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Innovation

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A new machine that is invisible to the human eye could hold the key to more efficient manufacturing, says a team at the University of Manchester.

Scientists at the School of Chemistry have developed a machine just a few nanometres long – a few millionths of a millimetre – that can connect atoms together to make molecules, the building blocks of all organic substances.

The machine, which can only be seen using special instruments, is claimed to be the most advanced molecular machine of its type in the world and could be used to make new types of drugs.

It has been developed by Prof David Leigh and his team.

He said: "Such machines could ultimately lead to the process of making molecules becoming much more efficient and cost-effective. This will benefit all sorts of manufacturing areas.

"For example, we're currently modifying our machine to make drugs such as penicillin."

So far the machine is slow, but Prof Leigh says huge numbers of the machines can work alongside each other in 'factories' to increase productivity.

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