

be the
business

BAE SYSTEMS



Be the Business + BAE Systems

Getting small businesses on the path to growth

bethebusiness.com





Introduction

The last 18 months have been hugely challenging for UK SMEs. The Covid-19 pandemic has forced many companies to rethink their business models.

Some have shifted online, others have focused on cost reduction, a number have prioritised the introduction of new products and processes, and many have moved to hybrid working.

For others, the sense of uncertainty has pushed them to stop trading entirely. Separated from their teams and fellow business owners by lockdown restrictions and unsure of where to turn for support during the pandemic, small business owners have often been isolated.

BAE Systems and Be the Business have come together to help these businesses get through the crisis and on the path to growth.

BAE Systems has made the single largest contribution – valued at over £1.7m¹ – of any UK company to the Be the Business mission in 2020/2021. This has enabled Be the Business to deliver support and productivity-improving programmes to SMEs at a critical time.

¹ This contribution is the value to the Be the Business charity based on both cash and in-kind contributions.



Be the Business organisational highlights

Since its establishment, **over 11,000 small business** leaders from firms across different sectors and regions have participated in a Be the Business programme activity.



£350 million

Estimated productivity uplift for these businesses and the UK economy².



5,700+ individuals from small businesses across the UK **turned to Be the Business for support** in 2020/21 alone.



£114 million

Estimated productivity uplift over 2020/21 for these businesses – a huge impact at a very challenging time.

² The productivity uplift figures are calculated using our robust evaluation, firm level data, and evidence from the impact of similar programmes. Our approach accounts for both deadweight and displacement and was designed in collaboration with BEIS analysts.



The impact of our partnership

Over the course of 2020/21, BAE Systems **has made a major contribution** to the work of Be the Business and in helping SMEs get through the crisis.



The contribution made by BAE Systems **allowed Be the Business to pivot** to providing support to SMEs in distress in addition to productivity-improving programmes.



The direct support and resources provided by BAE Systems **allowed Be the Business to scale rapidly** and engage thousands of SMEs at a time when they desperately needed support.



BAE Systems' volunteers have become mentors that have supported 139 12-month and 54 12-week mentoring relationships. The productivity uplift of these relationships alone is estimated to be £12.2m³.

³ The mentoring uplift figure is based on evaluation evidence from the mentoring scheme and existing evidence from similar schemes. We calculate the value of the productivity uplift based on the average turnover of the firms involved.



The impact of our partnership



“At a critical time for the UK economy and small business community, BAE Systems stepped up and threw their support behind Be the Business and our work to help small business leaders. The contribution made by BAE Systems and its employees has been nothing short of incredible. Their support allowed Be the Business to help thousands of small businesses to successfully navigate the crisis and emerge from it more resilient than ever.”

Anthony Impey MBE – CEO, Be the Business



“The largest companies in the UK have a responsibility to share their expertise and skills with the smaller businesses in the economy. We all benefit when local businesses and communities thrive, and helping to create a more vibrant and productive small business community is a win-win.

BAE Systems has always recognised the importance of supporting small businesses that don't have the time or capacity to develop their own skills. This took on a new urgency during the Covid-19 pandemic. We realised that small business leaders were going to face huge challenges and that BAE Systems had a role to play in helping them to build the leadership skills and resilience they would need to get through the crisis.

I'm hugely proud of how the BAE Systems team and small business leaders have worked together to weather this storm and emerge stronger than before.”

Richard Baker – Project and Portfolio Support Director, BAE Systems



Who are Be the Business?

Be the Business was launched in 2017, with funding and support from the UK government and some of Britain's leading companies, including BAE Systems, GSK, Siemens, Amazon, Lloyds Banking Group, McKinsey & Co and Accenture.

We are an independent charity designed to bring together large and small companies, with the aim of increasing productivity and performance throughout the UK SME community.

Chief Executive Anthony Impey MBE and Chairman Sir Charlie Mayfield are supported by the Productivity Leadership Group, an advisory group, which comprises some of the UK's most senior business leaders – including BAE Systems' Chairman Sir Roger Carr.

Over the course of the pandemic, with the support of BAE Systems, Be the Business has tailored its interventions to meet the most pressing needs of the SME community. In addition to our work on improving productivity, we have delivered programmes to help SMEs build resilience and respond to the acute challenges of the crisis.

BAE Systems: delivering defence and economic value

BAE Systems helps customers to stay a step ahead when protecting people and national security, critical infrastructure and vital information. This is a long-term commitment involving significant investments in skills.

The Company works closely with local partners to support economic development through the transfer of knowledge, skills and technology. In the UK BAE Systems employ 35,300 people at 30 sites and contributed £10.1 billion to GDP in 2020, in addition to exporting nearly £4 billion of goods and services.

The Partnership

BAE Systems is a cornerstone partner of Be the Business. The partnership has not only enabled Be the Business to support thousands of SMEs, it has also helped to shape the strategic development of the organisation.



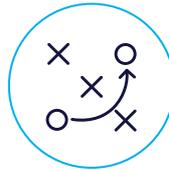
Enabling Be the Business to scale and support SMEs

BAE Systems has enabled Be the Business to reach and help thousands of small business leaders across the UK. This scale has only been made possible because of the support BAE Systems has provided.



Direct support from BAE Systems' executives for small business leaders

Hundreds of BAE Systems' executives have themselves joined the Be the Business movement and become personally involved, using their expertise and experience to help small business leaders develop and grow while simultaneously building their own skills.



Shaping the strategic development of Be the Business

Senior leaders from BAE Systems have been at the heart of the strategic development and growth of the Be the Business movement since the beginning. Their invaluable insight and guidance has helped build the Be the Business movement from the ground up.



1. Be the Business Mentoring

Our mentoring programme matches senior executives from leading firms with SME leaders to help accelerate their recovery, growth and competitiveness.

Programme summary

Over the course of 12 weeks or 12 months, mentors and mentees build relationships, and work together to help the small business leader overcome challenges and grow their business. The mentors share their expertise and advice while developing their own leadership capability.

The 12-week Programme was specifically designed to help SMEs through the critical months of lockdown and its aftermath. The two mentoring programmes have made a real difference to small businesses. Some of the early impact findings from the 12-month programme include:

- **51% of mentees** report that Be the Business Mentoring has improved their productivity, and 67% expect productivity will improve, or improve further, over the next two years.
- **88% of mentees** would recommend the programme to others.
- The impact has been extraordinary – **30% of SMEs** on the programme have reported an uplift in turnover.
- **30% of mentees** reported increasing employment in their business, a significant story of jobs growth amongst small businesses.
- In addition, **80% developed their skills and knowledge**, **54% adopted new leadership and practices** and **75% feel more confident** in their abilities.

BAE Systems' impact

At the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, small businesses were struggling and uncertain about their future. BAE Systems' leaders put out a call for executives to step forward to volunteer as mentors. BAE Systems' employees stepped up immediately with 139 volunteering to mentor on the 12-month programme and a further 54 signing up to support Rapid Response Mentoring.

- BAE Systems employees have **directly supported almost 200 SMEs** via the programme.
- BAE Systems' support has **delivered an estimated £12.2mn worth of productivity uplift** to SMEs on this programme alone.
- **54 of a total of 174 12-week mentoring relationships** established during 2020/2021 involved a BAE Systems executive.



31%

An amazing 31% of all 12-week Mentoring relationships over the period **involved BAE Systems executives.**





BAE Systems' Mentors

Honing skills while supporting the SME community

From our interviews with mentors, they tell us they have also benefited from taking part in the programme. Key benefits are better soft skills, with 89% of mentors say these have improved.



Improved communication skills

In particular those relating to listening and questioning were cited as a key development area. In the mentors' opinion, these skills were critical to the success of the relationship, helping them to get to the 'root cause' of the issue at hand and identify the most effective solution.



Improved understanding of SMEs

78% of mentors said they had a better understanding of: the challenges SMEs face, the pace of change within SMEs, and the difference in the attitude to risk ("larger companies tend to play it safe"). These insights enabled mentors to relate to SMEs more easily. This is an important capability for large companies which are likely to be dealing with SMEs through their supply chain.



Increased self-confidence

This was reported as a positive outcome from their relationship. Participating in the programme gave these mentors a new-found belief in their capabilities which they are then able to transfer back to their own companies.



Unexpected benefits for mentors

These related to personal satisfaction and improved mental well-being. Also, in a select few cases, mentors reported that their company also benefited from the mentoring programme, albeit in a confined manner.

A positive impact through the SMEs supply chain

Mentees reported that businesses within their supply chains also benefited from the outcomes the mentees had achieved through the programme.



16%

confirmed that their supply chains had already **experienced indirect benefits**. Another 12% expected this to occur within the next two years.



Case study



Jo Scott

Co-founder/director,
Truth Creative,
Manchester

“Being accountable
was exactly the kind
of challenge I needed.”

When the pandemic hit last year, Jo Scott wanted to ensure she could pursue her growth ambitions for her creative agency Truth Design, while at the same time supporting her team and her young family.

The company had developed ‘Truth Labs’ – an alternative to traditional agency workshops which gives voices to people across her clients’ businesses, not just those in the brand team. Jo and her husband and business partner, Darren, understood the power of their offer, but were considering how best to promote Truth Labs as a core strategic offering when the pandemic hit.

Jo suddenly found herself trying to keep the business afloat, support her staff and home-school her two young sons – but didn’t want to lose the momentum that had been building in the agency. When she found out about the Be the Business 12-week mentoring scheme, she seized the opportunity – and was matched with Will Matthews, sales effectiveness and operations director at BAE Systems Applied Intelligence. “Initially I thought, do I really need this, with all the experience we’ve got?” she says.

Will, a seasoned mentor, says: “Many successful SME founder/owners, however experienced they are, are often so busy working in the business, that they don’t have time to work on the business.” One technique he used to get Jo to take a more objective view of her company was to slow her down.

Jo says: “Will makes me accountable. In a recent session he asked me to prepare a full financial forecast for the coming financial year, ready for our next session two weeks later.” This concentrated her mind, and she put day-to-day tasks aside in order to focus and set some business goals. “He provides exactly the kind of challenge I need,” she says. “Despite the pandemic, we’ve already won two and half times the new business in 2020/2021 that we won the previous year.”

[> Read more](#)



2. Productivity through People

An executive education programme designed to boost the leadership and management capability of SME leaders.

Programme summary

During this 10-month, part-time programme, participants experience practical classroom-based learning, are exposed to the successful strategies of world-leading firms such as BAE Systems, Lloyds Banking Group and Rolls Royce, and gain access to a network of like-minded individuals – something that is crucial to sustainable improvement.

BAE Systems' contribution

BAE Systems co-designed and part-funded the delivery of this programme, which has resulted in a £165m productivity uplift amongst participants since it was first delivered.

The evaluation results have been impressive. The majority of participants surveyed say they have changed their approach to business leadership as a result of taking part in the programme.



70%

of respondents reported that their business had **increased turnover**.



78%

of businesses reported **creating additional jobs**.

- **Over 90%** say employee engagement has risen over the past financial year.
- **Some 56%** feel the programme has strongly influenced their approach to improving the skills of their workforce, and to identifying and developing future leaders.
- PtP is **exceptionally popular with participants**. They clearly value the experience with three quarters of respondents saying that it offers a unique support package that is not available from other sources.
- **70% of respondents** reported that their business had increased turnover in the previous financial year.
- The employment impact has been terrific – **78%** had created additional jobs.
- On the core goal of driving up firm level productivity, the programme is also proving to be a winner. Be the Business data analysis has found a **5% increase in productivity** at the aggregate level for PtP participant firms between the year prior to and the year following their participation in the programme.
- PtP has also helped BAE Systems to **build a more resilient supply chain**, with a number of the participants being direct suppliers to BAE Systems.



Case study



Stephanie Chamberlain

Owner and CEO,
Magic Milestones,
Birmingham

“I can honestly say that the Productivity through People course has changed my life.”

Even before the pandemic hit, Stephanie Chamberlain said she felt “a bit like an engine that had run out of steam”.

She set up the tech consultancy 13 years ago and enjoyed a decade of innovation and success. But she had become unclear about the company’s message and direction, and when Covid-19 arrived she questioned her ability to meet the challenge.

When Stephanie enrolled on the Productivity through People course at Aston Business School, everything changed. “Very quickly, the penny dropped around our proposition, and, since then, it’s been eureka moment after eureka moment,” she says.

Two of the biggest insights she gained were the need to invest in people management, and the value of peer-to-peer working with like-minded business leaders. “I had stopped investing in my own learning,” she admits.

The thinking space the programme afforded made her realise that her business is about ‘performance’, which, in turn, allowed her to define and target the right customers, and create a new strapline – ‘Changing the world, one team at a time’. It also gave her the confidence that her business can hold its own against bigger consultancies.

Having to switch to online learning mid-way through the course didn’t diminish the benefits, and the new financial literacy module was, she says, invaluable. “We’ve grown, kept our staff and won new clients, including a large global contract, even during the pandemic. We’ve seen our gross business profits increase by an incredible 48%.”

[> Read more](#)



3. Be the Business Boards

Matching a SME leader with experienced senior executives from successful companies, Be the Business Boards provides a high value intervention with high level impact.

Programme summary

Whether a small business leader wants some guidance on their operations, finance, HR or marketing, experienced executives from some of the UK's most successful businesses are brought together by Be the Business to provide non-executive director style support in the form of Be the Business Board.

Each board is hand-picked to support the small business leader to achieve their goals. The Board meets quarterly over a 12-month period to mirror the cadence and structure of a board meeting.

SME leaders have used their Boards to help accelerate growth plans, develop new products and services, or seek advice on how to improve sales performance or manage staff. Using their Board's depth of knowledge, SME leaders come away with new ideas and greater confidence in their own ability to lead their company and drive improvements and results.

Some of the early monitoring insights from the programme demonstrate it's impact:

- **Over 80%** of advisees agree that the Board is providing a level of technical or emotional support that they previously didn't have.
- **Two thirds** of advisees view Boards as providing an experience that no other organisation provides.
- Individual leaders are already starting to see effects after their second meeting with **50%** feeling more knowledgeable and confident in how to protect or improve their business performance.
- **Around 50%** also feel better able to tackle any problems the business may face.



Jenner Collins

Collins Ltd,
Silverstone Technology
Cluster Advisory Board

“Having a Board helps to lift your head up, view your business more objectively and review your own progress.”

“It's hard not to enjoy the process – you have people who are curious about you and your business and really want to help you. They are willing to give you their time. They appear to be learning from it too and enjoying it.

Having a Board helps to lift your head up, view your business more objectively and review your own progress. It's a reflective process. You can take a step back, have a look, see where you are in the greater scheme of things and ultimately make better decisions.

It's been really interesting because the more people you have around the table, the more you realise that there isn't just one way to do things. It gives you confidence in what your own approach.

Getting input from experienced people in different fields, and the networks that exposes us to, for a relatively small investment of our own time, has been invaluable.”



4. BAE Systems Apprentices

Helping to make a difference

Caitlin Pyrah and Poppy Mallace, two apprentices at BAE Systems, joined the team at Be the Business during a crisis period for small businesses.



Caitlin Pyrah

Apprentice at
BAE Systems

“Our secondments with Be the Business were insightful and enjoyable. We learnt about the challenges small business leaders were facing across the country at the time, including: recruitment struggles, retention issues, financial worries and technology frustrations as a result of the ever changing social, political and economic climates.

We supported Be the Business in delivering leadership and management, and digital and tech adoption initiatives by enabling knowledge-sharing relationships to be formed between business leaders, supporting SMEs to recover, adapt and grow throughout the pandemic.”



Poppy Mallace

Apprentice at
BAE Systems

“It was rewarding to see business leaders coming together and sharing their challenges with each other to generate solutions collectively.

It was also inspiring to see senior leaders from our own organisation, BAE Systems, express such enthusiasm in helping small businesses by, for example, hosting sessions to share their knowledge with them and joining the Be the Business Fellowship, formerly led by Nigel Whitehead and now Richard Baker.”



5. Shaping the growth of Be the Business

BAE Systems' strategic guidance

BAE Systems' Project and Programme Portfolio Support Director, Richard Baker, former Head of HR Jenny Cridland and former Chief Technology Officer Nigel Whitehead, have all worked directly with Be the Business to help shape strategy and create world class small business support programmes.



Jenny Cridland
Former Head of
Human Resources
at BAE Systems

“I worked with Be the Business for four years, supporting the journey from a vision statement to a thriving business.”

“As an experienced business leader and HR professional, I jumped at the chance to help shape a new organisation, develop proven programmes targeting the leaders of small and medium businesses and to influence government policy. I worked with Be the Business for four years supporting the journey from a vision statement to a thriving business supporting thousands of business leaders across the nation.

The Productivity through People programme helped 100s of business leaders to improve their performance and drive double digit growth in their organisations. It formed the foundation of a £250m investment from government for an enduring programme Help to Grow.”

Building stronger supply chains

BAE Systems is committed to supporting the development and resilience of the small businesses in their supply chain. Be the Business and BAE Systems are working together to ensure that the small business leaders throughout the supply chain have access to the leadership development and productivity improving programmes.

Through targeted recruitment we aim to increase the number of BAE Systems suppliers participating in our mentoring and boards programmes.

Designing a new generation of SME support programmes

BAE Systems, who were instrumental in the establishment of the Productivity through People programme, supporting the re-design and scale-up support of the programme. This will enable the programme to support many more SMEs, including those within the BAE Systems supply chain.



Support around the country

BAE Systems' partnership with Be the Business has helped small businesses around the country.

BOLTON



"Being a mentor helps to keep my ideas fresh."

Being a mentor to three different SMEs in the North West has helped BAE Systems' head of transformation Pete Boddy bring new and relevant insights and ideas to his day-to-day job.

"As a mentor, you might be the first person who has ever challenged embedded thinking and suggested different ways of doing things. You have to have the relationships in place for your challenges to be well received," he says.

"I have learnt so much from the businesses I've worked with so far. Each firm has displayed a real hunger to learn and improve and achieved really impressive results very quickly. Being a mentor has helped me keep my ideas fresh and this makes me better at what I'm doing in BAE Systems too."

[> Read more](#)

WARRINGTON



"Mentoring has felt almost like business therapy."

As a new non-engineer recruit in an engineering company, Nicola Seferta felt she faced a steep learning curve when she joined Rawwater Engineering Company in mid-2019. A mentor from BAE Systems – Alison Ballard, who was leading the UK Typhoon support programme – helped her adjust to this new environment.

An experienced mentor, Alison focuses on leadership and personal development. "With Nicola, I act as a sounding board, offering suggestions about alternative ways of thinking about things and tackling challenges," she says. It's a sentiment Nicola agrees with. "Talking to Alison has really helped to build my confidence. It's felt almost like 'business therapy'."

The benefits of mentoring go both ways. "I've learned a lot from talking to Nicola: it's interesting getting her opinions on some of the issues I'm dealing with too," Alison says.

[> Read more](#)



Support around the country

BAE Systems' partnership with Be the Business has helped small businesses around the country.

MANCHESTER



"We didn't want Covid-19 to stop us in our tracks."



Be the Business' 12-week Mentoring Programme matched Fiona Speakman, client director for the food and retail team at data, research and insight consultancy CGA Strategy, with Sarah-Jane Penman, business improvement manager at BAE Systems.

Sarah-Jane helped Fiona by suggesting how CGA might adopt and adapt some of the tools and techniques she uses in BAE Systems.

"For example, BAE Systems have a staff consultative committee to facilitate cross-departmental communications, with members elected from every part of the business," Sarah-Jane says. "We can adopt the principle of that here."

Fiona drove the agenda from the outset, setting the topic for each mentoring session in advance, which gave Sarah-Jane time to think about her response. As well as the organisational benefits, Fiona also gained personal development – particularly as the relationship between the two women evolved.

And the benefits are sustainable: not only is Sarah-Jane now part of Fiona's network, but both women expect the mentoring relationship to continue, at some level, beyond the end of the formal programme.

[> Read more](#)

BRISTOL

"A super-charged, power-punching couple of hours – two down, third one in the diary. I've benefited massively from the Be the Business Advisory Boards, particularly by getting new, and different, viewpoints into my business."

Helen Tanner, Founder and Managing Director, Data Cubed





Support around the country

BAE Systems' partnership with Be the Business has helped small businesses around the country.

CORNWALL



"We would not be where we are now."



When a health condition for Mark Holden required him to shield during the pandemic, the pub landlord sought advice from a mentor to help him lead his team effectively from a distance. The results have been astounding.

Following the lockdown, Mark Holden, director of three pubs in Cornwall, transformed his business overnight, into a takeaway and doorstep-delivery service. "Our three main objectives were to provide a community service to people who were lonely, isolated and frightened, to create as much cash flow as possible so we could continue to pay the wages of our 70-plus staff, and to sustain the two new revenue streams (food and drink) as and when we open again," he says.

While he's achieved the first two objectives, and is confident of achieving the third, it's been, he admitted, "a very hard journey and a huge learning curve". He's been helped by mentor Andy Richards, CIO of BAE Systems Applied Intelligence.

One of the first things Andy suggested to Mark was to hold weekly virtual team chats so he could discuss his plans, address staff concerns, develop trust and buy-in, see clearly who wasn't going to get on board, and manage their performance accordingly.

The chats reduced Mark's sense of isolation and his greater visibility meant he was able to gradually win people round. One of the messages he used to get them on board was that they were no longer "pub staff", but "key workers" providing a vital community service.

There have been a succession of wins so far – one of the most gratifying involved being able to persuade the managers of one of the three pubs, who'd had a terrible year in 2019 and were on the point of throwing in the towel, to stay. "Had it not been for Be the Business and Andy, we would not be where we are now," Mark says.

[> Read more](#)

Today, with the economy adjusting to 'the new normal', small business leaders will require support to overcome the new challenges of a rapidly changing business environment.

In order to help small business leaders continue along the path to growth, and to tackle the UK's productivity question as a whole, Be the Business and BAE Systems will continue to work together to make our small business community more resilient and productive.



Be the Business – Charitable objectives (charity number: 1173660):

The promotion of industry and commerce in the UK for the public benefit by promoting the productivity of business in order that the UK economy as a whole will benefit through improved business sustainability, employment security, job satisfaction and standards of living.

Source: The Charity Commission

