

**Press release - Sheffield Telegraph**  
**By James Newman, Master Cutler**

WHEN the Government first came to power in 1997, Education, Education, Education was their mantra. This is not the place to discuss how successful or otherwise they have been but it is something we need to take very seriously if the future of manufacturing in South Yorkshire is to be secured.

It is widely accepted that we are not the individual super power we once were, we do not have the same influence we once did but we do have the potential to rise again – provided we put in place the encouragement and appropriate education and training needed to bring young engineers into our factories, plants and manufacturing facilities.

At its most basic, the manufacturing skills essential to the future of the industry in Sheffield and South Yorkshire fall into three main categories.

Basic numeracy and literacy come under the remit of our schools. Skills related to manufacturing and engineering – maths, science, physics, computer science and the like – are catered for through our colleges and universities and finally there are the specific skills needed by business and manufacturing taught through their own training, induction and apprenticeship programmes.

Instead of mixing the three, with business telling schools what they want and colleges offering narrow-based courses for a particular industry, there should be three totally focussed strategies and funding pots for the three levels of skills.

Education in schools comes under the remit of the City Council, not business. The Cutlers Company and businesses do get involved through sponsoring education programmes but the generic aspect, in terms of encouraging students to take up engineering as a career, begins with schools guiding young people towards maths and science degrees and the Universities subsequently steering them towards manufacturing.

Businesses in Sheffield and South Yorkshire can play their part through apprenticeship schemes and work experience for school leavers and undergraduates. It is only when the student has made the decision to work in steel making or manufacturing widgets that the specifics of that particular industry should be taught.

The recent initiative being taken by the Council in conjunction with a number of businesses with the support of the Sheffield City Region to set up and advanced engineering apprentice scheme is most welcome, deserves this industry's support and demonstrates that this region is at last serious about skills and specialist training to ensure we stay at the forefront of technology and innovation in manufacturing.

Encouraging young engineers and scientists is an important aspect of rebalancing the economy. Short-term fixes are not the answer. Serious funding is needed to ensure the future of manufacturing and the most cost-effective use of resources is to direct them to education.

Future Governments, no matter their colour, need to recognise the value of manufacturing, not just in South Yorkshire but the UK as a whole. Over the years we have allowed our reputation for manufacturing excellence to slip away. Now is the time to fight back.