

## SPECIAL RECOGNITION AWARD

### **Winner - Tough Furniture Ltd and University of Wolverhampton, School of Art & Design for Tough Furniture**

Tough Furniture Limited design and manufacture a unique range of furniture for environments where many kinds of challenging behaviour can quickly degrade conventional products. Established in 1997 and employing 12 staff (before the KTP), Tough Furniture recognised that it lacked a professional design capability and that they lacked access to rapid prototyping facilities needed to shorten lead times for new product development.



The company was referred by the Manufacturing Advisory Service, West Midlands to the Business Solutions team at University of Wolverhampton who suggested that a Knowledge Transfer Partnership would be the most suitable timely and cost effective vehicle to facilitate the knowledge transfer required. The programme was granted TSB funding and ran 2009-11. The Associate is now fully employed as Design Manager by the company.

As an outcome of this Knowledge Transfer Partnership, the company now has in-house professional design capability and is delivering real benefits for society. With little investment the company has seen an 18% increase in sales turnover and profit has increased by 21.36% and is now an ambassador for the scheme and advises new companies of the benefits of engaging with higher education institutions on knowledge transfer.

Kate, the mother of an autistic child, has previously found that conventional furniture could not withstand the rigours of her son and summing up the impact of the innovation she says, "...best of all, he doesn't cry anymore".

This project has been an exemplar of knowledge transfer between a company and University with clear economic and societal benefits