.instagram.com/michbondesio)

🌐 bondesio.com

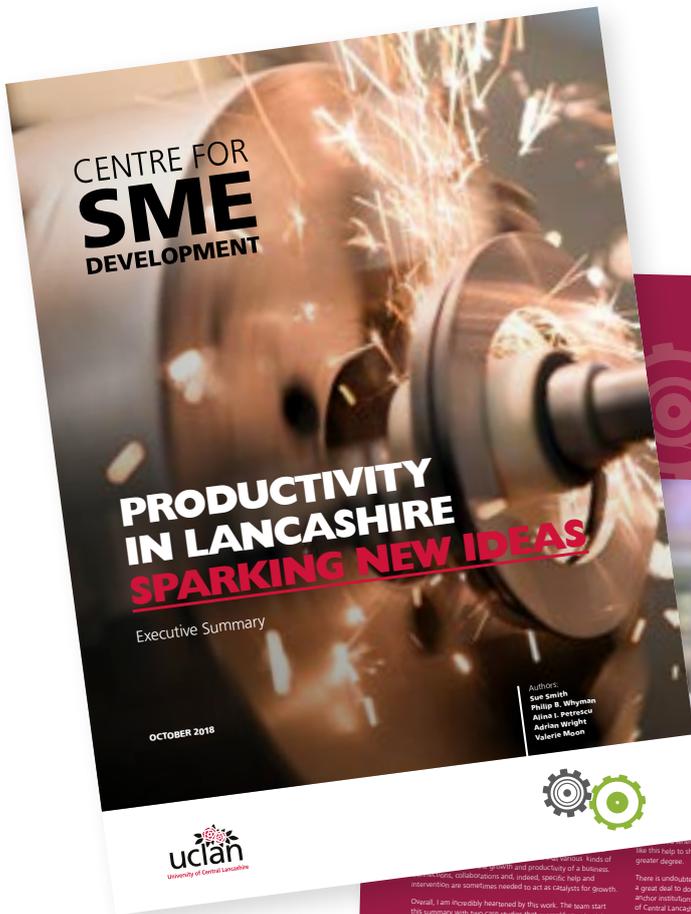
PRODUCTIVITY, CO-OPERATION AND PROPULSION

Through its on-going research programme, the Centre for SME Development contributes to the strategic planning for the city of Preston

The most recent example of this contribution relates to a two-year inter-disciplinary project, led by Professor Sue Smith with a team of fellow academics from the Lancashire School of Business and Enterprise, entitled "Sparking Productivity in Lancashire". In response to requests from Lancashire County Council and Lancashire Enterprise Partnership, this is a piece of "live" research and all parties will be working together to put its findings into action.

"One of the really important things for us as a university is making our students employable. Getting a degree is a great start in adult life but it's getting employment and getting students into employment that is really important and a big thing for UCLan. The Centre for SME Development plays a really big role here because we have one of the highest rates of start-up businesses as a university (we've helped nearly 1,000 students into business in the past 5 years) and, importantly, we've got a very high proportion of those companies still trading after three years. It's at that early stage in a business, when the really big challenges tend to occur and when help is needed to get the business established: the Centre can help there."

David Taylor, CBE, Pro-Chancellor and Chairman of the Board, University of Central Lancashire



...the most recent kinds of... growth and productivity of a business... collaborations and, indeed, specific help and... intervention are sometimes needed to act as catalysts for growth.

Overall, I am incredibly heartened by this work. The team start this journey with two case studies that exemplify productivity in action and strive to illustrate that we have a county where businesses often support each other to a much greater degree than might be demonstrated in other parts of the country. This sense of fellowship is an excellent starting point for fostering the learning, networking and ecosystems that will assist us to make the most of

...future. The case studies illustrate what can like this help to show how we can encourage productivity to a greater degree.

There is undoubtedly great potential in Lancashire but there is also a great deal to do. As a representative of one of the county's many higher institutions, I am happy to emphasise that it is the University of Central Lancashire's culture to work with all in our community to realise the potential of our local economy.

Sue Smith
Professor Sue Smith,
Director of the Centre for SME Development,
University of Central Lancashire

THE PRESTON MODEL

The Preston Model has been developing since 2013 and has created change in the city by deliberately altering behaviours for the benefit of the local economy - moving away from placing emphasis on cost alone, towards a consideration of social value.

At UCLan (and the same is true for other major institutions in the city) we support this initiative by striving to source our products and services locally wherever possible, ensuring that wealth is retained within the local community. The development of new start up local co-operatives is a key element of the Preston Model.

As our report on productivity shows, there is a need and potential for growth in Lancashire. Growth is an economic necessity but the government's recent Industrial Strategy also refers to a moral imperative to recognise our roles as citizens and communities.

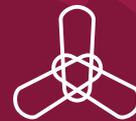


*Dr Julian Manley,
Social Innovation Manager,
Centre for SME Development*

With this agenda in mind, we are delighted to welcome **Dr Julian Manley as the Centre's Social Innovation Manager**. Julian will be conducting on-going research into the impact of the Preston Model whilst working closely with Preston City Council, the Preston Co-operative Development Network and Propeller, to increase job opportunities for graduates and create sustainable and successful new co-operatives in the local community.

This work is about the role of the university in relation to Preston as a place and about how the knowledge that we generate can be best attributed to where it matters most: in communities and for individuals.

The Centre for SME Development, under the umbrella of the Preston Model, will be reaching out to break down barriers and obstacles to participation with the local communities and we will be providing opportunities for our students to consider and develop co-operative ways of working in the local community.



Propeller

Meanwhile, inside the university, Propeller works to embed enterprise, innovative practice and employability into the structure of the student experience so that students go out into the world ready to engage with all forms of business and enterprise.

Students who set up their own businesses, co-ops or social enterprises become members of the Centre and use its resources in order to survive and thrive.



JOIN OUR FREE MEMBERSHIP SCHEME

Become a Member of the UCLan Business Community

If you have a small, medium business, a social enterprise, charity or co-operative, then we want to connect with you to create a vibrant, cooperative and constructive community where everyone benefits.

You, our members, lead our membership activities. Our ambition is to connect businesses across the region and beyond so that they can learn from each other and develop with support from others. We are here to help all types of business to help themselves, whatever it is that they wish to achieve.

Membership is free and provides access to:



Business breakfast and twilight networking events – held quarterly, these events provide the opportunity to meet other members and expand your personal network, hear from expert speakers around hot topics that you help choose and keep up to date with ways UCLan can support you and your business.



Good Practice Network (GPN) - opportunity for members to raise topics and together with other members share ideas, solutions and best practice. The sessions are usually capped at 10-15 participants and last between 2-3 hours. Topics are at the request of members, for example you may want to seek help around your digital marketing or explore how you can improve productivity in your organisation.



Masterclasses and workshops – complimenting the networking events, we invite speakers with a passion for helping organisations to share their knowledge and expertise with the membership. Events will focus on key issues. Past events have included GDPR, digital marketing and workplace wellbeing.



A gateway to UCLan – UCLan has internationally recognised research centres, a staff and student community of circa 38,000 and outstanding facilities. As a member, you will be kept up to date with news and opportunities to access support from the wider university, setting you on your own pathway to access a wealth of talent and expertise.

Complete and return the form included with this pack now or you can sign up online at:
www.uclan.ac.uk/sme





Why not get in touch and get involved too? Tell us what you want and need.

Call: **+44 (0) 1772 894321**

Email: **sme@uclan.ac.uk**

Twitter: **@UCLanBusiness**

Website: **uclan.ac.uk/sme**

We are proud to be working alongside:

