

MEMBER FEEDBACK 2006

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1. Introduction

In November 2006 current members were sent a questionnaire to ask their opinions on Social Firms UK and its communication activities. The full members' questionnaire was longer, including a section on the Members Forum. Social Firms UK then invited Social Firms that were not yet members to accept free membership for 2007 by filling in a questionnaire. Also logged here are the results of questionnaires returned by a few organisations invited to be new full members of Social Firms UK for 2007.

2. Summary Of Findings

The Website

a. All but two respondents look at the Social Firms UK website, over half at least once a month and almost nine out of ten at least once every three months. This is quite a high frequency and shows the need to keep fresh information appearing on the website.

Of the seven newly invited full members for 2007, only one had not accessed the website before. Thus far the other six had found the resources, research, Values-Based Checklist and FAQ sections most useful.

b. A wide range of areas of the website were seen as useful, but those mentioned most, in order of popularity were:

- News/articles/latest info
- Resources/downloads
- List of other members/information on other members' activities/case studies
- Events
- Members area

This shows the need to keep maintain a high quality of information appearing in these areas and to maintain the variety of the information available on the website.

c. All respondents thought the quality of information either good or satisfactory, although associate members were more likely to find it good (nine out of ten respondents) than full members (six out of ten respondents). The ease of navigation however scored lower, with only around half finding it good. This is an area to try to improve on in future.

d. There were lots of good ideas for making the site of more use to respondents. Among these are:

- some people are having trouble downloading documents. This is probably due to them using an old version of Adobe. It would be good to advise they upgrade in our next email newsletter
- more graphics/images
- easier navigation between pages
- be more proactive in providing information on what other Social Firms are doing
- categorisation of the resource centre

Members Forum

NB. Questions on the Members Forum were asked of full members only.

Only two fifths of full members use the Members Forum, and those that do just visit occasionally. Their response to its document library, discussion forum and directory is generally that it is 'quite useful.' Suggested future topics for the members include:

- the practicalities of running a Social Firm
- how far do grants mask the viability and understanding of Social Firms

Member Mailings & Bulletins

NB. Questions on member mailings and bulletins were asked of full members only.

Eight out of ten full member respondents find member mailings either very or quite useful. They generally find them informative, not too frequent and easy to access/not too long.

Resources

Again, only full members were asked what resources they'd like us to develop. These included marketing, finance and training materials, how to create a CIC, further dashboard development, a who's who in the sector, comparative studies of statutory and non-statutory Social Firms.

Communications In General

Only full members were asked their opinions of Social Firms UK's communications with them in general. Almost 95% found them either very or quite good, finding them frequent, relevant, clear, friendly, helpful etc. It was suggested that they could be improved by being more tailored to specific needs yet it was also acknowledged that this is hard to do.

About Social Firms UK

All but two associate and two full members that responded said that they had a good understanding of what Social Firms UK does.

Each member was asked to use three words to describe Social Firms UK. Out of a total of 178 words provided by 59 organisations, 95% of the words were positive and 5% were negative. The latter came from a few full members and we will give special attention to them in 2007 to see if we can improve their perception of us by the end of the year.

The most commonly used positive words by full and associate members were:

- **informative**

- **supportive**

- **helpful**

- **professional**

of which we can be proud.

The words the seven newly invited full member respondents used to describe Social Firms UK were on the whole, positive, though not surprisingly missing the personal adjectives about friendliness and enthusiasm that current members had used.

3. Current Full Members Survey Results

*This stakeholder questionnaire was sent to 44 current full members in November 2006. These results are based on **34** respondents.*

1. Social Firms UK Website

a. Have you ever visited the Social Firms UK website? (base = 34)

Yes 94% (32)

No 6% (2)

i. If yes, how often? (base used = 24)

Daily 0%

Weekly 13%

Monthly 39%

Every 2-3 months 32%

Every 4-6 months 10%
Every 7-12 months 6%

ii. Which sections have you found most useful?

- variety of comprehensive, detailed resources
- resources
- resources
- news, events, downloads
- to look at what is happening in other areas
- latest info
- case studies, 'what is a Social Firm?'
- news
- news
- news items, articles
- couldn't find what I wanted
- franchising and licensing! Like the new Q&A section on benefits
- documents available
- documents and discussion forum
- procurement opportunities
- grants advice
- events and updates
- I look at it all to keep up to date
- Partners; reading about other Social Firms
- News and events
- Policies, general information, Performance Dashboard
- Interest only
- Membership list
- General news
- Research
- All – it is very informative

b. How would you rate the site in terms of (base = 31)

i. quality of information?

Good 58%
Satisfactory 42%
Poor 0%

ii. ease of navigability? (base = 29)

Good 45%
Satisfactory 52%
Poor 3%

c. What could we do to make the site of more use to you?

- Email bulletin linked to site (more than done currently) similar to one sent 31.10.06
- have at least some accessible pages
- Apart from front page, very text-based, very dense. More photos needed, less text-based
- email out key news/developments; be proactive! Give more funding information
- more information on projects
- more short cuts
- links with similar businesses, UK and overseas; links made easier to member organisations
- very useful as it is
- very functional – needs more pictures
- jobs page updated more frequently
- a tailored internal system for each Social Firm would be useful

- provide me with a secretary, so that I have more time available to engage in broader issues – ok, so perhaps I’m deluded and just need to be better organised
- request more current articles from Social Firms – what’s happening/of interest to other Social Firms
- use ‘plain speak’

2. Members Forum

a. How often do you use the Members Forum? (base = 27)

weekly	0%
monthly	4%
occasionally	37%
never	59%

b. If you have accessed the Members Forum, how useful do you find its (base = 11)

i. Document library

very useful	1 respondent
quite useful	10 respondents
not useful	0
don’t know	0

ii. member directory?

very useful	2 respondents
quite useful	7 respondents
not useful	1 respondents
don’t know	1 respondent

iii. discussion area?

very useful	1 respondent
quite useful	6 respondent
not useful	1 respondent
don’t know	3 respondents

c. What discussion topics would you like raised for debate in the Forum in future?

- training programmes for the disabled in topics such as catering
- suitability of social enterprises
- practical aspects of social enterprise
- no time for debate, too busy running a Social Firm
- to what extent do ‘grants’ mask the viability and understanding of Social Firms?

3. Member Mailings & Bulletins

a. How do you rate the bulletins/mailings that we email to you? (base = 26)

very useful	27%
quite useful	54%
not useful	11%
don’t know	8%

b. What do you like about them?

- regular contact re-affirms the support that’s available if needed
- easier than going to website
- relevant/informative
- keep us in touch with others
- informative
- keep me up to date with the latest information

- news updates and funding information
- ease of access, informative
- keeps one up to date
- up to date and informative
- clear presentation and content
- keeps us informed
- information on grants and funders
- informative and succinct
- current and new ideas
- interesting to see how others are developing
- pertinent and to the point
- enthusiastic
- can't think of much – maybe a funding opportunity
- nothing
- informative, local news
- useful in keeping us up to date
- being alerted to relevant and useful information

c. What do you dislike about them?

- usually content heavy – gets demoted to “I’ll read that later” pile which invariably doesn’t happen
- not enough info
- very dry and boring looking which puts me off reading
- not always relevant to us and sometimes links don’t work
- nothing
- nothing
- no time to read mailings
- nothing
- can be too long
- being asked to fill in questionnaires

d. What types of tools or resources would you find it useful for Social Firms UK to develop?

- specialist business advisors in variety of fields
- marketing and training materials
- how to create a CIC
- finance issues for social enterprise
- contact booklet
- further develop dashboard and set out markers to measure progress of a Social Firm
- who’s who in the world of social enterprise
- comparative studies of non-statutory and statutory Social Firms
- more help around procurement
- I – I help
- opportunities for inter-trading between Social Firms
- grants available in N. Ireland
- marketing remains the biggest single factor holding back our development as a Social Firm

4. Overall...

**a. How would you rate Social Firms UK’s communication with your organisation?
(base = 28)**

very good	36%
quite good	57%
poor	7%

b. What do you like about our communication with your organisation?

- regular/informative

- keep us in touch with the rest of the UK
- email is convenient and accessible
- pitches at the right level
- better than nothing
- friendly, open, helpful
- well informed and useful
- clear and concise
- regularly keeps us informed/up to date
- frequent and relevant
- regular, not too much information
- clear and useful, especially stuff about legislation
- well-intentioned
- incentives like saving £120 always a good thing
- not much: it's not very relevant to us as a Scottish Co-operative which isn't a 'standard' Social Firm
- It's regular, but not too much
- regular enough to be interesting, and not so often you dismiss it
- lots of it!
- quarterly newsletter
- it is regular
- it can easily be deleted if not relevant

c. How could it be improved?

- it is very good
- it is a very competitive market at this moment and there is a need to keep ahead of the game
- could try and link similar organisations together
- more funky
- by being more specific to each organisation's needs and capabilities
- more telephone contact
- not sure, it's good
- difficult to say as firms are so different in their approach and product
- I don't have any expectations given our uniqueness
- made more accessible

d. What three words would you use to describe Social Firms UK?

Professional Knowledgeable Supportive & successful	Effective Quality Small team punching above their weight	Developing, evolving & reactive (at the moment) & Inclusive, informative, innovative
Resource Information Network	National Supportive Sector representatives	Informative Helpful Available
Boring Worthy Black and white, not colourful	Friendly, open, helpful & Committed, trustworthy, helpful	Current Useful Informative
Support Businesslike Approachable	Supportive Enthusiastic Informative Professional	Engaging, networking, relevant & Supporting, organisations, developing the social economy
Beneficial Informative/information-base	Supportive, informative, sharing	Professional Smart

Useful	& Support, ideas, real	Thoughtful
Informative Valuable Focused	Enthusiastic Knowledgeable Detached	Essential for the sector Worth belonging to Friendly staff
Irrelevant Well-intentioned	Informative Supportive Easy to access	Enterprise Informative Approachable
Distant Not relevant Not relevant	Enterprise Employment Empowerment	Professional Knowledgeable Effective
Supportive Dynamic Informative	Professional Informative Money-saver	Isolated Collective Informative
Informative Experts Helpful	Helpful Informative Clear	Informative Supporting Networks

e. How far would you agree with the statement “I have a good understanding of what Social Firms UK does”?

Eleven of the thirteen organisations felt they have a good understanding of what Social Firms UK does; one felt it did not, one was not sure.

4. Newly Invited Full Member Survey Results

This questionnaire was sent to sixty non-member Social Firms/Emerging Social Firms invited in November 2006 to become members of Social Firms UK for free in 2007. Seven responses were received.

1. Website

a. Have you ever visited the Social Firms UK website? (base = 7)

Yes 6
No 1

i. If yes, how often? (base used = 5)

Daily 0
Weekly 0
Monthly 2
Every 2-3 months 3
Every 4-6 months 1
Every 7-12 months 0

b. How would you rate the site in terms of (base = 5)

i. quality of information?

Good 4
Satisfactory 1
Poor

ii. ease of navigability?

Good 2
Satisfactory 3
Poor

c. Which sections have you found most useful?

- Would like access to Benefits Agony
- Resources
- Resources and research
- What is a Social Firm?; Values-based checklist

d. What could we do to make the site of more use to you?

- Benefits Agony will be very useful
- A list of organisations that offer financial support to emerging/Social Firms

2. About Social Firms UK

i. How far would you agree with the statement:

“I have a good understanding of what Social Firms UK does”

Four organisations felt that they had a good understanding of what Social Firms UK does, one felt it did not, one was unsure.

ii. What three words would you use to describe Social Firms UK?

Employment Opportunities Disability	Network Lobbying Resources	Influential Regional Listening
Useful Informative Helpful	Enterprise Employment Empowerment	Arcane Distant Peripheral
Supportive Helpful Necessary		

5. Current Associate Member Survey Results

This questionnaire was sent to current associate members in November 2006. There were 32 responses.

1. Website

a. Have you ever visited the Social Firms UK website? (base = 33)

Yes 32
No 1

i. If yes, how often? (base used = 32)

Daily	0	0%
Weekly	6	19%
Monthly	13	41%
Every 2-3 months	8	25%
Every 4-6 months	2	6%
Every 7-12 months	1	3%

b. How would you rate the site in terms of (base = 32)

i. quality of information?

Good	29	91%
Satisfactory	3	9%
Poor	0	

ii. ease of navigability?

Good	16	50%
Satisfactory	14	44%
Poor	2	6%

ii. Which sections have you found most useful?

- Project information
- All
- Resources and contact details
- Resources and news
- News, events, case studies, forum
- The Members Area
- Resources Database of other members
- Downloads, resources & reports
- Case studies, news, reports and background information
- Case studies
- Events, downloads, resources
- All useful, depending on needs
- News
- Downloads, news
- News, replications, member forum, resources

c. What could we do to make the site of more use to you?

- Better searching of members, by product/activity maybe
- If the resource section were categorised
- I think it's pretty good really – we are not a Social Firm but I think you have a good understanding of the sector's needs and are always trying to improve the offer
- More details of members' activities – e.g. short case studies and profiles
- It is currently fit for use
- I can't always download some of the articles and pdfs, but that is probably more a reflection of the quality of my equipment, than of the site itself!
- Headline news on home page
- The sheer volume of information makes it hard to recall where a particular link resided
- Can I change my password to something more memorable – and username if poss?
- Up to date news items
- Better search facility under resources rather than just long lists

2. About Social Firms UK

i. How far would you agree with the statement:

“I have a good understanding of what Social Firms UK does”

All respondents felt that they had a good understanding of what Social Firms UK does apart from one that said it did not and one that was unsure.

ii. What three words would you use to describe Social Firms UK?

Informative Helpful	Interesting Supportive Sharing	Pioneering Imaginative Commendable
Efficient Professional Helpful	Support Innovative Accessible	Enterprise
Informed Proactive Friendly Helpful too!!	Member-led Up to date Dynamic	Important Thoughtful Representative
Supportive Informative Helpful	Paid Employment Disabilities	Informative Useful Clear
Support Information Representation	Enabling Professional Approachable	Useful
Dedicated Enthusiastic Focused	Professional Creative Consistent	Informative Inclusive Representative
Good Useful Necessary	Professional Inspirational Useful	Central Support Organisation
Professional Plugged-in Helpful	Beneficial Helpful Open-minded	Helpful Driven Enterprising
Supportive Informative Helpful	Employment Empowerment Enterprise	Focused Independent Important
Enable Employment Enterprise	Relevant Inclusive Progressive	

6. Feedback On Reasons For Not Renewing

- Council cutbacks on taking out subscriptions
- charity closed
- finances are too tight
- new manager is reviewing all subscription activity
- budget constraints