

As Group Managing Director of OSL Group Holdings, David Grey is a respected businessman in Sheffield and is currently the Master Cutler. He has also been an advocate and driving force behind BiG Challenge.



'What struck me at the beginning was that, if I entered a room of my age peers, out of 100 people, there would be five or ten entrepreneurs. If I went into a school, there would be 95 young people who had an entrepreneurial spirit and five who didn't get it. I came to the conclusion that entrepreneurialism gets knocked out of you as you go through life, as you get into mortgage, children and other responsibilities, and the risk/reward gap gets too big. So, if you're going to change anything, you have to start really early.'

'BiG Challenge gives young people confidence to have a go at things. It can be a turning point. Research work suggests that, if you knew an entrepreneur or you made money when you were a child, the chances are you'll believe that you can do the same later in life.'

'I also see a kind of Rubicon that young people cross when they realise that they are in control of their destiny. They have the ability to determine what they're going to be in the world. When you talk with young people, they accept the possibility of boundless possibilities. That's a big thing when you're 13 or 14 years old.'

'I think the smart thing to do with BiG Challenge is to look at what young people are learning and how they are learning and then apply that through lessons. If I wanted to teach someone simple maths, having engaged them on an entrepreneurial programme, I'd point out that they really need to know how much money they're making. Writing reports and putting ideas onto paper requires literacy and communication skills. I believe you can capture young people's enthusiasm for activities like this and drive learning through it.'



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'I think Sheffield benefits in two ways. Firstly, wealth creation is fundamental to any economy and to start big businesses, you have to have small businesses. And to start small businesses, you need to have micro-businesses. So, getting that process started is intrinsic to this country's big issues. Secondly, I need entrepreneurial people within my business. I want people who can spot opportunities and find ways of doing things better or more efficiently. BiG Challenge was never about people leaving school at 16 and setting up a business. It is about people – at some stage in their life – seeing an opportunity they might otherwise have missed, and taking advantage of it.'

'To get a programme like this right, you need to get buy-in from headteachers to gain school commitment; buy-in from students who see something they will enjoy; buy-in from parents who will support their children; buy-in from industry to provide the real-world experience; and buy-in from institutions such as the council, academy trust. If one of those is missing, it will fall over.'

'For programmes like BiG Challenge to become sustainable, each of the stakeholders has to put in some resource. It is like any investment decision I make for my business. It requires consistent investment to create outcomes over the next 5-10 years. We have driven the costs out of the programme over the years.'

'When you look at the numbers of students that go through BiG Challenge each year, from all sorts of backgrounds and sometimes facing particular challenges, it has to be worth investing in. When people attend the awards ceremony, they always agree that we must keep this thing going.'

