

Meet the three North East firms to make list of top 100 UK innovators

Three North East businesses have made it onto a list of the top 100 new UK innovators.

Startups 100, the index of disruptive new startups, has released its 2023 list to showcase new companies which display innovation, strong finances and opportunity in their markets, as well as strong concepts and customer bases. The latest list is the 15th annual publication of emerging companies, having previously championed the likes of Revolut, Bulb, Deliveroo and Notonthehighstreet, which all went on to greater things.

Volunteering platform onHand features at number 14. The Gateshead firm – which featured in The Journal’s own ‘Ones to Watch for 2022’ – secured a £1m investment in 2021 and was also selected as a Rising Star by Tech Nation. Its app, launched in collaboration with six charities, offers businesses a way to engage and support employee wellbeing in the new world of work, primarily through arranging short volunteering sessions which can be arranged around the working day.

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It began by offering shopping, cleaning and other domestic help to those less able to get out and about during the pandemic. After helping thousands across the country, it has now expanded to cover issues including homelessness support, food poverty, youth mentoring and sustainability.

Founder Sanjay Lobo says onHand is aiming to work with companies which are “focused on responsible business and the

shift to profit with purpose”.



onHand founder Sanjay Lobo
(Image: handout from Northstar Ventures)



Simon Allocca, CFO at RareCan
(Image: RareCan)

Rarecan, based in Hexham, Northumberland, was formed three years ago and comes in at number 59. The tech startup works to help find treatments for rare cancers by allowing those with rarer forms of cancer to share their data with researchers to speed up the discovery of new diagnostics and treatments. In the last two years, the company has acquired over 1,100 registrations to the RareCan community while also securing partnerships with three cancer support groups.

Meanwhile, Dragons' Den stars Jenny McFadden and Alex McFadden of Pretty Mama make it into number 76 on the list, with their brand of stylish maternity wear.

The sister founded the brand in 2018 when Alex struggled to find feminine and comfortable clothing while she was pregnant.

The pair has partnered with a local Newcastle manufacturer which has helped to lower its carbon footprint and also have a working relationship with Northumbria University, with Jenny being a law and business graduate.

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