**Rough Sleepers and Vulnerable People**  
*Street Census of Begging Friday 20th of May*

On Friday 30th of June staff from RSVP undertook a census of people begging in Glasgow. Three areas were focussed on; the City Centre, the West End and Shawlands as these areas had been identified as having regular begging sites. We principally wanted to gain a snapshot of the situation in Glasgow related to begging and determine how many of the people begging were known to the Simon Community, in contact with services and were roofless at the time.

Staff did not interview the people begging for two primary reasons, firstly it would be an intrusion into their lives that would not necessarily be of benefit to them and secondly experience tells us that people will often tell you what they think you want to or need to hear so that accuracy of information is variable.

Information was collected visually, through existing knowledge and experience and in a few cases staff spoke to the individuals concerned directly. At no time were staff ever threatened or made to feel uncomfortable engaging with people. Most begging is passive and we found no evidence of aggressive begging.

**Number of People Begging**

On the day in question staff observed 42 people begging across the three sites in the City. The team are aware of a further 45 people who regularly beg who were not begging on the day in question. 19 of the 42 people were known to the Simon Community RSVP Team, either actively engaging or previously supported by the team. Of the 42 people seen 30 were male and 12 were female.

![Gender Pie Chart]

- Male: 71%
- Female: 29%
Nationality

20 of the 42 people were from the Roma Community and of those the split between male and females who were begging was 50/50.

![Nationality Chart]

Location of begging sites

Anecdotally we were receiving reports that there had been an increase in begging in the South and the West of the City. Numbers taken on the day indicate a permanent presence but the City Centre is by far the main area for activity.

![Location Chart]

The team looked at the sites chosen and identified that the vast majority were selected due to the high footfall in the area. There is a tendency to locate near a Greggs where customers provide coffee and food but as it's a mostly cash sale business, people come out with change. The team did not identify any particular site that was a nuisance, ie stopping people from passing. Generally people begging were unassuming.
Age Range

The age group of those people begging was in general a guesstimate as we have no information available on the Roma Community. Previous attempts to engage have proven fruitless so we know very little about their needs, circumstances or personal details. Of those resident in Glasgow 20 out of the 42 were confirmed as Glasgow residents, 22 were unknown. At best as we can estimate the age profile is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16 to 30</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 to 50</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51+</td>
<td>52%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Reason for Begging

We know that not all people who beg are homeless and not all people who are homeless beg. In terms of the people on the street only 9 out of the 41 (excluding the Roma Community), were not accommodated. We believe that the Roma people predominantly live in the South side of Glasgow and we’ve had reports that suggest the accommodation is overcrowded.

We considered four key reasons why someone might choose to beg; to meet a substance need, survival (food, transport, shelter), the purpose of income, habitual in terms of it has become their employment/activity. We excluded the Roma community from this as again, we simply don’t know enough. Of the non Roma people begging (22), 10 were seeking money to feed a habit (alcohol/drugs), 4 Revenue, 1 habitual, 3 survival and 3 all four.

We know of two people who travel in from Paisley to beg and are accommodated and as far as we’re aware they do not have addiction issues. They provide passers-by with a story that is fanciful but effective in getting money. Generally this type of begging is rarer.
Of the 45 people known to the service and known to regularly beg in the City 34 are male, all are UK nationals and residents of Glasgow. It is suggested that begging increases at weekends as there are more shoppers in the City. At this stage we are unable to confirm this. From discussions with service users we estimate an average day's takings is between £60 and £80. However many service users abandon their site once they have enough money to meet their immediate need, whether it's a bottle of Vodka or a bag of Heroin.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion it appears that less than a quarter of the people begging were homeless at the time of the Census. All the homeless people were known to RSVP and many others known for begging in the City were not around at the time of the census. Almost half the people begging are from the Roma Community of which little is known. Of the people begging that we do know over half had substance misuse issues.

We will repeat this exercise in 3 months' time.