

# PLYMOUTH SOUP RUN

WINTER 2017 Q1

**The following is a summary of a report on the 2016 highlights of the Soup Run, prepared by Lyndsey Withers and Hilary Knight for the end of year meeting of the Rough Sleeper Strategy Group. The report was also presented by Lyndsey at the Christmas buffet supper for volunteers in December at Mutley Baptist Church (see pictures below):**



**Some of the Wednesday night volunteers at Mutley Baptist Church (see feature on page 2). Top row, left to right: Adrian, Mike, Paul, John, John and Chris. Bottom row, left to right: Giuseppe, Derek, Matt, Clare and Peter.**

- We served 21,100 meals at an average of 58 per night.
- Volunteers received training from the Red Cross and St Luke's, and learned about other partner agencies through talks at Soup Run Development Group meetings.
- New teams were welcomed on board during the year, medical and social science students provided regular support, and we have a waiting list of potential volunteers.
- A growing list of contributors provided generous donations of food, appeals to the community maintained a good supply of blankets and sleeping bags, and partners provided gifts to help make Christmas special for our service users.
- Our website informs readers on who we are and what we do, with news flashes, articles and a quarterly newsletter. The nightly blog shares up-to-date information on service user numbers and urgent issues.
- We have spread the word about the Soup Run through a meeting organised by Transforming

Plymouth Together between the Bishop of Exeter and local community groups, a meeting of Plymouth University health and wellbeing researchers, and Shelter's anniversary conference. Other opportunities to raise awareness and funds included our sponsored winter walk and a poster series.

- The people that we serve are at the heart of all that we do. We work with individuals as well as our service user group as a whole, and are always happy to learn of personal impact, eg entrenched rough sleepers who are ready to come indoors, and ex-service users who stay in touch with news of positive developments in their lives.

**THANK YOU** so much to all the groups and individuals who sent donations of money, toiletries and smaller clothing items (ie hats, gloves, scarves, socks and pants) that came in at Christmas. These are all so welcome, especially in winter.



A community and faith driven service providing free food and hot drinks to homeless, hungry and vulnerable people 365 days a year.

**MUTLEY BAPTIST CHURCH (MBC)** has for many years been established and recognised for its caring ministries amongst the homeless, addicted and vulnerable. As well as the Soup Run we take a look at some of their other projects.

**Wednesday** is the MBC Soup Run night co-ordinated by **Chris Hulbert**. Of the 3 MBC teams, **Adrian Sutton** leads one with volunteers from MBC, St Peter's RC Church and St Edward's.

**John Walker's** life began with learning difficulties and a very cruel step-mother. He went to a children's home but at 16 he left to return home where his step-mother beat him again. He ran away but was admitted to a psychiatric hospital, so he left and went on the streets. Having taken a train to Euston, a kindly policeman showed him where the homeless slept and where he could get food. He was homeless for 42 years all over the country before coming to Plymouth. He was the first person to walk into Gaffer's Café (see opposite) and later found faith at MBC. Friends at MBC have walked with him through his journey, God has

answered his prayers and he now has a safe home and is free from alcohol. John realised that God gave him a purpose; his experience and insight into homelessness are so real and relevant for the Soup Run and he has been part of the team for about 4 years. John is such an inspiration, encouragement and a treasure.



**Clare Rogers** has been on the team for 3-4 years. Married with 2 children, she works at the Art College, and is also an artist and a poet. "It's like Mother Teresa said... 'Not all of us can do great things, but we can do small things with great love.' Doing something purposeful with my faith just feels what I am meant to do".



**Plymouth Focus Advice Centre** provides free, confidential and impartial advice on debts and welfare benefits. The service was set up in 2002 by **Colin Trend**, the project manager, who focuses on debt issues. **Chris Hulbert** joined in 2004 and deals with benefits. Most of the welfare benefit clients have mental health problems and most are classed as vulnerable. Referrals are by word of mouth, mental health charities and the NHS. The office at MBC is open 10am-4pm on Tuesdays with a drop-in from 10am-12 noon Saturday mornings (entrance via the MBC reception, Ermington Terrace). For more information visit [www.plymouthfocus.co.uk](http://www.plymouthfocus.co.uk)

**Gaffer's Café** began in 2009 as a twice weekly drop-in providing free lunches for the vulnerable and homeless. **Fiona Spicer** heads up the team and the café is open on Mondays and Thursdays from 1-2pm. The entrance is in the MBC lounge (on the side of the church, up the slope).

**Recovery**, which began in 2010, seeks to show people the love of Jesus whilst providing free hot meals, support, prayer, music and a social time for those wanting to move on and recover from life's storms. Many of the clients are seeking to be free from drug/ alcohol problems, some have mental health issues, a few are homeless. Recovery, co-ordinated by **Fiona Spicer** meets on Tuesday evenings from 7-9pm, entrance via the youth door at the side of MBC.

**Chaddlewood Community Baptist Church**

Following the article in the last newsletter it has been brought to our attention that Chaddlewood Community Baptist Church has not 'closed' as such, but meets on Tuesday evenings at Boringdon Park Golf Club in Plympton. They are also behind 'The Hub', a Plympton-based community project which seeks to meet some of the social need and deprivation in the area from premises on the Ridgeway, Plympton. Members of the Chaddlewood Soup Run team come from a wide variety of sources in Plympton including St Mary's Church, Woodford Methodist Church and staff from Chaddlewood Primary

**Dear Lord...**

*Thank you that we can find shelter in You from the storms of life. Amen*