Item 2

29th February 2024

Glasgow City Council

Wellbeing, Equalities, Communities,
Culture and Engagement City Policy Committee

Report by Councillor Allan Casey, Chair of the Glasgow Begging Strategy Steering Group

Contact: John Foster, 0141 287 6540

GLASGOW BEGGING STRATEGY: ANNUAL REPORT 2023-24

Purpose of Report:

To provide Members with an annual report on the progress made with the Glasgow Begging Strategy (GBS).

Recommendations:

It is recommended that the Committee:

i) Considers the contents of this report.
ii) Considers the progress made with the Glasgow Begging Strategy to date.
iii) Notes the planned activity for the next year of the Glasgow Begging Strategy.

PLEASE NOTE THE FOLLOWING:

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Members will recall that the Glasgow Begging Strategy (GBS) was previously approved by City Administration Committee (CAC) on 25 March 2021 following a public consultation exercise. The relevant CAC report can be viewed here.

1.2 At that time, it was agreed that annual reports would be provided to the Wellbeing, Empowerment, Community and City Engagement City Policy Committee (WECCE). The last annual report was presented on 2 March 2023 and can be viewed here.

1.3 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with the third annual update on progress achieved over the past 12 months.

2 CONTEXT & CHALLENGES

2.1 Previous reporting has outlined the various challenges impacting project delivery to date, including the Covid-19 pandemic, the ongoing cost of living crisis, and other related economic and resourcing concerns.

2.2 In summary, given the nature of the Glasgow Begging Strategy and the complex issues associated with street begging, these challenges and their associated impacts can be significantly felt e.g.:

- continuing economic uncertainty
- corresponding impacts on employment opportunities
- increased likelihood of health risks
- more individuals/households slipping below the poverty line
- increased likelihood of street begging

2.3 At the City Administration Committee (CAC) on 30 November 2023, Councillors declared a housing emergency following unprecedented pressures facing the council in relation to homelessness. This is recognised within the context of GBS, and officers and project partners continue to support efforts to mitigate against the worst impacts of related issues.

2.4 As per **item 3.2.1** below, the Glasgow Helps scheme signposts users to support services available across the city. This now includes connecting people to local organisations tackling homelessness in Glasgow via the Street Support Network.

3 ACTION PLAN: DELIVERY TO DATE & FUTURE ACTIVITY PROPOSALS

3.1 Alternative Giving (Street Change Glasgow)

3.1.1 As previously reported, some changes to the Street Change Glasgow (SCG) initiative were necessary. The original physical donation point infrastructure has been replaced with QR code posters and associated signage as a more appropriate alternative platform. This has addressed previous issues, reduced costs, increased flexibility, and encouraged wider participation.

3.1.2 New vinyl signage promoting SCG has been installed in Central Station and to dress vacant retail units at the Mercat Building (Glasgow Cross), while similar

marketing opportunities will continue to be explored. Please see images as contained within **Appendix A**.

3.1.3 Given the generous support and collaboration of organisations such as Best Bar None, and Blankfaces, GCC funding has been used to produce promotional materials and the creation of SCG “welcome packs”; activities which help to encourage wider participation. QR code posters are now displayed within various Council and Glasgow Life buildings and venues. Branded T-shirts were also produced for GCC staff taking part in the Glasgow Kiltwalk 2023 fundraising event.

3.1.4 Further opportunities to promote SCG through sponsored events are also being explored, as is possible celebrity support/endorsement. Initiatives like this may be increasingly important as donation levels dropped over during the second half of 2023, likely because of the various economic factors previously highlighted.

3.1.5 More broadly, it is understood that Edinburgh City Council may be developing their own Begging Strategy, and Alternative Giving scheme. Discussion and liaison between Glasgow and Edinburgh is ongoing and may help identify mutual benefits from aligned strategy/activity.

3.1.6 From a reporting perspective, efforts to improve data collection mechanisms remain ongoing. The creation of an information dashboard continues to be explored. A summary overview is provided below in **Appendix B.**

3.2 Financial & Digital Inclusion

3.2.1 As previously reported, initial workstream actions contained within the GBS Action Plan have since been completed and focus has shifted to an expanded programme of activity supporting vulnerable users, in collaboration with Simon Community Scotland (SCS) and other project partners. This includes:

- Digital literacy training via Glasgow City College
- Simon Community’s Get Digital and Get Connected activities
- Street Support Glasgow (with support from Glasgow Helps)
- Employability referrals to Jobs & Business Glasgow
- Weekly welfare rights clinic via the Govan Law Centre
- Referral partnerships with GHeat and the Fuel Bank Foundation
- Financial support services through the Money Matters project
- Service provision through SCS Women’s Centre

3.2.2 SCS and GCC continue to review and monitor this wider support service provision to ensure targeted delivery going forward, and to identify other related project opportunities where opportunities arise.

3.2.3 It is envisaged that related updates will form part of the improved data collection and reporting mechanisms where possible (as per **Appendix B**).

3.3 Environmental Strategy

3.3.1 Actions undertaken through this workstream are focused on enhancing perceptions and positive use of public place, increasing safety, and supporting the city’s wider economic recovery.

3.3.2 Operational activity is being progressed through GCC's Environmental Tasking and Coordination (ETAC) group, whilst more strategic outputs are intended to align with e.g. Avenues Programme, District Regeneration Frameworks, and the new City Centre Strategy (2024-30) which was recently published for public consultation[1].

3.3.3 Actions highlighted in the previous report have now been completed or remain ongoing, with additional activity falling within scope as appropriate. A summary update of related outputs is provided below:

- The Hielanman's Umbrella design contract is now pending final delivery. Subsequent works will be informed by available funding and indicative costs – aspects which have still to be clarified.
- Remedial public realm works as part of the Buchanan Bus Station action plan were completed in March/April 2023.
- A pilot needle bin scheme in New Wynd completed in December 2023 and assessment of this activity will help to inform potential activity expansion.
- Targeted feature lighting interventions were undertaken to help perceptions of safety as well to support city centre businesses, especially within the Sauchiehall Street area. Further opportunities continue to be explored.
- Additional environmental enhancements will be informed by funding availability, especially where external service provision is required.

3.3.4 As part of the GBS Safer City Centre work strand, intelligence gathering continues to monitor locations towards targeting outreach support where street begging tends to take place. Frontline operational resources confirmed that the numbers of rough sleepers in the city centre increased significantly from around Oct/Nov 2023 (from 6No. to c40No.).

3.3.5 There has also been an associated increase in local business complaints over the same period which GCC continue to address. Striking a proper balance remains paramount i.e. resolving complaints whilst treating vulnerable users with compassion.

3.3.6 Throughout the year, council officers have highlighted increased numbers of people presenting with mental health issues. Additionally, reporting for West/Central Glasgow noted an increase in the number of individuals presenting to GCC as homeless, as well as those engaged in street begging. Frontline staff have received additional refresh training to help support their efforts in responding to these issues as appropriate.

3.4 Public Perceptions

3.4.1 Officers continue to promote the aims and aspirations of the Begging Strategy by highlighting the various actions being undertaken. This has focused on raising awareness of outputs completed to date, and supporting messaging issued by project partners. A summary overview of key social media posts and related data analytics is provided in **Appendix C**.

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1 https://www.glasgowconsult.co.uk/Project/932#:~:text=The%20Glasgow%20City%20Centre%20Strategy,to%20be%20delivered%20by%202030.

3.4.2 Collaborative working with project partners remains a significant element in wider messaging efforts as this helps provide a broader platform via local and national media channels, enabling engagement with a wider audience.

3.4.3 Additionally, it is hoped that the efforts to enhance reporting mechanisms can help provide a contextual narrative to any public facing messaging, more fully informing perceptions on the issues associated with street begging.

3.4.4 Furthermore, the inclusion of human-interest stories from those with lived experience, which build upon and look beyond the surface data, can be particularly valuable in public messaging, an aspect which has been utilised on the Street Change Glasgow website wherever possible. The established GBS webpage continues to serve as a "landing page", providing the public with useful information as well as links to other associated projects, initiatives, and the work of partner organisations.

3.4.5 Efforts to develop and grow the range of project partners will remain vital going forward, building upon existing relationships and the invaluable support received to date (e.g. Best Bar None members[2]). This will include expanding the number of QR code poster venues, as well as exploring opportunities for more active involvement.

3.4.6 The use of BT Hub digital screens for wider promotion of SCG has also been used and further opportunities on similar advertising infrastructure will continue to be explored.

4 CONCLUSIONS

4.1 Despite the continuing challenges faced over the past twelve months, progress with the Glasgow Begging Strategy remains positive.

4.2 Across each Key Project, the following items may also be noted:

4.2.1 Alternative Giving (Street Change Glasgow)

- By the time it ceased operations, over 1800 donations were received via the contactless tap points, totalling £6,950.
- A total of £6,554 has been raised through the SCG Just Giving page to date, comprising 300 donations.
- From all sources, a total of £19,789 has been raised for Street Change Glasgow (as of Jan 2024).
- Street Change funding has been accessed over 200 times by support workers from Simon Community, Glasgow City Mission, The Marie Trust, Lodging House Mission, and Waverley Care - to assist people they support to move on to more positive destinations. These awards so far total £16,202.
- Twenty-three BBN member premises are currently promoting the QR codes (an additional five on last year), as well as several additional businesses, and further partnerships are being developed.

[2] https://www.glasgowtimes.co.uk/lifestyle/23653282.iconic-glasgow-music-venue-supports-people-involved-begging/

4.2.2 Financial & Digital Inclusion

- The initial scope of this workstream has now been completed.
- The range of services now being offered has grown beyond original project expectations and is clear evidence of positive partnership working models and of maximising available resources.

4.2.3 Environmental Strategy

- This Key Project continues to benefit from progress made on other strategic work streams where shared goals and outputs either align and/or overlap.
- Operational support through the ETAC group has been useful in identifying and addressing issues arising within the public realm, as well as associated intelligence gathering to help inform GBS actions.
- Similarly, and as previously reported, funding made available through strategic workstreams continues to assist operational frontline services in programme delivery, targeting local interventions against available evidence.
- The development of the new City Centre Strategy will further support these efforts, with agreed actions and outputs intended to bring additional benefits.
- The support and assistance of frontline services has been especially helpful given increasingly challenging circumstances.

4.2.4 Public Perceptions

- Work will continue to foster and develop relationships with existing project partners as well as encouraging participation with new stakeholders.
- Opportunities for prospective sponsors, events based fundraising activities, and potential endorsements will be explored going forward.
- Enhancing public messaging through increased media attention, including via previously unused channels and platforms, will also play an important part, especially given the dynamic landscape of digital communication.

4.3 In more general terms, the following project aspects are also noted for reference and review:

- The ongoing development of a GBS information ‘dashboard’ is the culmination of continued efforts to improve reporting mechanisms and is hoped to become a key asset going forward.
- The possible development of an Edinburgh Begging Strategy would enable sharing of best value/best practice principles, with mutual benefits from aligned strategy/activity, and may even lead to a national model.
- GCC Community Justice Glasgow has established a Strategic Partnership Group to focus on issues and challenges arising at the Four Corners area of Glasgow city centre (i.e. Argyle Street/Union Street junction). This activity involves a wide range of different stakeholders including various GCC services, Police Scotland, ADP, HSCP, and a variety of different charitable organisations, local businesses, and resident groups. A list of different recommendations has already emerged and GBS will continue to inform and support this initiative as appropriate. Community Justice Glasgow will provide update reports to the Safe Glasgow Partnership.

5 POLICY AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Resource Implications:

Financial: Costs were in place for the initial delivery of this strategy including the pilot projects of Street Change Glasgow and the Financial and Digital Inclusion (FDI) officer. Since then, the need for a dedicated FDI post has been superseded. However, in general, further extension of existing activities or development of new projects may require additional funding. Suitable evaluation of resource requirements will therefore be undertaken as appropriate.

Legal: There are no immediate legal issues, however, this will be assessed as individual actions/projects are developed.

Personnel: There are no direct personnel issues.

Procurement: The transition away from the use of physical donation points now supersedes any requirement to procure further infrastructure to enable SCG participation by a broader business base. Any future procurement needs would be evaluated as appropriate, though none are currently envisioned.

Council Strategic Plan:

Specify which Grand Challenge (s) and Mission (s) the proposal supports. Where appropriate the relevant Commitment can also be listed.

The project supports the following items:

- **GRAND CHALLENGE ONE – Reduce poverty and inequality in our communities**
  - MISSION 1: End child poverty in our city using early intervention to support families
    - Commitments: 7
  - MISSION 3: Improve the health and wellbeing of our local communities
    - Commitments: 1, 2
- **GRAND CHALLENGE TWO – Increase opportunity and prosperity for all our citizens**
  - MISSION 1: Support Glasgow residents into sustainable and fair work
    - Commitments: 7
  - MISSION 2: Support the growth of an innovative, resilient and net zero carbon economy
    - Commitments: 2

Equality and Socio-Economic Impacts:

Does the proposal support the Council's Equality Outcomes 2021-25? Please specify.	People begging on the street do not necessarily fall within the protected characteristics groupings. However, the Begging Strategy supports the following Outcomes: ● Outcome 1 – access to training opportunities ● Outcome 3 – signposting Council Family services ● Outcome 4 – provision of spaces/services for women ● Outcome 6 – improved social inclusion
What are the potential equality impacts as a result of this report?	An EqIA screening process has been completed. GBS is intended to have positive impacts and supports identified Outcomes.
Please highlight if the policy/proposal will help address socio-economic disadvantage.	Yes. People engaged in street begging are usually the most socially and economically disadvantaged amongst us and may come from the most deprived areas of Glasgow. The Glasgow Begging Strategy will look to reduce barriers to accessing services across areas such as Health & Wellbeing, Housing, Education, and Learning Skills & Employment whilst encouraging vulnerable users to access appropriate support services.

Climate Impacts:

Does the proposal support any Climate Plan actions? Please specify:	GBS indirectly supports various actions, primarily through aspects of the Environmental Strategy Key Project which seeks to encourage positive uses of space, thereby promoting active travel i.e.: **Climate Plan Theme 1:** Communication and Community Empowerment ● Aim: To foster participation and collaboration. **Climate Plan Theme 2:** Just and Inclusive Place ● Aim: Ensure that the transition to a net-zero society is a catalyst for building a fairer, healthier, prosperous, resilient, and greener city for all. **Climate Plan Theme 3:** Well Connected and Thriving City ● Aim: Support decarbonisation of transport systems by helping to improve infrastructure for walking, cycling, wheeling, and reducing the need to travel. **Climate Plan Theme 4:** Health and Wellbeing ● Aim: To support equitable access to good quality open space and green infrastructure in the city.

	Climate Plan Theme 5: Green recovery ● Aim: Supporting improved infrastructure for walking, cycling and remote working.
What are the potential climate impacts as a result of this proposal?	The GBS Environmental Strategy Key Project will support and benefit from other projects such as the Avenues programme, DRFs, and the City Centre Strategy. These are intended to bring significant environmental enhancements to Glasgow city centre, such as increasing active travel and improving the public realm across the city centre. Additionally, supporting vulnerable individuals will promote and enhance social cohesion thus supporting the broader community.
Will the proposal contribute to Glasgow's net zero carbon target?	As above, increasing and promoting the amount of active travel routes across the city centre will lead to a reduction in CO2 emissions.
Privacy and Data Protection impacts: *Are there any potential data protection impacts as a result of this report Y/N*	A DPIA is required by law where the processing of personal data is likely to result in a high risk to the rights and freedoms of individuals. The project will not collect personal data except through the provision of contact details for the purposes of community engagement. Permission for any other use, or any ongoing use, will be sought at the point at which contact details are provided.

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 It is recommended that Committee:

(i) Considers the contents of this report.
(ii) Considers the progress made with the Glasgow Begging Strategy to date.
(iii) Notes the planned activity for the next year of the Glasgow Begging Strategy.

JF 22/01/24
WECCE – 29Feb24

7 APPENDIX A: STREET CHANGE GLASGOW VINYL INSTALLS - IMAGES

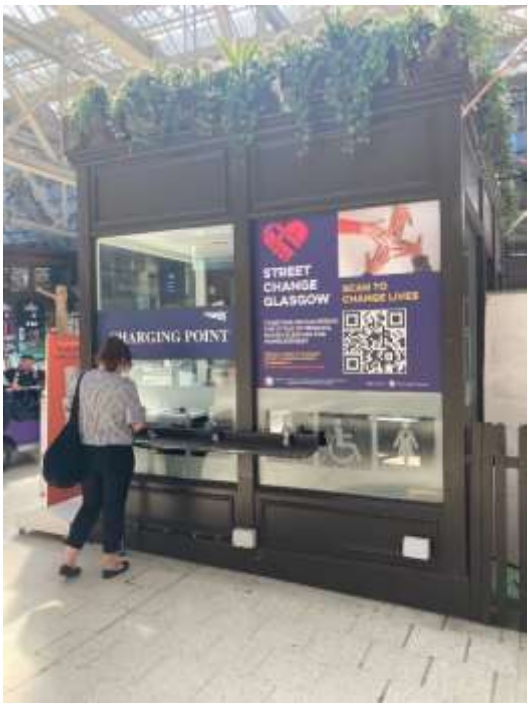




Figure 1: Images of SCG vinyls in Glasgow Central Station main concourse





Figure 2: Images of SCG vinyls on Mercat Building at Glasgow Cross

8 APPENDIX B: RELATED SCS/SCG DATASETS

8.1 Introduction

8.1.1 This short report provides Street Change Glasgow data from inception until the end of 2023.

- **Section 1** provides an overview of the number of scans the Street Change Glasgow QR codes have received since this element was launched in August 2022.
- **Section 2** details how the Street Change fund has been utilised since June 2020.
- **Section 3** provides data for referrals made to the Fuel Bank Foundation from Simon Community's Access Hub.

8.2 Section 1. QR code statistics

8.2.1 **Figures 3 - 6** show the number of QR code scans via posters placed in bars and restaurants around the city and some local authority buildings, and vinyls placed in Glasgow Central Station, and on vacant window space of the Mercat Buildings. The posters have consistently been the most effective form of receiving scans from the public.

8.2.2 **Figure 7** shows the total number of QR code scans across all methods of display since the launch of the QR codes element of the programme in August 2022. We have also printed the QR code onto drink mats and have started distributing these to bars and restaurants (largely those that are Best Bar None members). These were used successfully at the Best Bar None Awards Night - where approximately £2,000 was raised from QR code scans. We are working to increase the awareness of this QR code campaign through social media and other avenues, such as benefit gigs and concerts, in 2024.

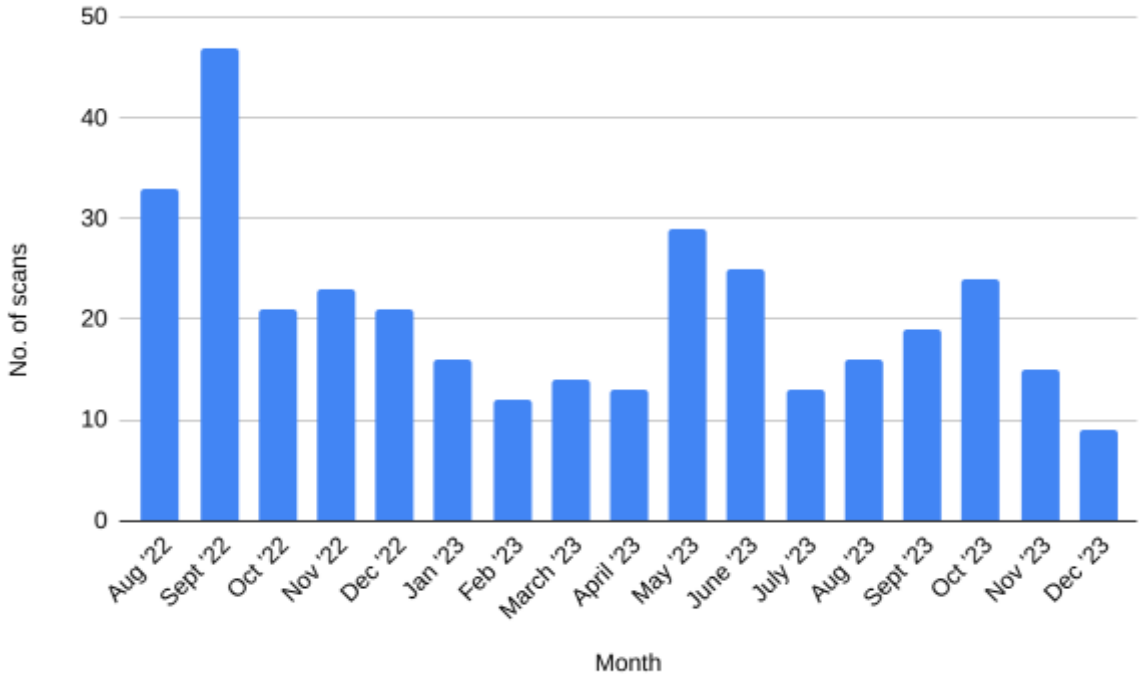


Figure 2: Monthly scans of Street Change Glasgow QR code posters (installed from August 2022).

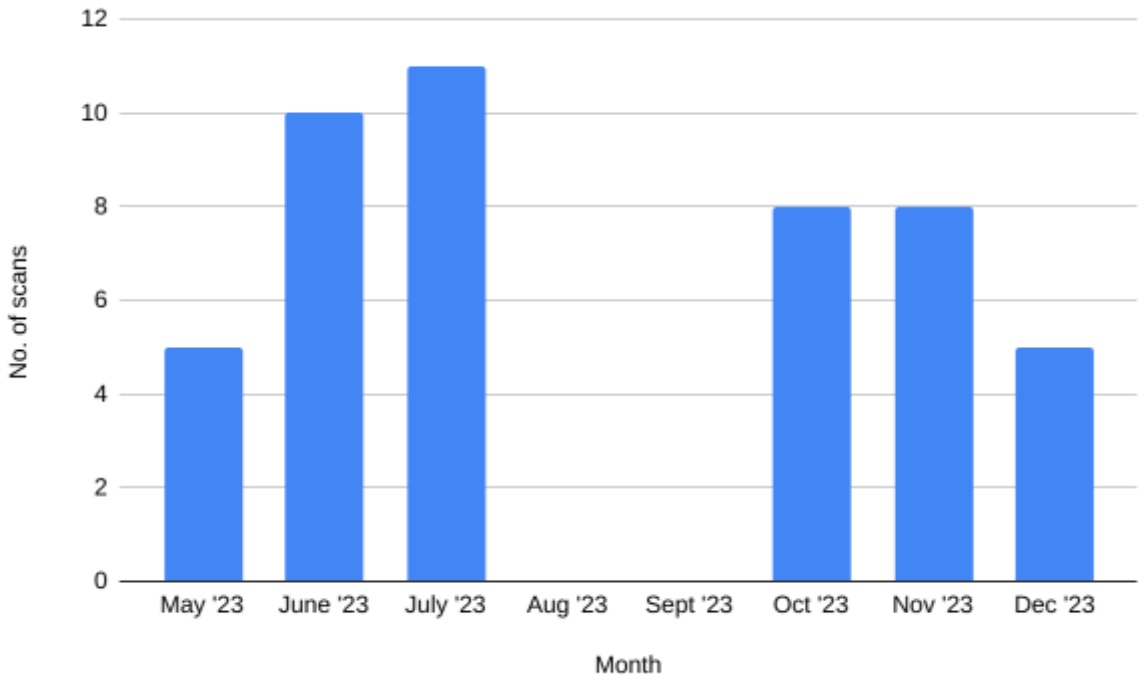


Figure 3: Monthly number of scans of Square QR code vinyl at Glasgow Central Station mobility point (installed in May 2023).

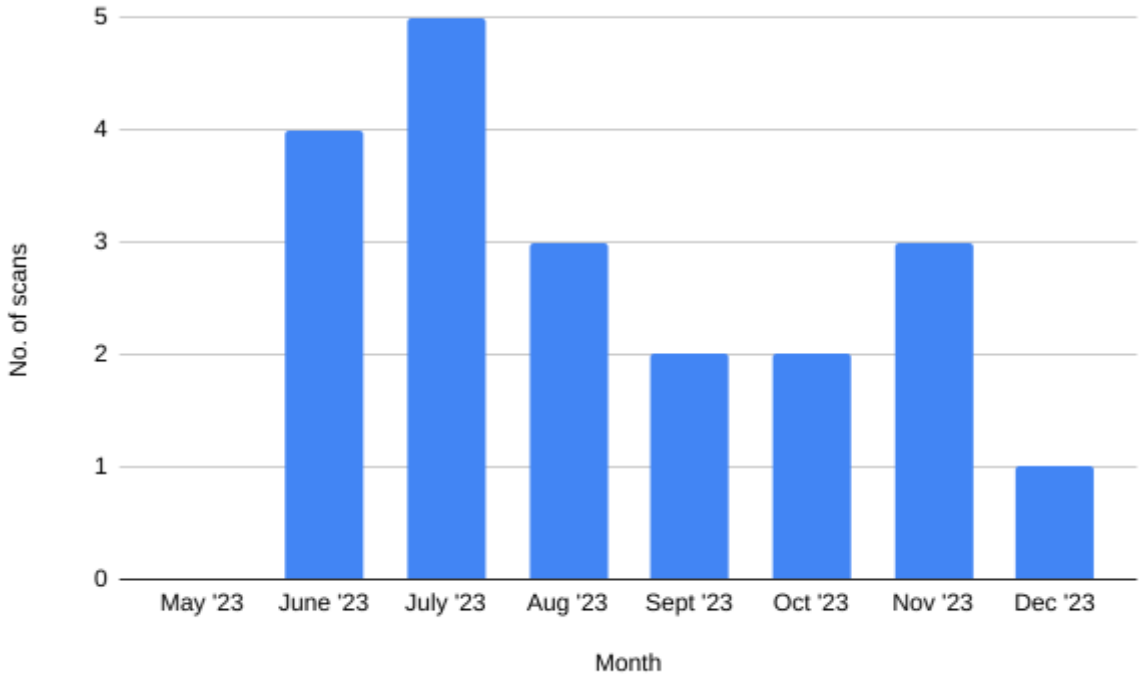


Figure 4: Monthly number of scans of Long QR code vinyl at Glasgow Central Station British Transport Police point (installed in May 2023).

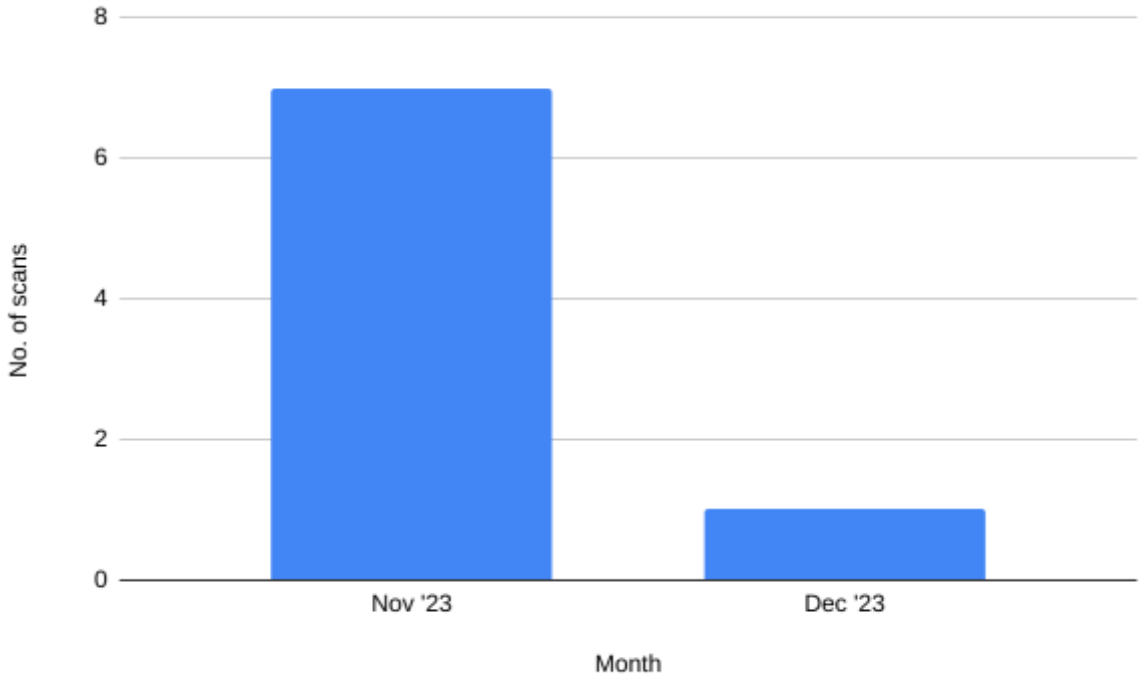


Figure 5: Monthly number of scans of QR code vinyls placed on window space of Mercat Buildings (installed in November 2023).

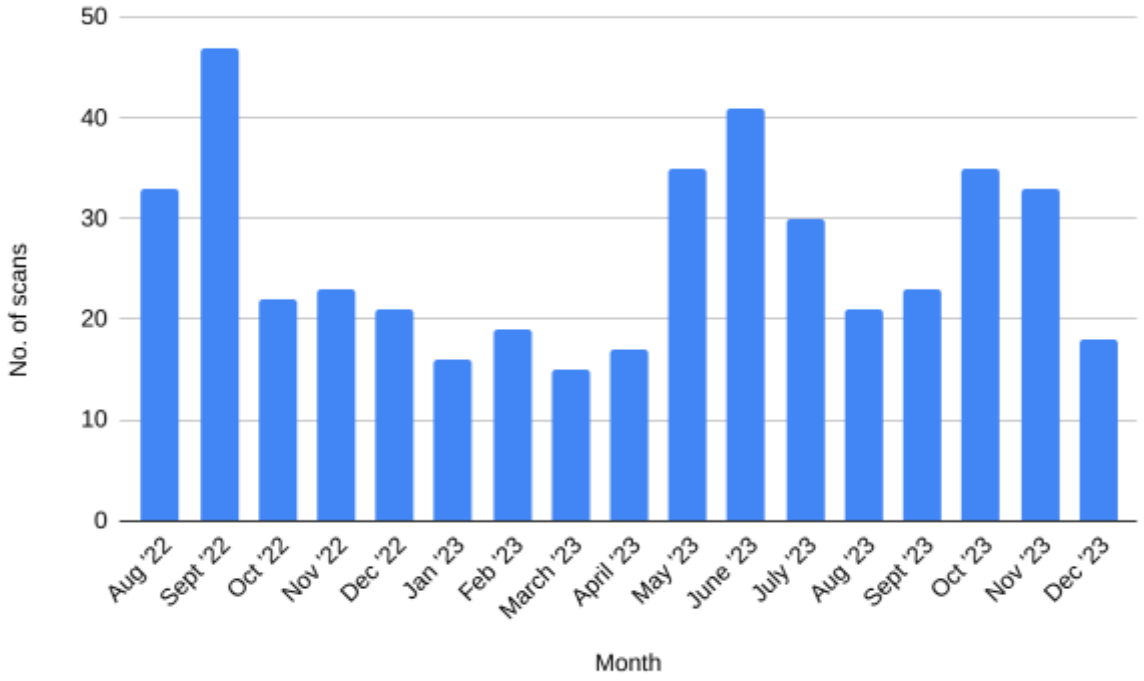


Figure 6: Monthly total number of Street Change Glasgow QR code scans across all methods of display (installations started in August 2023).

8.3 Section 2. Referrals to Street Change Glasgow fund

8.3.1 The Street Change Glasgow fund has been accessed a total of 206 times (until the end of 2023) since it was launched in June 2020. It was accessed 108 times in 2023.

8.3.2 **Figure 8** provides a breakdown of these referral numbers by month. The total amount utilised to date is £16,202 from total donations of £19,789.

8.3.3 **Figure 9** shows the six most common reasons/uses for the fund being accessed since it went live in June 2020.

8.3.4 **Figure 10** shows uses of the fund in 2023. In some instances a single application is submitted to assist someone in more than one way (e.g. to purchase some food, and travel). Since its inception, the most common reason for an application being made was to purchase clothing for someone being supported, followed by purchasing food or essentials, mobile phones and top up, supporting someone with travel to appointments or for example, to family, utility bills, and to purchase TVs to help prevent and tackle social isolation. The 'other' category is made up, for example, of applications for furnishings to make a living space into a home, personal items and services such as towels and haircuts.

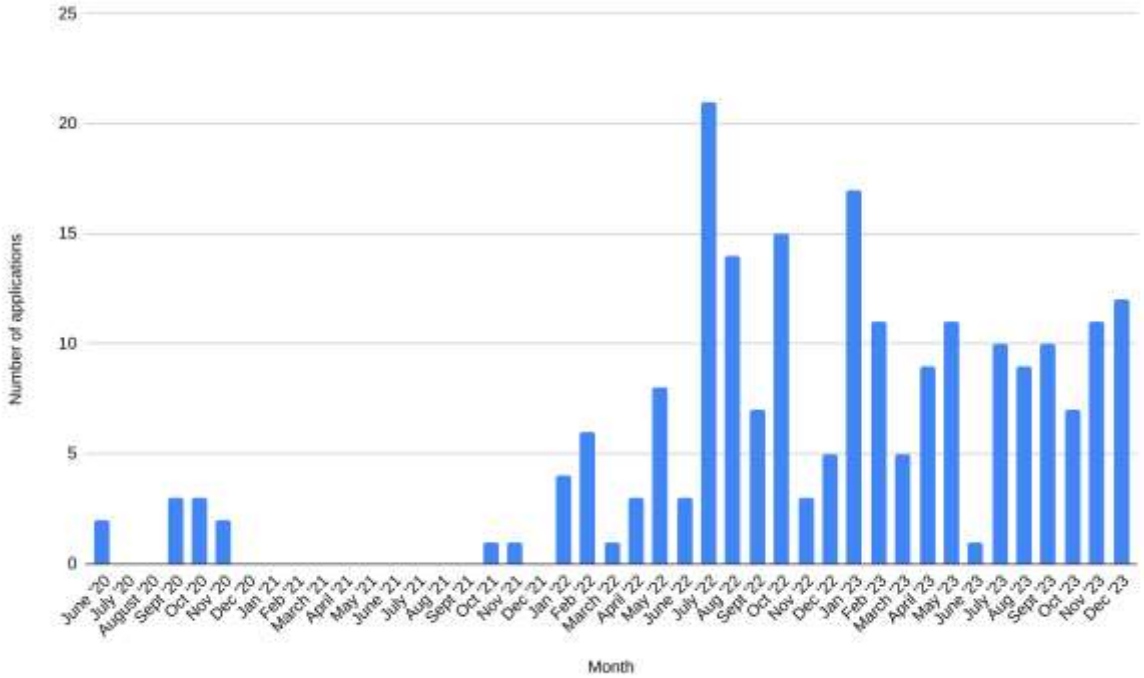


Figure 7: Number of monthly referrals made to Street Change fund (June 2020-October 2023).

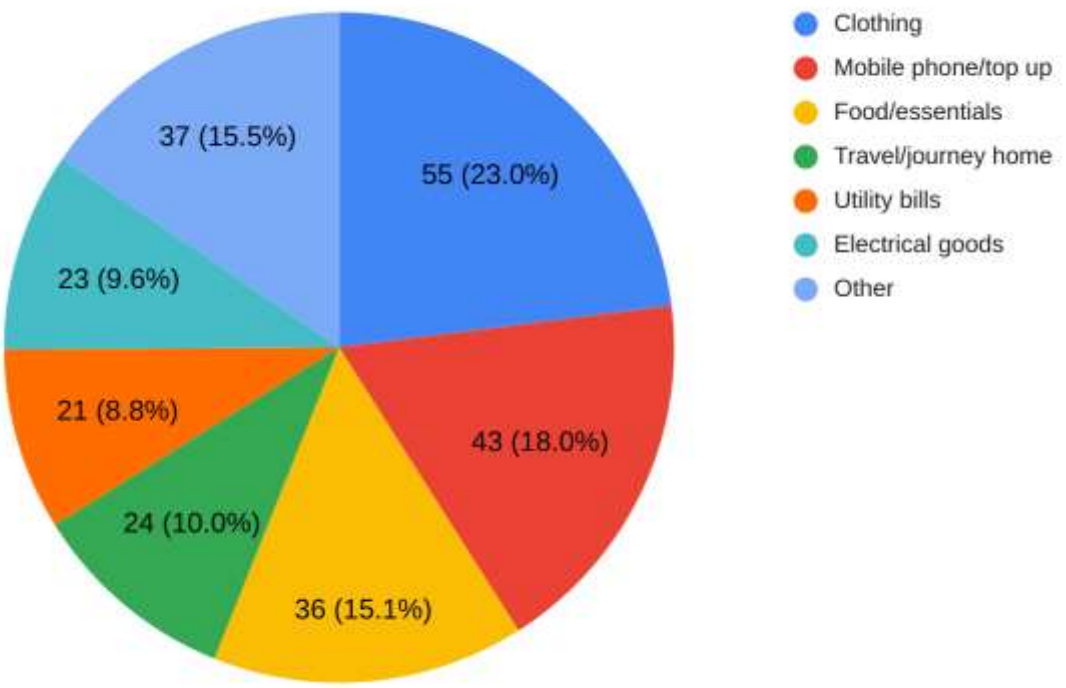


Figure 8: Breakdown of Street Change fund application categories since fund became accessible (June 2020-December 2023).

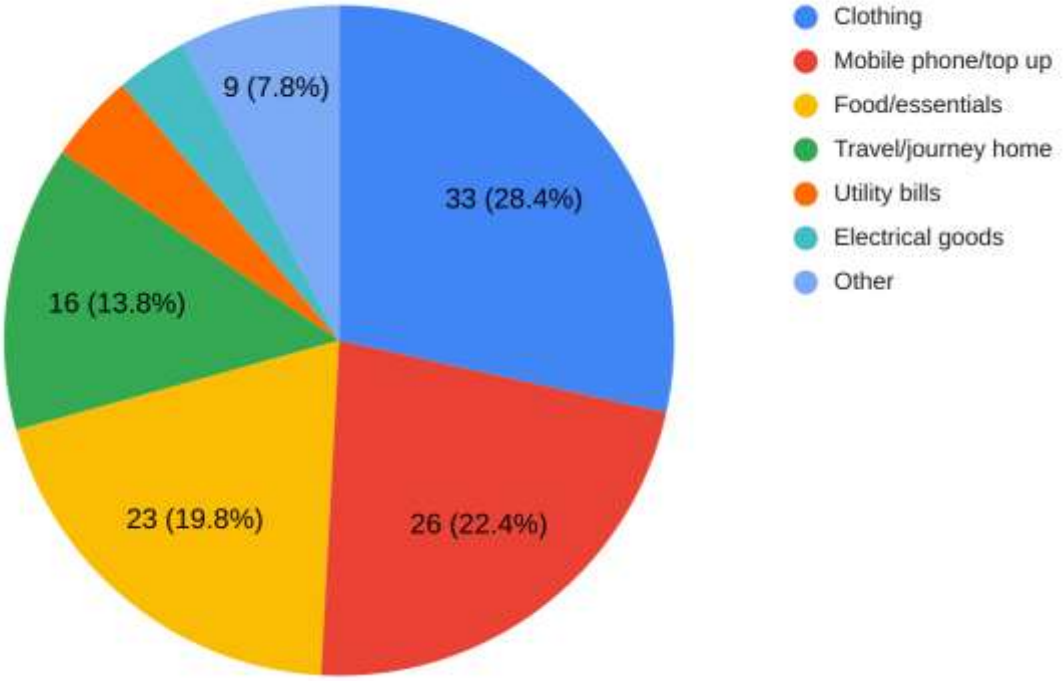


Figure 9: Breakdown of Street Change fund application categories for 2023.

8.3.5 Below are some quotes describing how using the Street Change fund for some of the above reasons, has made an impact:

- *"Through the Street Change fund I was able to buy a winter coat and new shoes for someone we support - the ones he owned had holes in the soles" -Simon Community Support Worker*
- *"The Street Change fund really helped with supporting a gentleman who was rough sleeping to register with a GP. We were able to buy him a mobile phone and arrange a phone appointment so he could speak to the GP directly. It would have been much less likely he'd be linked in with ongoing medical support without this" - Simon Community Healthcare Support Worker*
- *"He was unable to use kettle packs or go to the usual places where homeless people can get free food [because he had Coeliac Disease]. We did supervised spends with him at a local supermarket. He said that we had made a huge difference to him as he was no longer constantly hungry. He had forgotten what it felt like to have a full belly." - Simon Community Support Worker*
- *"Using Street Change funds, we were able to support a woman in her own tenancy to purchase her own bed, mattress, and bedding. She was delighted to be able to choose the design on her duvet cover - something that had never been an option for her before.*
- *Having spent years rough sleeping and moving between emergency and temporary accommodations, it was so important for us to be able to make*

her home comfortable and feel like her own. She is now in a safe, warm, and comfortable environment of her own." - Support Worker

8.4 Section 3. Other Simon Community Scotland activities

8.4.1 **Figure 11** details the number of referrals made from the Simon Community Access Hub to the Fuel Bank Foundation. Simon Community Scotland became a referral partner for the Fuel Bank Foundation in October 2022.

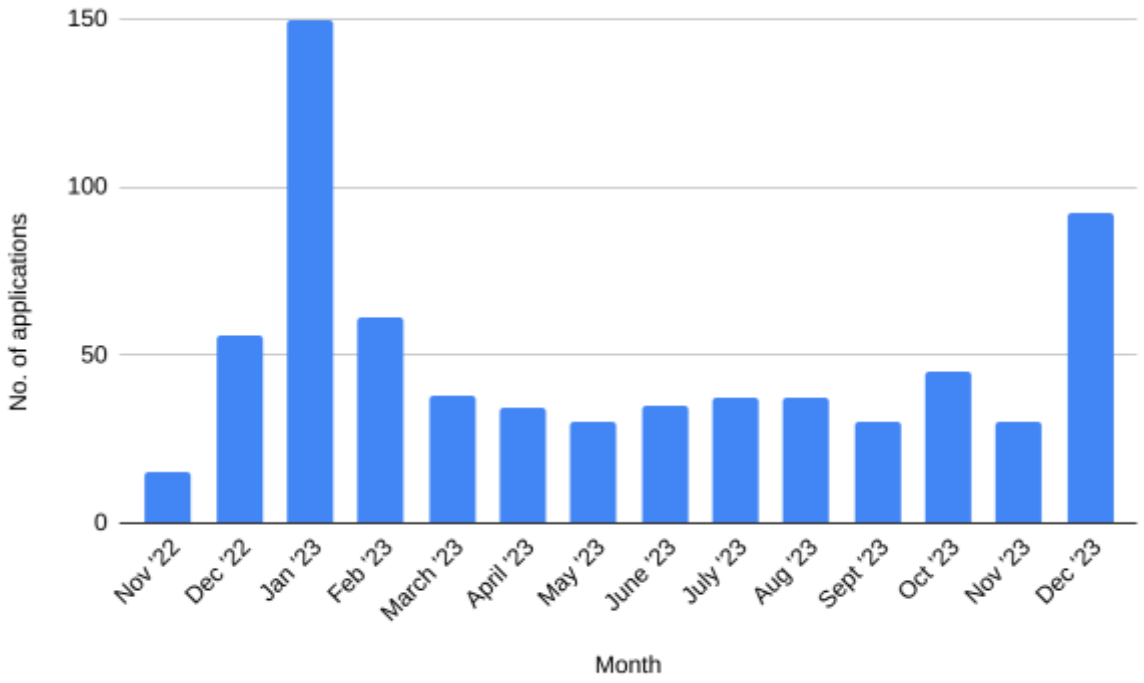
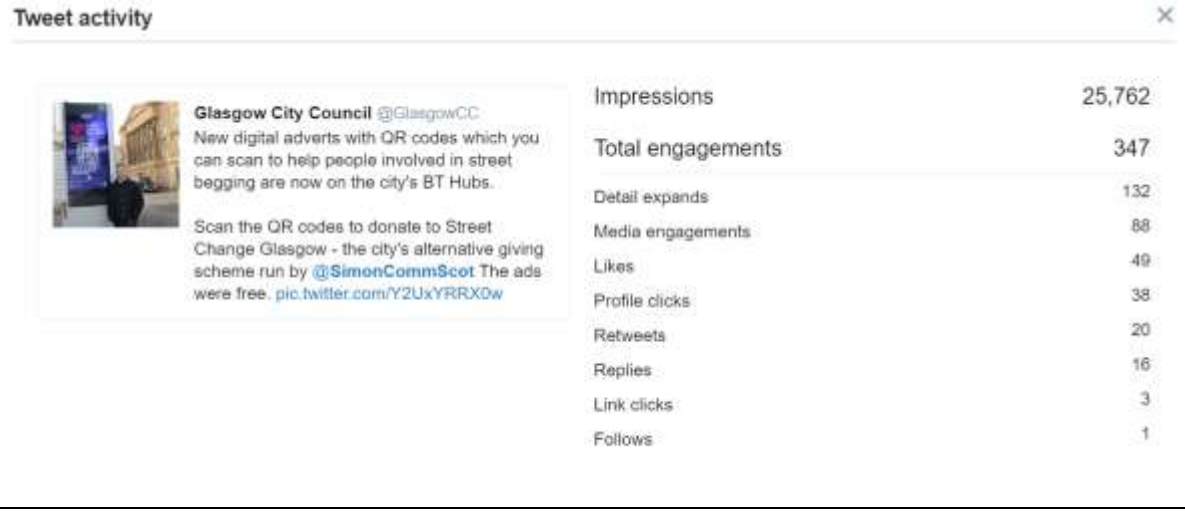


Figure 10: Number of monthly referrals made to the Fuel Bank Foundation from Simon Community Scotland's Glasgow Access Hub

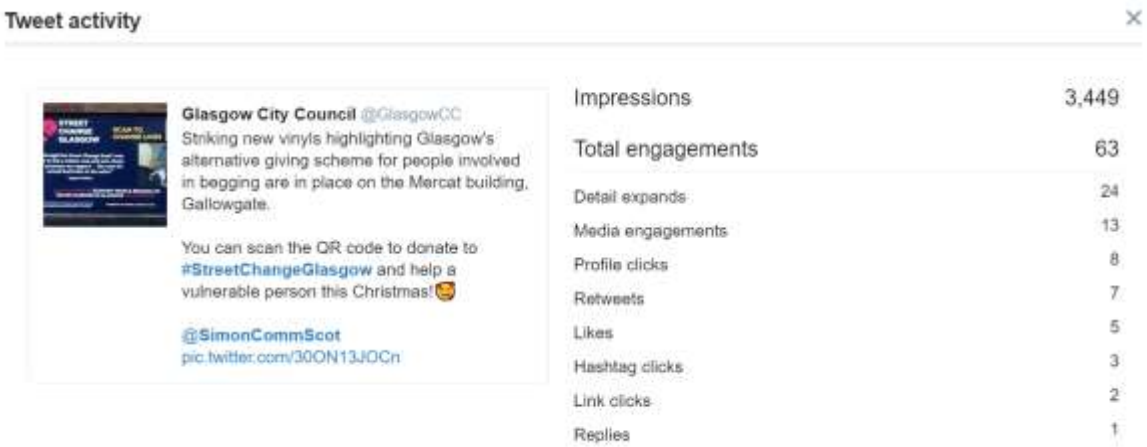
9 APPENDIX C: GCC GBS SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS & DATA ANALYTICS

X (Twitter):



Facebook (post above):
Impressions – 34,247
Reactions – 143
Comments – 86
Shares – 41
Other Clicks – 1,647

X (Twitter):



Facebook (post above):
Impressions – 7,051
Reactions – 20
Comments – 4
Shares – 4
Other Clicks – 133

X (Twitter):

Tweet activity



Glasgow City Council @GlasgowCC
Help vulnerable people involved in begging in Glasgow by scanning Street Change Glasgow QR codes which are on display in a host of council & **@glasgowlife** buildings as well as at Glasgow Central Station. **@NetworkRailGLC** ❤ **@SimonCommScot** **@GlasgowLib** **#begging** **#alternativegiving** pic.twitter.com/cRcedPVVkr

Impressions	6,800
Total engagements	80
Detail expands	29
Media engagements	16
Likes	10
Link clicks	10
Retweets	6
Profile clicks	5
Hashtag clicks	3
Replies	1