



Cass Business School
CITY UNIVERSITY LONDON



ALDGATE & ALLHALLOWS BARKING EXHIBITION FOUNDATION

**EXPLORING THE OFFER AND PROGRESS OF THE SCHOOLS FUNDING NETWORK:
A PRELIMINARY REVIEW**

Funded by the Aldgate and Allhallows Barking Exhibition Foundation

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March 2013

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Executive summary

Background to the SFN and this preliminary review

1. The Schools Funding Network (SFN) is an ambitious social initiative, offering focused opportunities for schools to seek and access donor funding or other resourcing for the range of projects and activities they undertake. Using a dedicated website to attract donors and to demonstrate the kinds of resources needed, where philanthropic partners can play a key part, the SFN seeks to fulfil two core roles, brokerage between schools needs' and donors' responses, and developmental, to support schools' fundraising.

2. The aim of this review is to report stakeholders' perceptions and expectations of the SFN's pilot phase, and from this to help develop a basis for an evaluation framework for the SFN programme.

- Reflections and recommendations: how is this offer progressing, what has been done and what remains to be done
- Towards an evaluation of the SFN- how this could be approached

The nature, aims and development of the Schools Funding Network

3. Operating primarily via its web-based portal, SFN demonstrates its purposes as sustaining a continuing engagement between schools and donors, which will leverage in new donations of money, items and skills, and create important bonds between givers and receivers. Its aims are wide-ranging and look to the long term: *'Schools Funding Network works to give every pupil the opportunities to succeed by raising fundraising standards in schools, reducing the barriers that exist between educational stakeholders and bringing more money, products, services and volunteers into schools.'*

4. SFN grew from two kinds of entrepreneurship. The concept came from the then head of the fundraising division of the former Specialist Schools and Academies Trust, and now current CEO; Seedcorn resources, required for recognising and incubating the growth of the initiative came from the Sir John Cass's Foundation (providing £99,000) and Aldgate and Allhallows Barking Exhibition Foundation (providing £45,000). Beginning in 2012, SFN is a private limited company, with two directors, and with developments on - going currently concerning charitable status. The London Borough of Tower Hamlets is its 'pilot' or phase one site. Expansion to further local authorities is understood to be underway; and a wider launch of SFN will take place at the House of Lords on 5th June 2013.

The Review methodology

5. Working within a six week time frame from January until the end of February 2013, the review used multiple methods involving; desk research ,electronic surveys sent to participating schools, follow-up telephone interviews with participating schools' representatives, telephone interviews with all 3 of the supporting organisations shown as 'major donors' on the SFN website, telephone interviews with 3 prospective major donors, as nominated by SFN's CEO, face-to-face interviews with SFN's CEO, Nick Ryan, supplemented by documentary material from subsequent email exchanges and informal and formal telephone interviews with Richard Foley, CEO Allhallows, the start-up seedcorn funders.

6. Limitations of the fieldwork methodology, in particular the very limited school response to the electronic survey request, are discussed. Whilst the review did not provide resources for a major underpinning literature review, some key literatures around e-philanthropy, website design for nonprofits, fundraising issues and wider challenges for schools, were identified.

The Review findings from SFN's contributors and stakeholders – staff, users, individual and corporate donors and would-be donors, and funders

Schools

7. Responding schools found the SFN platform as a good medium for generally raising the school's profile in its community and displaying school projects requiring funding. Positive views were expressed about the SFN portal's potential especially for raising money, although it was "too early" to reach a view as to what kinds of results might be achieved in this (Tower Hamlets) locality.

8. Brokered donor services offers were in principle liked, but the current ones were of limited interest. Schools would welcome a wider choice of services offered (e.g. IT materials and training, legal advice, speech therapy, accounting software, hard copy books and playground equipment).

9. Challenge funding from donors was much liked and valued; and there was a clear appetite for more of these opportunities.

10. The Fundraising Guide was well received. Whilst the Gift Aid guide was seen as 'useful,' there appears to be an ongoing problem with its content since it seems that local authority supported schools will be unable to secure the exempt charitable status required to directly access Gift Aid. One responding school had already experienced the rejection of its application for registration as an exempt charity.

The ‘major donor service providers’

11. The three existing “major donors” expressed disappointment regarding extent of take up of their services offers. Their suggestions and reflections follow.

- SFN needs a higher profile to attract more donors and strengthen its offer
- The lack of success stories on the website will inhibit its development, especially since schools tend to be risk averse
- There is a need for testimonials from schools that have used SFN, which can then be used to encourage further donors to join
- More resources need to be committed to better engaging schools with the site and the donors
- More information is needed about how the site works and how schools are being encouraged to go online, and about how the SFN is being promoted to schools and how they access it subsequently
- It is not possible for service providers to see which schools are looking at their offers and thus who is interested and no feedback from SFN about interest (regarding donors’ services offers) among schools
- Service providers need regular briefing from SFN re progress – none to date

Prospective donors

12. It was surprising that only one of the three prospective donors identified for interview had a strong expectation of becoming involved and then possibly only in the area of challenge funding. The prospective donor with a potential interest suggested that SFN could positively encourage schools to develop new projects and challenges, on the basis of projects that are already known to work elsewhere, getting parents more involved, improving IT capacity in schools, providing additional opportunities for children to ‘catch up’ and addressing children’s needs beyond the schools into the wider community.

Reviewers’ reflections on findings

13. Areas for reflection were identified, and are set out below.

- There is considerable promise but much uncertainty about the role of the SFN portal to date as a route for schools to access cash, in kind support and volunteers
- The role of media partners is emphasised but evidence of progress is lacking. Questions are posed about major donors’ brokered services and individual donors ‘ needs
- Challenges from donors are welcomed but not overwhelming in take-up
- Tax-efficient giving: problem with the proposed methodology for accessing Gift Aid

- Concerns about impact of SFN's work to extend the scheme elsewhere on the full development of Tower Hamlets pilot
- Evidence of success in driving potential donors/supporters to the site: a 'Network' for whom?

Interim Recommendations

1. The Network's development and growth versus its consolidation in the 'pilot'
2. Improving relations and communications with participating schools, including increasing intelligence and feedback
3. The need for marketing and driving people to the SFN website
4. The potential for a web site review
5. Assessment of the current role of brokered services
6. Assessment of the future and further development of challenge funding
7. Action regarding flawed Gift Aid strategy
8. Costing issues in the case of SFN expansion beyond Tower Hamlets.

What has been achieved and what remains to be done

14. Achievements identified include the success in establishing SFN's web presence, the potential for schools to access new funding sources such as challenge funding, and the general raising of awareness of schools' funding needs in competitive resourcing environments.

15. A number of areas remaining to be addressed include decisions about priorities as between full learning from the pilot phase and expansion into new areas, with a critical examination of expansion plans (with the implications for information and intelligence on the schools' currently involved website review'), the importance of donor cultivation if the promise of new donor access is to be achieved, action on areas that affect reputation (such as Gift Aid confusions), and the re-examination of 'the Network for whom' question, before moving to full evaluation.

Introduction

The nature, aims and development of the Schools Funding Network

16. The Schools Funding Network is an ambitious social initiative, offering focused opportunities for schools to seek and access donor funding or other resourcing for the range of projects and activities they undertake. Using a dedicated website to attract donors, and to demonstrate the kinds of schools' resources needs where philanthropic partners can play key parts, the SFN seeks two core roles. Firstly, a brokerage role, where schools' and donors' interests align; and would-be donors are accessed and attracted to the personalised form of giving to a particular school or schools. Secondly, a developmental role for schools' fundraising, as participating schools accumulate learning from their experiences in attracting donor funding through the website and from associated support mechanisms.

17. Operating primarily via its web-based portal, SFN demonstrates its purposes on the web as sustaining a continuing engagement between schools and donors, which will leverage in new donations of money, items and skills, and create important bonds between givers and receivers. As such, it seeks to extend to the state schools' education sector the resourcing opportunities which growing interactions and targeted fundraising between alumni and their 'home' institutions has produced in the higher education sector.

18. SFN's expressed aims are nevertheless wide-ranging, with a functionalist view of fundraising in schools, as a means rather than an end in itself. Its aims are presented on its website in the following terms: "*Schools Funding Network works to give every pupil the opportunities to succeed by:*

- *Raising fundraising standards in schools*
- *Reducing the barriers that exist between educational stakeholders*
- *Bringing more money, products, services and volunteers into schools"*

19. Elsewhere on the SNF website, the aims are expressed, slightly differently, as follows: "*Schools Funding Network helps every pupil succeed by raising fundraising expertise in schools, removing barriers to giving, and raising funds and support for schools.*"

20. In both cases, these aims, all underpinned by important assumptions, indicate the degree of complexity and the extent of the educational 'long game' and challenge in which SFN is engaged.

21. SFN's initial development grew from the conjunction of two kinds of entrepreneurship. The first, the SFN concept and idea, came from the then head of the fundraising division of the former Specialist Schools and Academies Trust, Nick Ryan, keen and able to draw on his contacts and expertise for the creation of this distinct kind of organisation. The second, in the form of organisation seedcorn resources, recognising the initiative in this idea and incubating its growth came from the Aldgate and Allhallows Barking Exhibition Foundation (hereafter, the Allhallows Foundation), providing £45,000 and Sir John Cass's Foundation, providing £99,000. The vital role of these foundations was encouraged by the advocacy and foresight of Richard Foley, Allhallows CEO and Deputy Clerk to the Sir John Cass Foundation.

22. Beginning in 2012, SFN is constituted as a private limited company, with two directors, Nick Ryan and Meg Ryan, and Nick Ryan as its CEO; with developments going on currently concerning charitable status.

23. Its initial site for operation is the inner London Borough of Tower Hamlets. Here, an integral aspect of the funders' 'seedcorn' approach, is the offer of £500 'matched funding' to 24 schools in this borough for any project of their choice, the schools' own funding to be raised within a three month period. The Tower Hamlets site is described as SFN's pilot site and phase one. However, the expansion to operations to other London borough and beyond, to selected English counties is already understood to be underway. A wider launch of SFN will take place at the House of Lords on 5th June 2013.

The brief for this Review

24. The aim of this review is to report stakeholders' perceptions and expectations of the SFN's pilot phase, and from this to help develop a basis for an evaluation framework for the full SFN programme.

25. An invitation from SFN and its foundation funders to undertake an evaluation of SFN to date gave us an opportunity to explore ways in which an external overview could best support SFN's progress. With overarching aims, as discussed above, emphasising the long term and making important assumptions (for example linkage between pupil success and school fundraising growth), questions of attribution in any formal evaluation at this stage could appear problematic. Without discounting the value of prior knowledge and experience from SFN's inventor of the prior state of schools fundraising, whether in terms of its 'standards' or its 'expertise', there was no base line data on these key aspects, held or used by SFN, against which a formal evaluation could assess SFN's progress. Finally, there was as yet no prior development of a framework for assessing SFN's achievements, in the sense of breaking down the aims into

objectives, with sought-after outputs and outcomes, against which progress could be then assessed and reported on.

26. What there was in place were the key elements of the SFN service, or offer: its website to promote, enable and empower schools' fundraising, its activities to draw in donors, and its specific match-funding offers from its supporting Foundations and its further schools' support availability. There was also interest being expressed beyond Tower Hamlets, as its CEO undertook outreach with other potential local authority sites for SFN, for example in the (outer) London Borough of Redbridge. Together, these were clearly central to the impetus in getting SFN working, as an entrepreneurial exercise and moving forward. It was agreed therefore that we should instead:

- undertake a review of the externally facing (i.e. public) key elements of the SFN as constituted in December 2012
- report selected stakeholders' perceptions and expectations of these key elements comprising the SFN offer
- and so help identify an evaluation framework for the SFN, its concept and achievements, going forward

The Review methodology

27. With the agreement of SFN, we identified the SFN's key elements as the website and fundraising platform for participating schools and donors; the 'opening offer' of matched – funding support to schools and subsequent attraction of further donors (the brokerage aspects of the work), and the availability and growth of additional resources and complementary support services for schools, in the form of fundraising guides and professional fundraising support (the developmental aspects of the work).

28. Five stakeholder clusters were identified: users in the schools, participating or targeted for participation (head teachers, school business managers), individual and corporate (business) donors to SFN; donors being sought for SFN; SFN staff (its CEO), and the SFN start-up seedcorn funders.

29. Our review questions sought to build a picture of stakeholders' experiences and perceptions of the SFN offer, as they gained from or contributed to it, their expectations of its work and views on its further development and progress.

In particular, we were interested in:

- The processes and practices associated with the site's organisation and operation- how/whether it works and for whom, how it has been marketed and with what results
- The initial responsiveness to the match funding model - funders' expectations, how schools have responded and why
- The relative importance of the additional resources and 'support' for the programme - are these integral or additional
- How a full evaluation framework might be developed and shared between stakeholders, which concentrates on building schools fundraising *capacity* (or schools' resource needs) rather than their 'standards'

30. Working within a six week time frame from January until the end of February 2013, the review used multiple methods, involving:

- *Desk research*, considering documentation and the on-line material provided by SFN, setting out what SFN offers to schools and local authorities and how the link between school and donor works; in addition to the website data, this included documentation prepared for SFN's ongoing outreach contacts with potential new local authority areas
- *Electronic surveys*, of all (24) participating schools in the SFN and of 24 schools which had not joined the Network; with anonymity offered for reporting purposes
- *Follow-up telephone interviews with participating schools' representatives, replying to the survey*
- *Telephone interviews with all 3 of the supporting organisations, shown as 'major donors' on the SFN website:* The Buying Support Agency, Rising Stars and Little Bridge
- *Telephone interviews with 3 prospective major donors, as nominated by SFN's CEO:* Lloyds TSB plc, The Education Endowment Fund and the Rachel Charitable Trust
- *Face-to-face interviews with SFN's CEO, Nick Ryan, supplemented by documentary material from subsequent email exchanges*
- *Telephone interview with the representative of the start-up seedcorn funders, the Aldgate and Allhallows Foundation and Sir John Cass's Foundation, Richard Foley, Allhallows CEO and Deputy Clerk to the Sir John Cass's Foundation.*

The Literature Review

31. Constraints of resources for this review precluded an accompanying or framing consideration of academic or grey literature. However, we recognised the importance, in any study going forward, of the growing work on “E-philanthropy” which the SFN exemplifies. This includes that relating to web use for fundraising and donor relationship development (e.g. Olsen et al, 2001, Hoeffler, 2012), for wider communications purposes (e.g. Waters, 2007) and relationship building (e.g. Ingenhoff and Koelling, 2009), and for dialogic purposes (e.g. Ingenhoff and Koelling, 2010); also in relation to donor behaviour, such as impulsive giving during charity web browsing (Bennett, 2009). Practice-based literature has also considered the related development of “E-commerce and fundraising through on-line shopping” for US schools (e.g. Gressel, 2000). From the education policy perspective, the challenges and contradictions surrounding new resources generation are set out. For example, Worth (2002, 4) argues that

“Fundraising is but one aspect of a complex process, involving the institution, its hopes and goals and the aspirations of its benefactors. Fundraising is episodic; development is continuous. Fundraising is focused on a particular objective or set of goals; development is a generic and long-term commitment to the financial and physical growth of the institution.”

32. Given the centrality of SFN’s website, we were also aware of the important professional and practice literature that explores and evaluates charities and voluntary organisations’ website, from fundraising roles to user support. Here the case study research on websites funded by the Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund, in charities working with young people, remains important (Ciber, 2003).

33. Moreover however, the demands on head teachers concerning pro-active responsiveness to their environments continue to grow. The Department for Education Research Report on extended services in schools, and head teachers’ perspectives, for example, emphasises the importance of heads’ flexibility towards and accessing a range of funding streams, whilst also noting that “school partners cannot be commanded (DFE, 2011, np.).

34. This suggests that any future work might usefully incorporate some review of the policy-education practice literatures, where this relates to the changing funding environments and expectations which schools are facing and the multiple pressures on school head teachers and leaders in particular.

Limitations

35. The time given to us in interviews, by telephone and face-to-face respondents, was valuable; as was the access to SFN's documentation. However, as the schools' needs are the central purpose of SNF, we hoped to begin to build up a sound picture of the schools' experiences to date and the nature and extent of their expectations of SFN. We devised a very brief electronic (rather than on-line) survey which concentrated only on the core offer (website, donor access, matched funding and complementary fundraising support) (See Appendix). Using SFN's Schools' database, this was circulated from a Cass email address following an email from the CEO alerting schools to the fact that they would be approached as part of a review of SFN. In sending out the surveys we discovered that there were limitations with the Schools' database, since it was composed of predominantly generic email addresses rather than specific named contacts for the schools this may have been a factor in the very limited response, noted below.

36. The alert to schools in the SFN membership about the Review from the CEO was included as one of the items in a 'fundraising tips' newsletter. This was less than satisfactory and a discrete invitation to participate would have been preferred. The CEO was unable to send an email reminder to complete the survey and in the event only 4 schools replied. From these 3 were asked for interviews and 2 acceded. Whilst useful telephone interviews were conducted, this makes the picture gained from this small number very small indeed. Similarly, if not unsurprisingly, the survey to 24 non-participating schools in Tower Hamlets (the number intended to match those within the Network) received a negligible response. It was only possible to personalise email invitations to those schools which, according to SFN records, were about to 'opt in', but had not actually signed up. Again, this represents a marked gap in our user knowledge; as well as being a demonstration of the time pressures facing schools.

Findings: The Nature and Form of the SFN Offer

The Schools Funding Network Website

37. The SFN offer is encapsulated through its website (www.sfn.org) through which
- schools can seek donors and support for their projects (such as play facility development, music or sports activities)
 - brokered relationships between donors, providing funds or services and schools can be established and
 - where opportunities for challenges from donors, offering matched funding or resources to schools for projects and initiatives are publicised or projected. The site emphasises its credentials expertise and purpose:

“Schools Funding Network (SFN) has been developed by a team of leading professional fundraisers. Designed specifically for the needs of schools, the service enables educational establishments to fundraise for any project, large or small, and interact with major donors, charitable trusts, foundations, parents and other potential funders; aspects such as automated Gift Aid, crowd-funding and donor stewardship have all been incorporated.”

38. The website offers a personalised style, directed towards the donor (rather than to the schools) from the beginning. Thus the home page addresses the donor as “you”, (in the sense of “you can offer anything that might be of interest to a school...”). The site’s “how it works” section explains that SFN works in three ways to connect schools and “individual and major donors”. Schools may publicise activities and projects, or skills needs which they are seeking, on the site, and manage and receive donations directly, with the opportunity to show how well their funding targets are progressing. The participating schools are currently confined to those in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets although extension to the London Borough of Redbridge was under active consideration at the time of the review.

39. “Major Donors” may provide funding, both through donations and through challenge funding arrangements; major donors being defined as those giving money, skills or items worth more than £2000. A separate link provides an ‘application form’ to SFN for major donor status. The role of the potential individual but ‘non major’ donor is not similarly highlighted, although the link to the directory of participating schools and their requests is the basis for individual donation to take place.

40. Participating schools present their project needs in very brief descriptive vignettes, and where they have registered for the £500 matched funding challenge, their entries demonstrate

the extent of their progress, using the classic fundraising “thermometer”. Although SFN includes an emphasis on the importance of schools’ accessing Gift Aid, the individual school entries on the website do not indicate whether the school or an associated part has charity registration and is thus eligible for Gift Aid. Moreover, SFN is also dependent on each individual school’s ability to maintain its entries and fundraising results regularly, so that casual or motivated viewers can have as accurate a picture as possible.

41. Finally, the logos of what are described loosely as ‘supporters’, appear on the website: those of Allhallows and Cass Foundations, the ‘Guardian Teaching Network’ and ‘BESA’.

42. Further insight on SFN’s perspective on and understanding of the website role was gained from the documentation provided by SFN in January 2013) to the London Borough of Redbridge in its plans to extend its work.

43. This material showed that SFN sees its website as “*a sophisticated fundraising platform specifically designed for schools*”, going point out that “*by adopting the platform for all its schools, the local authority would immediately provide visibility and access to all schools*”. The Redbridge documents also emphasised that since the platform allows schools to request money, in kind support or time/volunteering, and donors to offer them, “*not only does this create a high degree of flexibility, it also allows donor-beneficiary relationships to develop*”. SFN is also keen to emphasise the opportunity that its website gives to activate different forms of challenge funding, as a means of combining funders’ efforts and thereby raising more funds for schools which could take various forms such as:

“A funder seeing a project it likes and offering funding subject to the school meeting a challenge to raise a certain amount of money itself.

A funder setting its own challenge(s) and inviting schools to raise money to meet the challenge and access their funds.”

44. Thus the website enables a would-be donor (of any ‘size’) to see ‘at a glance’ what participating schools are seeking, and in the case of the matched challenge funding, how their own fundraising efforts have been faring. This accords with the important consumer-style approach to seeking donations, as would-be donors “shop” for giving opportunities. As such, this follows the general approach of nonprofit (i.e. noncommercial) websites to link up schools and donors which are well established in the United States, although with some significant variations. (For example, <http://www.donorschoose.org/> with its strapline, “teachers ask, you choose” – “see what great teachers need for their students”)

45. As the show-case and 'shop window' for the SFN, the website is its most critical feature. No data was available however on the number of website 'hits', nor were there any reported efforts from within SFN to drive 'business' to the site. On 4 March 2013, a website view showed that 19 projects had been uploaded by 18 schools, of which X1 reported £80,025 raised (although school confirmed this as a local authority contribution), whilst X18 reported no funds raised. 11 of the 24 schools involved in challenge funding reported results: 5 schools have reached or exceed target, 2 schools have raised £400 and over and 4 schools have raised less than £50.

Supporting fundraising materials

46. The two supporting guides for schools, in the form of PDF documents are both documents on which important effort has been expended within SNF, in order to ensure an underpinning on fundraising from each participating school; although these schools will inevitably vary in their prior approach to and success in fundraising. They are available to all participating schools, but are not downloadable from the website.

47. The first guide is described by SFN as *"A 50-page fundraising guide which shows schools where to find support, how to request it, and how to follow up once support has already been given"*. It gives a valuable fundraising overview, although it is not a wholly unique source or service (see for example, web material on fundraising from PTA-UK, <http://pta.org.uk/pta-fundraising>)

48. The second guide sets out to present *"An easy step-by-step guide to Gift Aid, showing schools the benefits of this tax rebate and how exactly to sign up"*. This explains that schools should be able to access following registration with the Charity Commission as an exempt charity and asserts that *"[t]he platform automates take-up of this rebate, potentially saving millions of pounds of lost income"*. The situation of individual schools will however vary considerably. The opening line for this guide, *"as a school or academy, you are almost certain to be accepted for Gift Aid"* can seriously mislead and, critically, disappoint since it appears that schools which are neither academies nor foundation or voluntary schools will not qualify as exempt charities. The authoritative style of the guide masks considerable complexities, not least that registration as a charity is the core step to Gift Aid eligibility, and is a precursor to HMRC registration. SFN's CEO has acknowledged the need to amend the guide in important respects, notably in relation to those "local authority schools without a PTA", but nevertheless this Guide appears more an internal work in progress' and due caution on its advice needs to be stressed.

Professional Fundraising Support

49. When this review began, a further underpinning support service for schools, which was likely to be highly attractive, was that offering specialist fundraising support and advice from SFN experts. This was only briefly described in SFN documentation and “pitch” to the London Borough of Redbridge,. It was indicated to schools that this would be very valuable, since the annual cost of even a single fundraiser was estimated at £75,000.. Although this would therefore be an attractive and distinctive ‘add on’ to the website and guides access, this proposal has now been withdrawn from SFN’s current and future offer.

The Business Plan

50. At the end of our fieldwork period, we learned of the existence of a formal business plan for SFN which had been written prior to its inception. We subsequently had access to this Plan and understand that it was independently reviewed on the funders’ behalf. Since the parameters for this review focused on the SFN’s public offer, as it is currently being delivered and because of resource constraints, we have not undertaken any direct comparisons between Business Plan proposals and projections and the delivery undertaken to date. In a further formal evaluation, it may be appropriate to do so, particularly in the areas of proposed partners, size and nature of SFN staffing, projected fundraising levels for schools and potential funding sources, but also against the extent of financial resources attracted by SFN to achieve its goals.

Findings

Perceptions of the SFN Offer and Progress with its Delivery

The participating schools in Tower Hamlets

51. An important part of the Review involved canvassing perceptions of the SFN offer and trying to ascertain how much progress had been made in its delivery. As discussed in the methodology and limitation sections above, the expectation from SFN, and thus the reviewers, that electronic surveys would be an appropriate way of contacting participating schools to gauge a range of opinions, was not fulfilled. Of the 24 school participants contacted, only 3 schools returned their surveys. Of these, 1 respondent was a school head, and 2 were business managers, one relating to a school that was very favourable to SFN, another less so. The third invitee declined. To improve matters we turned to the business manager of a schools' partnership of 9 schools, of which 6 were SFN participants at the time. Two of the business managers agreed to follow up interviews, one relating to a school that was very favourable to SFN, another less so. The third invitee declined.

52. These three schools and one partnership of nine schools are not identified in this review. Such small numbers of course make for wariness in drawing detailed conclusions and inevitably non-response among SFN participating schools is hard itself to gauge, ranging from possible satisfaction to uncertainty. Nevertheless, from this very limited outline survey and interview data, a positive view of SFN, as much in its potential as in its actual role, was conveyed. Nor were these schools necessarily reflecting those which might be deemed 'already strong' in fundraising, and thus most likely to link to a further source; for example, there were major contrasts in the challenge matched funding scheme experience, with one already exceeding its £500 target, and another having only raised £10 to date.

In summary:

- The SFN platform was regarded as good as a medium for generally raising the school's profile in its community and also for displaying school projects requiring funding. All schools had found it easy to set up, and to use subsequently.
- Positive views were expressed about the SFN portal's potential especially for raising money, although it was "too early" to reach a view as to what kinds of results might be achieved in this locality.
- Whilst the offer of brokered donor services (materials, in kind support) was in principle liked and considered valuable, the current services on offer were seen to be of limited interest. Schools would welcome a wider choice of services offers and identified the

following, as potential examples - IT materials and training, legal advice, speech therapy, accounting software, hard copy books and playground equipment.

- The offer of challenge funding from donors was much liked and valued and there was a clear appetite for more of these opportunities.
- Of the fundraising guides, the fundraising guide was well received and liked. Whilst the Gift Aid guide was seen as useful, there were problems identified 'for state schools securing Gift Aid' and one of the responding schools had experienced the rejection of its application for registration as an exempt charity.

The non-participating schools in Tower Hamlets

53. As noted above, there was a negligible response here to the outline survey and its linked interview request, and 'cold calling' was deemed inappropriate. This leaves open the critical question of hard to reach schools, which arguably might be particularly the kinds of schools in funding isolation, which the SFN concept sought to change. The single reply from one such school, from its executive head, was a matter of concern, since he "had not been aware of the initiative and therefore couldn't provide any comments" and since because the request itself could appear to place yet more pressure on over-stretched head teachers.

The Existing Major Donor Service Providers

54. Interviews were conducted with each of the three 'major donors', as described by SFN, currently offering services on the SFN platform. These are organisations and businesses, with offers on a preferential basis, negotiated by SFN. All organisations were interviewed, as follows:

- **Buying Support Agency** (Matthew Roper, Director) Offering free membership of the BSA buying Group (worth £495) which provides discounted deals on products such as office supplies, catering, furniture and insurance.
- **Little Bridge** (Roz Young, Head of Marketing) Offering 100 free licences to each school (worth £15 per licence) to their software package for young learners of English.
- **Rising Star** (Andrea Carr, CEO) Offering 10 free eBook licences (worth £15 per book) to schools in the network.

55. All were asked about take-up to date and about their views in relation to the strengths, weaknesses and opportunities of Schools Funding Network. All three donors felt that the SFN platform was a good idea and was one which also provided them with opportunities to engage

with schools. However, there was a degree of disappointment regarding the extent of take-up of their offers. BSA reported that two schools had approached them, but there had been no further contact. Rising Star reported 6 or 7 schools having taken up the offer, but having then had no feedback. Little Bridge reported no take up, but seemed not to have made it clear on the website that there were free licences available

56. The ways in which SFN could be made “more attractive to donors offering services” produced a range of points, ranging from website content to interactions between the key parties. These were:

- SFN itself needs a higher profile to attract more donors and strengthen its offer.
- The lack of success stories on the website will inhibit its development, especially since schools tend to be risk averse
- There is a need for testimonials from schools that have used SFN, which can then be used to encourage further donors to join
- More resources need to be committed to better engaging schools with the site and the donors.
- More information is needed about how the site works and how schools are being encouraged to go online
- Also about how the SFN is being promoted to schools and how they access it subsequently.
- It is not possible to see which schools are looking at their (ie the donor-service-provider) offer and thus who is interested
- There is no feedback from SFN about interest (regarding donors’ services offers) among schools
- Need regular briefing from SFN re progress – none to date
- It is not possible to approach schools that have shown an interest because they (donors’ offering services) don’t know who they are.
- Donors need opportunities to be able to get in front of schools
- SFN should enable donors to contact schools directly (by Email) and promote their service/product but this would require a contact list for schools which is not available
- SFN should allow donors to display the fact they are involved with SFN and to use their logo on their (donors’) material

57. In terms of strengthening and developing SFN, further points were made, notably:

- SFN needs to better understand the “market” with which it’s trying to engage
- The SFN “brand” needs to be developed, managed and built up

- The SFN's credibility with testimonials from participating schools
- Back-up marketing is needed to drive people to the site.
- There is a need to tap into the networks that already exist among schools within a local authority (e.g. the finance managers' network)
- SFN should consider bringing donors and schools together to talk about the services on offer
- SFN needs piloting and testing properly before trying to roll it out. To expand it prematurely could lead to it being "spread too thinly" and the concept could be damaged as a result.
- SFN needs to be rolled out to increase profile and impact once it has been properly established

Prospective Major Donors and Service Providers

58. As SFN has set itself the task of attracting further (and major) donors to the Network, it was agreed that prospective donors, with whom SNF had been in contact, should also be contacted for interviews. Three organisation and business names were nominated by SFN's CEO, and each agreed to be interviewed:

- **Rachel Charitable Trust** (Shimon Cohen, Advisor) A charity committed to supporting special educational needs.
- **Lloyds TSB** (Ian Buss, Head of Education & Not For Profit) Providing banking services for schools.
- **The Education Endowment Fund** (Kevan Collins, CEO) A grant making charity with a £200m endowment fund which has been established to identify and promote promising educational innovations that address the needs of disadvantaged children.

59. Each prospective (nominated) donor was asked what they considered to be the likely value of SFN for their own work, what further opportunities for SFN's development they felt existed, and whether they might be likely to support SFN in future, i.e. 'join' the Network.

60. Despite the nominations, it was surprising to find that only one of the three prospective donors had a strong expectation of becoming involved. The Educational Endowment Fund did express an interest and felt it likely that they would become involved.

- The Rachel Charitable Trust explained that their interests were tied specifically to special education and that although there were a small number of schools of this nature, the SFN was unlikely to be a suitable medium for them to use to pursue their interests.

- Lloyds TSB explained that they were simply interested in offering and providing banking services to schools on their standard terms & conditions and that they were undecided about what advantages SFN would provide for them. Thus, the interviews with Lloyds TSB and Rachel Charitable Trust representatives proved less informative, than might otherwise have been the case.
- Some positive feedback was elicited from the Educational Endowment Fund. They liked the idea of the Network and the portal and thought that SFN could engage with their own grantmaking agenda. With regard to further opportunities for SFN they suggested that SFN could positively encourage schools to develop new projects and challenges, on the basis of projects that are already known to work elsewhere. These might revolve around:
 - Getting parents more involved
 - Improving capacity and systems within the school (e.g. IT)
 - Providing additional opportunities for children needing to “catch up”
 - Addressing the needs of a wider range of children beyond the school in the wider community

This Foundation went on to explain that whilst they were not entirely certain about future involvement, if this did go ahead then it would be likely to be on the basis of some sort of challenge funding, aimed at leveraging additional resources and getting schools to undertake new activities.

Foundations supporting the SFN and providing challenge funding

61. As the key ‘donors of record’, both funding the establishment of the SFN concept, and providing the highly valued challenge matched-funding opportunities, the perspectives of the Aldgate and Allhallows Barking Exhibition Foundation and Sir John Cass’s Foundation were central to this review. This was the final interview to be conducted, with Richard Foley, in his roles as CEO of the former and Deputy Clerk of the latter as a member of the SFN’s Advisory Board, Richard appears both as an ‘insider’ and an ‘outsider’ in this review. A interview schedule contrasting to those for potential donors and services donors was developed, which examined the funders’ perspectives on SFN as an intervention, its objectives and development to date, the enterprise which it represents, the theories of change which underpin it and the pressures which SFN faces in balancing its inputs to expected outputs and outcomes. This interview took the form of reflection and consideration, both backwards and looking forwards,

rather than producing the 'shopping list' approach of stakeholders more distant from SNF. Key findings were presented below.

62. The value of the core idea of SFN, the pressing need for supporting schools 'resourcing when the pressure facing them will both limiting their individual efforts to fundraise whilst adding to their sense of isolation, was recognised throughout the interview. Also, the importance of 'acting now', to support SFN's initial beginning was stressed, tracing back to early urgent discussion with Nick Ryan at the time of the Comprehensive Spending Review in 2010, when the extent of spending constraints in education was becoming clear.

63. As an outline concept, SFN was innovative and its champion brought 'knowledge and knowhow', and a strong track from his work in the then SSAT. The two funding charities were very aware of the high level of support in higher education which was leveraging in funding from alumni, and the matched funding schemes (though the latter were government and not foundation-backed); and 'if in universities, why not in schools'? Presented as an outline concept to both funders, this had necessarily meant that the usual 'due diligence' of the grantmaker could not be exercised, since the embryonic SFN was in effect a start-up, a shell organisation ('no address, no resources'). The early chronology of support was therefore appropriately guarded and careful, from March 2012, with some deferrals in support requested taking place until technical questions had been resolved. A detailed Business Plan had been presented and reviewed independently, and a subsequent 'grilling' of Nick Ryan from the Aldgate and Allhallows trustees had further confirmed the value of the concept and its need for viability funding, to move forward. In June 2012, funding for the development of the website came through in June 2012, with the pilot project being based in Tower Hamlets (a site of the funders' particular work focus), with two complementary activities expected in due course, the wider expansion of the scheme beyond Tower Hamlets, and then a national launch.

64. Richard's own advocacy for SFN responded to the social entrepreneurial approach of NR a strong idea with an important story, with SFN to become the vital broker between schools in resources need and intending donors, or donors who would be enabled and could be enticed to give. Tower Hamlets was regarded by funders as the logical pilot area, as an area of deprivation (as confirmed again in the week preceding the interview, around levels of child poverty in London), but also wedged between the City and Canary Wharf, so that donors could be expected to be at the 'wealthier end' of the giving spectrum.

65. Reflecting on an approach to evaluation, going forward, Richard recognised that the initiative had not been underpinned by a fully-developed 'theory of change' approach (as advocated by Grant, 2011, and others, i.e. 'what change are you seeking, in which social problem areas', 'what are your assumptions and knowledge about the factors that affect these

problems', and 'by what means do you expect these changes to be achieved'). At the same time, he was clear that the outcomes were expected to be cultural change (i.e. towards pro-active fundraising) in schools, following an initial impetus from seedcorn donors. He saw this clearly as the 'long game and relates also to cultural changes generally going on in local authorities in relation to education in schools. He also cited aim of "professionalising fundraising in schools" he saw as "saying something different" (as well as begging questions), if narrower than the central idea of schools' pro-active interaction with funding environments of all kinds.

66. In retrospect, it might be argued that the idea was "too open-ended". Richard's own preference would have been for development on the lines of the Kellogg (Foundation) model, i.e. a structured logic model that contains "a lot of specifics" (Kellogg Foundation, 2004). However, it was critical for foundations to do this particular kind of developmental support of innovation, recognising the risk factors and, following Eisenberg's argument (see Eisenberg 2005), performing key roles as incubators of new social ideas. Moreover, the Business Plan had been favourably assessed.

67. The current structure for SFN, as a company with its two directors, and an Advisory Board, mainly of education experts, was a demanding one; and a forthcoming plan to obtain charity status within the SFN framework was noted, where this would itself then attract Gift Aid. The work balance and work pressures within SFN for its multi-tasking CEO were recognised as "tough", with pressures to 'do everything all at once', from development of the website to promoting new business. Moreover, as in any social innovation, there is the continuing tension 'just in case someone else develops the idea' or there is a rise in schools using non dedicated but familiar giving systems e.g. Just Giving.

68. A very central issue however remained which was the vital need for the website to attract visitors/donors and regular business. Both funders are active in publicising the SFN and especially the website to key influential, from highlighting it in the documents for the Sir John Cass Annual Lecture, to supporting publicity for SFN at the 'Festival of Education' at Wellington College.

69. Seeking practical support (for example, on the lines of London's 'Dispossessed Fund') Richard had approached Michael Gove and although, through his special adviser, interest was forthcoming, there were no offers of funding. Given his central interest in schools, Lord Adonis is a further contact target schools; also working with the Association of Charitable Foundations (the foundations and trusts' 'umbrella membership body'), to publicise the work among and attract funding from other foundations.

70. From Allhallows' perspective, the matched funding offer had provided a model for foundations' contributions; and the website was already showing its worth, with some schools over-shooting their funding target. At the same time, it was recognised that schools coming within striking distance but not completing their target within the time deadline might feel disadvantaged, and there was the possibility that in some cases sums less than the set £500 ceiling might be matched.

71. In summary, Richard was seeking a 'learning report' from this review. It would not be feasible for 'everything to be right' at this early stage. However, it was recognised that this is now the point where some comprehensive core support, in the form of central government funding, would be central to helping SFN develop through its future phases.

Reflections on the Review Findings

72. What are the implications of the ways in which the SFN offer is developing to date, from our review perspective? Our concentration on the SFN 'offer' concentrated on its public face to stakeholders, close to and further off from its operations. As such our findings place emphasis on the communications actions and challenges of SFN, its efforts taking place across a broad front of contacts very much bounded by its limited resources, and the environmental pressures facing all social innovation.

73. They have also acknowledged the major burden being carried by SFN's initiator and CEO , in moving to maximise SFN's advantages all at once, and continually seeking to innovate further 'products' within the existing SFN offer as further added value ; but also seeking to amend some offers. For example, the development and circulation of an electronic Newsletter for participating schools, which began when our fieldwork was completed, which will help keep SFN's 'face' visible to its existing participants; but on the other, the decision to remove the initially enticing offer of further bespoke professional fundraising support for schools from new 'pitches' to further local authorities, on grounds of 'cost'.

We reflect on aspects of our findings as follows:

Great promise but much uncertainty about the role of the SFN portal to date as a route for schools to cash, in kind support and volunteers

74. After our fieldwork was completed, of the 19 projects itemised on the site involving 18 schools, only one has posted details of any funding raised and that is understood to be £80,025 from the local authority. All other projects appear to have raised no money, other than that related to the matched funding challenges. . This may of course be because it is too early to expect an inflow or because schools have simply not posted the results of their fundraising.(The dependence on schools' having time to maintain their situation regularly is importance.). However the absence of information could undermine confidence in the site at any one time, and for casual browsers especially.

75. Our very limited survey revealed no evidence of gifts in kind or volunteering as a result of SFN involvement; and it is uncertain whether these two, especially volunteering, are really part of the SFN offer, or at least until third parties are driven to the site .

76. There was or no evidence that people, other than those directly involved with the schools in question, are being driven to the site, and it was unfortunate that there appeared to be no basic data available, on the numbers accessing the site over time. Whilst a highly basic metric and

conveying nothing about site *usage* , this offers a initial insight in the extent to which the website still has a predominantly passive presence; clearly a matter of concern to stakeholders. Nor was there knowledge within SFN as to the participating schools which in turn used their own websites to drive traffic back to SFN (we came across one example, following one of the interviews, which makes such a link very explicit.)

77. All of these points raise questions about how the platform can be used to generate resources in accordance with since this is a central SFN “promise”; and the extent to which a highly-specified review of the website, from website review specialists, should take place, once the SFN’s aims are fully clarified.

Media Partners emphasised but roles not illustrated

78. Whilst we learned of media partners having been lined up (eg The Guardian), we received no evidence of this ; and our own web trawl in the week beginning 5 March, of the Guardian Teachers Network ‘resources’ section (<http://teachers.guardian.co.uk/resources.aspx>) did not produce any immediate links to SFN. Again media partners’ role in site traffic seems critical.

The Major Donors: Brokered services and individual donors’ needs

79. Given the possible value of brokered deals to schools, and their centrality in the SFN offer, having only three to date on the site, raises questions as to the impact this may have on would be further donors, and on the existing donors to remain. These questions are compounded by the limited potential for engagement found among ‘prospective’ donors to whom we were referred.

80. From talking to donors, it was clear that take up from schools is very low, whilst donors to an extent felt disconnected with SFN, and only one of the three prospective donors seemed likely to engage with SFN. We recognise of course that prospecting and then sustaining relations with potential donors is an immense, time consuming and often frustrating task , and then mostly undertaken by a single purpose individual, not a CEO with a great many other tasks to hand. Nevertheless the growth in this area would seem to be central to the continuing credibility of SFN to schools, to the degree that once joined, schools actively sustain their own participation in its work. This uncertainty was compounded by our lack of extensive feedback on how SFN participation is itself ‘managed’, along with the other pressures of the school

environment, for heads, and school business managers. Individual SFN ‘champions’ for, or within, each school could be very helpful.

81. We also felt that there was some vagueness in the term ‘major donors’, implying variously corporate (‘large’) business, small(er) businesses, and charities (trusts and foundations). We were unable to test whether individual donors (personal givers, with an attachment to or interest in the school, the school’s locality, or the type of project it was seeking funds for) found the website helpful, user-friendly and appropriate.

Challenges from Donors: Welcomed but not overwhelming in take up

82. Notwithstanding the welcome given to it from our small sample, it was surprising to find only 11 schools displaying their involvement on the site with the £500 Challenge. Of these 11 schools, in the week beginning March 4th, 7 had raised or nearly raised the £500, but 4 had raised less than £50.

83. Our inability to make contact with the majority of participating schools and those non participating, meant that we were unable to probe for possible reasons, which may vary school by school, or simply be seen as too demanding overall in the pilot area. Other questions were also begged regarding the publicity of the success stories – i.e. the need for such schools /SFN to ensure that the ‘success story’ is captured and celebrated online in a brief vignette – but also for those posting less successful results (how for example might individual donors react to this news, as a spur to giving or as a signal that the school cannot progress far in fundraising.).

84. We are aware of the CEO’s recognition of the importance of ensuring that it is ‘not only the strongest schools which get support’ but this in itself is a challenge (as it was in the now – completed government matched funding scheme for higher education institutions.). The flexibility which the current challenge funders may be able to give to those schools ‘nearly making it’ is of course very welcome, but it is not normally the stuff of which such challenges are usually made.

Tax Efficient Giving: Gift Aid, important problems with advice

85. Despite the statement at the beginning of the Gift Aid Guide that “ *As a school or academy, you are almost certain to be accepted for Gift Aid*” this has turned out not to be the case. Such acceptance appears not feasible notably for ‘regular’ state schools (i.e. those that are not academies or voluntary/assisted) and yet these schools form the majority of SFN’s client. We learnt of at least one school which has had its application as an exempt charity rejected, so

calling into question the contention that schools generally will benefit from tax efficient giving as members of SFN and as a result will be able to raise additional money. We recognise that SFN is responding to an appetite for knowledge in its schools clientele on this important issue, but were concerned that any assertions in the Guide that are not accurate could affect SFN's credibility. This would be especially the case in any 'rolling out' of the scheme beyond Tower Hamlets.

The 'pilot' nature of the Tower Hamlets work of SFN and work to extend the scheme

86. The Tower Hamlets work was widely described throughout our review as a 'pilot' for the initiative, but this seems to have been more in the general sense of 'the first base' for the SFN initiative, rather in its research or evaluation sense, as a programme trial, from which lessons will be drawn before the programme is extended or duplicated. This is against the background of the simultaneous and intense efforts of the CEO to extend SFN's offer in other local authority areas, but necessarily having to amend and change the nature of these offers, as he goes along (e.g. the withdrawal of the plan to have 'professional fundraising' supporting SFN schools, in the Redbridge 'pitch').

87. It was perhaps inevitable that because of these demanding efforts, we experienced difficulties (through SFN) in making contacts with the schools in the Tower Hamlets sample (e.g. uncertainty about named contacts, email addresses etc) suggesting a chronic lack of time available for getting to know these SFN's very first tranche of schools, and using their in depth experiences to the Network's benefits.

88. This hurry to extend the Network through new local authority customer/subscribers is entirely understandable, given the critical need for extending resources, but is necessarily detracting from the SFN's ability to become close to and understand in a deep and unique way, the needs of its school beneficiaries and its donors with a special interest in education in Tower Hamlets. Our review of the documentation for extending SFN's work beyond its 'pilot' has suggested to us that this is also having to be amended and changed as SFN itself adapts to its changing environment and at worst this may damage or at least lead to uncertainty as to what it is that SFN is offering.

A “Network” for Whom?

89. The findings from our review have emphasised the extent to which the SFN is working in a demanding funding environment, whilst facing multiple directions. Its schools are both beneficiaries and users; but its donors may also be users (and beneficiaries where good matches with schools reflect donors’ own needs; and help them meet their own obligations, if organisational funders/). It also arguably has ‘customers’, if some donors are trading their support for commercial access to schools, but also where local authorities in any future extensions of SFN are being asked to pay for their schools’ access to the Network. We reported the website’s addressing the browser as ‘you’, i.e. emphasising the donor, but there is also the ‘you’ of the teachers, whose accomplishments will be enhanced from such donations to consider and draw in to the Network in imaginative and positive ways.

90. Networks thrive, we would suggest, from the shared *ambition* of their members, or the shared and supported *services* which members receive. SFN appears from these findings to be aiming at achieving both these outcomes, yet the question of ‘network for whom?’ remains.

91. We noted at the beginning of the report that SFN “*helps every pupil succeed*”. Our findings suggest that a greater prominence for the schools’ children and students, not just as ‘beneficiaries’ but as active partners themselves in demonstrating what the Network can achieve, could usefully be considered. It seems to us that it is the children and students of SFN schools who will best combine the Network’s ambitions and its services offer.

Interim Recommendations Arising from the Review Findings

1. The Network's development and growth versus its consolidation in the 'pilot'

92. We recognise that as presently developing, SFN's future appears to depend on local authorities' willingness to pay a fee or sign a contract or make a grant, in return for their schools' SFN membership,

93. However, a balance needs to be struck between prioritising the amount of energy and resources which are put into expanding the Network and driving up membership and that put into consolidating and developing the pilot which needs to provide a sound, effective and credible vehicle capable of delivering a wide range (or a small, consistent range) of valued services. Expansion to the detriment of pilot may ultimately damage the concept.

2. Relations with individual schools

94. We believe that the communication links with schools need to be reviewed and that refocusing on these 'first network members', the pioneers or leaders in SFN's work, should be a priority.

Specifically, this should include:

- consultation with participating schools about the overall "offer", not only the selection and recruitment of donors, but schools' own approaches to publicising their needs, which might develop further the SFN ultimate aim of pupils' educational success
- increased feedback to schools, along with the newsletters and helpful if episodic email, for example, the numbers of hits on their own pages
- increased intelligence on the participating and non-participating schools.

95. Currently most schools in the Tower Hamlets pilot appear to be primary schools., leaving questions over secondary schools' relative engagement and expectations, or alternatively the advantages of focus on the primary school as a prime beneficiary of SFN. Given that the large majority of schools 'signing up' are primary schools, what does this tell us about attitudes towards and the appeal of SFN to secondary schools? If the SFN model has minimal traction in secondary schools generally, this warrants further investigation.

3. Marketing/driving people to the site

96. Schools report that as far as they were aware (we understand they do not receive feedback on this) the majority of people visiting the site are parents and those in contact with each

school. This together with the lack of a record of site visits raises questions about its utility and its promotion.

97. Urgent attention needs to be given:

- to the best means of promoting and publicising the site, in order to get more people browsing on line and to widen the range of people/organisations willing to support the schools and
- to capturing basic data on site visits

98. As part of this, securing new media partners or gaining a commitment from existing media partners to publicise SFN and help drive people to the site, would appear to be vital.

4. A web site review

99. Understanding of the value of the website as part of the SFN is very important and this could should include site usage, information quality, reliability, information relevance (as gleaned from users, including relevance of images, hyperlinks etc), and its accessibility and usability.

5. Role of brokered services

100. Means need to be found to ensure that existing donors feel more engaged with SFN and the member schools, with careful consideration given to (business-based) donors' requests for feedback about their services and intelligence via the site on interest in their services.

101. Discovering new and further donors with "services and offers which will be really attractive and advantageous to schools", as schools have requested, should be a high priority.

6. Role of brokered challenge funding

102. Challenge funding is well received, but appears from the site to be patchily taken up and finding further challenges of this nature is important, potentially aided by giving a clear and detailed focus on the case examples of challenge success in among the current schools – i.e. interim impact reports on how well this has worked for school x, and for what project.

7. Gift Aid

103. In the light of earlier comments on the uncertainties of Gift Aid information, both where it can mislead and where it is insufficient or wrong, the content and the extent to which SFN provides this information to schools, needs to be urgently reviewed. This is regardless of what

proposals are in hand to secure SFN's own charitable status and any relationships between claiming or non claiming schools, where it is assumed that legal advice will be sought.

8. Costings in the case of SFN to new local authority areas

104. If the ongoing efforts to ensure extension of SFN to new boroughs in London, and beyond London continue, increased attention and more precise justification of costings to local authorities are required. During the course of the review, these costings have been evolving and now appear to be £2,500 plus VAT per 100 schools. SFN needs to ensure that this figure (for example) is not only viewed in terms of its value to these new areas, is underpinned by evidence of achievement in each area of the SFN offer, from its pilot base.

What Has Been Achieved and What Remains To Be Done

105. In providing these reflections on the data we gathered, and in making interim recommendations for consideration within SFN, it is important for us to state the extent to which we recognise the major level of commitment and considerable efforts made by SFN's CEO especially in relation to the multiple stakeholders of SFN and the vital role of the two initial funding foundations, in their enterprise incubation. The achievements to date include:

- the formal reality of SFN, its web presence in a pressurised and demanding fundraising environment
- the opportunities for certain schools to gain access to new forms of funding for them (notably the funding challenges scheme) and
- a general raising of awareness of the resources needs for schools in that competitive environment, as they articulate them individually, rather than as a group (i.e. 'schools need...')

106. However, within these achievements, the challenges of operationalising the SFN in full, (for example with a pilot phase apparently overlapping with pitches to extend its reach to other local authority areas) have become apparent. .

Though this approach seems driven to an understandable extent by the need for further resources for SFN it has the unfortunate effect of resulting in 'not waiting' until a really full understanding of the pilot site has been achieved, and thereby, the nature of the task of SFN is fully articulated.

107. In considering what remains to be done, we have suggested areas of interim action. These take into account the need to identify priorities and for increased focus on an 'in-depth' approach (where the pilot is really given priority, and both improved intelligence and improved schools' interaction is emphasised).

108. If a 'breadth' approach continues, then expansion plans must be critically examined for what can (rather than what might be) offered and a sense of limitation in what SFN can thereby achieve will need to be clear.

109. In either case, identifying and then cultivating donor relations, is essential if the 'promise' of donor access is to be fulfilled. As the donor development and fundraising markets change so

rapidly (for example with the advent of crowdfunding), the SFN will need to consider how its flexibility can be assured, without compromising the 'solidity' of its offer, and risking its reputation.

110. The paradox within SFN's work is also clear. The schools most needing critical support in gaining access to donor-based resources, are likely to be those which themselves have the least resources (in time, 'people' and 'knowhow') to access the kinds of activities which SFN aspires to offer. Hence, our major emphasis is on the website's role and the need to drive visitors to the site.

111. On a wider scale, a re-examination of the 'Network for whom' question may be valuable, in line with an intention to move towards a full evaluation. 'What remains to be done' at this stage therefore includes:

- a clarification of the SFN purposes, and priorities
- organisational and managerial responses to this clarification, concerning the 'depth' /'breadth' development of SFN to date
- attention and improvement in internal intelligence and communications regarding all stakeholders
- further development of relations with existing and new major donors
- attention and improvement to external communications and publicity, with major emphasis on website issues.

Towards an Evaluation of SFN

112. Responses from the fieldwork which were undertaken were primarily concerned with the immediate issues around the SFN offer, and questions of clarity, resource availability and schools' and donors' roles. They did not, as we had initially hoped, provide wider indicators at any length for an evaluation programme.

113. Nevertheless this concentration both on SFN detail, and on a range of uncertainties from schools and donors, suggests that consideration of an evaluation programme will itself need to consider the extent to which that programme would invite stakeholders to be active evaluators; and whether schools especially would have the resources 'appetite' as well as the interest for self-evaluating their own roles.

114. A critical factor in an externally conducted evaluation will be the evaluation *criteria* which a project or programme has set itself, following the establishment of its aims. Once identified, these will provide broad evidence of the extent of achievement of aims, and will also enable commentary to make upon them, e.g. the factors that have enabled or detracted from that achievement. Before criteria setting however, comes clarification at all points.

115. For SFN, clarification appears to be at the heart of moving forward to formal evaluation; and it is very appropriate that the entrepreneurial spirit and energy which gave the impetus for this development, now reflects on what achievements are being sort, for whom and in what order, rather than the 'everything together' and necessarily ad hoc approach at the start.

116. A further aspect of formal evaluation is that it links into and may itself prompt improvements in the information systems which a programme holds. This would seem to be especially important for SFN. A broad approach then could include:

- clarifying aims, why the projects exists, for whom the project exists
- identifying the expected impacts which the programme will have on organisations/students /places' 'lives'
- identifying the expected outcomes (the changes in practice, behaviour, opportunity etc that is being sought)
- clarifying the activities of the programme, both broadly and narrowly-specifying what the programme delivers, in fulfilment of the aim , i.e. its outputs
- setting out the resources of the programme –human, organisational, financial, community to enable these activities
- developing the criteria assessing the outcomes achieved from the activities (target development in its broadest sense)

- ensuring the regular collection of information within the programme to present information on activities' progress
- conducting an evaluation (which may be internal, for organisational learning) or external (for major public consumption) which reviews the aims, activities, outputs undertaken, outcomes achieved (from identified stakeholders' perspectives), and impacts achieved.

117. Currently, the growth in interest in the sector on 'impact measurement', and as critically, 'impact communication' (letting people know what you are doing) is accompanied by extensive material available from within the sector. However, much work precedes impact assessment (the final purpose of an evaluation) and critically for organisations such as SFN, setting realistic targets for the activities and outcomes, as against the resources which are available, is essential.

118. Very valuable resources helping direct evaluation practice and reflecting on evaluation issues can be found on dedicated voluntary sector websites, see for example:

Charities Evaluation Service, especially their 'Tools and Resources' section, <http://www.ces-vol.org.uk/tools-and-resources/Evaluation-methods/making-connections-tools>

This includes examination of the ways in which theories of change support evaluation, learning and reflection across a programme.

National Council for Voluntary Organisations, e.g. material on monitoring and evaluation http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/psd/commissioning/monitoring_and_evaluation

Whilst this is developed in the context of voluntary organisations and public services delivery, its reach, from organisations themselves through to funders, is very helpful.

Knowhow Nonprofit (part of NCVO)

<http://knowhownonprofit.org/search?SearchableText=evaluation><http://knowhownonprofit.org/search?SearchableText=evaluation>

Details of evaluation training programmes available, including those based on the CES's 'self evaluation' approach.

Charity Finance Group

http://www.cfq.org.uk/resources/~/_media/Files/Resources/CFDG%20Publications/SME330%20CFDG%20Impact%20Report_v6.ashx

'Principles of Good Impact Reporting for Charities and Social Enterprises

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Appendix I:

Survey of Schools in Tower Hamlets Participating In the Schools Funding Network

The contents of this survey will be treated in confidence by Cass Business School and schools will not be identified individually in the survey analysis.

School (s):

Name:

Position:

Email Address:

Telephone :

Please return to jon.fitzmaurice.1@city.ac.uk by Friday 15th

February

We've adopted a multiple choice format to make it easy to complete. **Simply underline the answer that applies to you and your school.** If you want to add a comment at the end of each question, then you can. **It should only take a few minutes to complete**

What we want to learn from the survey is:

- ***Ease of Use:*** *was it easy to set up/does the technology work for you*
- ***Value:*** *what is the value to the school*
- ***Results:*** *what results have been achieved*
- ***Your Views:*** *any additional points you want to make*

1. The SFN Fundraising Platform

1.1 Did the *SFN User Guide* Provide A Clear Explanation Of How To Use The Fundraising Platform

- Very clear
- Sufficiently clear
- Not very clear

1.2 How Easy Have You Found Uploading Schools' Details & Projects Onto The SFN Platform?

- Difficult
- Not Too Difficult
- Easy

1.3 How Do You Value the Platform In Terms Of Providing Schools With A New Fundraising Technique?

- Very Valuable
- Quite valuable
- Not Very Valuable
- Uncertain at this stage

1.4 Are You Using Any Other Electronic Means Of Fundraising (eg Facebook) Other Than SFN ?

- Yes
- No

1.5 Any Other Comments Regarding the SFN Fundraising Platform:

2. Raising Money for School Projects

2.1 Has Participating In The SFN Helped Schools To Develop Projects For Funding?

- It has helped a lot
- Helped a little
- Hasn't really helped
- Uncertain at this stage

2.2 Have You Evidence That Being Able To Display Projects On The Platform Has Led Prospective Donors To Contact Schools?

- Yes
- No
- Too early to say

Please Elaborate:

2.3 Has the SFN Platform Generated Funding For The Projects On Display?

- Yes
- No
- Too early to say

2.4 Any Other Comments about Raising Money for School Projects Via The Platform?

3. Major Donors: Services

3.1 Have Schools Used Any Of The Services Offered From Major Donor On The Platform?

- Yes
- No

If yes, could you tell us which ones?

3.2 How Do You Value Schools Being Able To Access Services From Major Donors Via The Platform?

- Very Valuable
- Useful
- Not Very Valuable

3.3 Any Other Comments about the Usefulness of Services From Major Donors?

4. Major Donors: Challenge Funding:

4.1 Do the Schools With Whom You Work Expect To Raise The Required Match Funding To Qualify For The £500 Challenge Funding?

- Yes
- No
- Uncertain at this stage

4.2 How Valuable Is It To Have Challenges Of One Sort, Or Another, Against Which Schools Can Raise Funding?

- Very Valuable
- Useful
- Not Very Valuable

4.3 Any Other Comments about Challenge Funding From Major Donors?

5. The Fundraising & Gift Aid Guides

5.1 How Clear Is The Fundraising Guide In Terms Of Making Use Of It?

- Very clear
- Ok
- Not very clear

5.2 How Useful Is The Fundraising Guide In Terms Of Providing Schools With Information and Ideas?

- Very useful
- Fairly useful
- Not very useful

5.3 How Useful Is The Gift Aid Guide In Terms Of Enabling Schools To Benefit From Gift Aid?

- Very useful
- Fairly useful
- Not very useful

5.4 Any Other Comments about the Fundraising or Gift Aid Guides

6. Overall, do you consider that this Initiative (Please underline as many as appropriate)

- Provides new ways of accessing donors
- Widens potential donor pool
- Attracts corporates' support
- Improves schools' fundraising activities generally
- Increases schools profile locally
- Supports existing fundraising efforts in schools
- Raises expectations of new inflows of funds to schools
- Creates overt competition for funds between schools in localities
- Makes too many demands on staff

Other (please specify):

7. Schools' Responsibility For Fundraising

7.1 What is your opinion on the view that, professional fundraising approaches should be extended to and/or expanded in schools?

- Agree
- Disagree
- Uncertain

8. Further Support From Schools Funding Network

8.1 What other forms of support/services might you value from SFN in the future, if any ?

All responses will be treated in confidence

Thank you for completing this survey. Please return it to:

Jon.fitzmaurice.1@city.ac.uk

by Friday 15th February

Appendix II:

Survey of schools in Tower Hamlets, currently not participating in the Schools Funding Network initiative

The contents of this survey will be treated in confidence by Cass Business School and schools will not be identified individually in the survey analysis.

School:

Name:

Position:

Contact Details (Telephone/Email)

Please return to jon.fitzmaurice.1@city.ac.uk by 5th February

We understand that your school is not participating (as at January 2013) in the Schools' Funding Network initiative in Tower Hamlets. To recap, SFN comprises the following "offer":

- 1. An On Line Fundraising Platform:**
 - To profile your school
 - To display funding requests for school projects
 - To accept offers or take up challenges from major donors
- 2. A User Guide to The Fundraising Platform**
- 3. A Fundraising & Gift Aid Guide**

We would be grateful if you were able to tell us the reason(s) for your deciding not to take part, using the format below, indicating whichever answer applies (please simply insert "X" as appropriate).

- | | | | |
|---|------------|-----------|-----------------------|
| 1. Your school is not yet at the stage of identifying fundraising needs necessary to participate. | Yes | No | Not Applicable |
| 2. You are waiting to see the kinds of results achieved by participating schools. | Yes | No | Not Applicable |
| 3. You feel that the school has insufficient resources to take part. | Yes | No | Not Applicable |
| 4. You felt that the technical briefs for participation were unclear. | Yes | No | Not Applicable |
| 5. You prefer to use your school's individual fundraising arrangements. | Yes | No | Not Applicable |
| 6. You are satisfied with your school's individual fundraising arrangements. | Yes | No | Not Applicable |
| 7. You are sceptical about a web-based approach to schools' fundraising. | Yes | No | Not Applicable |
| 8. You are already using some other electronic means of fundraising (e.g. Facebook) | Yes | No | Not Applicable |
| 9. You have reservations about an initiative seeking to professionalise schools' fundraising. | Yes | No | Not Applicable |
| 10. Other (please specify) | | | |
| 11. Please identify any factors and /or interventions that would change the situation for your school and support its participation. | | | |

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We would find it very helpful if you would be willing to take part in a brief follow-up telephone interview with us. If so, could you let us have a telephone number to contact you here:

All responses will be treated in confidence

Thank you for completing this survey. Please return it to:

Jon.fitzmaurice.1@city.ac.uk

by Tuesday 5th February