

Plymouth Soup Run Report for January 2022

In January 2022:

- Plymouth Soup Run served 2278 meals (an average of 73 meals per night, equivalent to 8 meals or 12% more per night than December 2021, and 19 meals or 35% more per night than January 2021; all figures rounded). This significant increase over January 2021 reflects the general observation that we are not seeing a winter dip in demand.
- We continue to receive donations of food albeit less than around Christmas/New Year, although some late donations to our 'Reverse Advent Calendar Appeal' boosted supplies. As a pilot, we have joined FareShare Southwest to help with weekend food requirements.
- Teams made 26 referrals to the Path Rough Sleeper Team; they met 80 other rough sleepers at the evening Soup Run/Kitchen and at Shekinah on Saturday mornings (some sightings will have been of the same individuals on different occasions); 51 sleeping bags or blankets were given out to rough sleepers.
- There were many requests for warm coats, hats, gloves, scarves and underwear, as well as for toiletries and sanitary products. We had several requests for shoes that we were not able to fulfil.
- Plymouth University Islamic Society students and medical students volunteered at the Sunday Soup Kitchen during January, serving food and providing toiletries.
- Concerns over the mental health of clients were common, some being very distressed. Stress and friction among clients sometimes boiled over into aggression, requiring intervention to de-escalate.
- Some clients were given first aid, others were directed to the Cumberland Centre MIU for treatment. One client discharged from hospital was helped with the cost of accommodation to avoid sleeping rough.
- We were, once more, confronted by the difficulties encountered by a client released from prison on a Friday without accommodation and without adequate time to arrange a methadone script.
- Volunteer podiatrists from the charity 'Forgotten Feet' visited the Soup Kitchen and treated eight clients. Two referrals were made to GPs in respect of potentially serious conditions noted by the practitioners.
- The Sunday Soup Kitchen benefited from the presence of the regular Path worker as well as workers from Trevi's Southwest Women's Spark Project who were able to offer specialist support to women clients including one who was experiencing serious domestic violence. Our strong collaboration with services including the Path/Rough Sleepers Team and Plymouth City Council is supporting joined up work, including through attending safeguarding risk management meetings.
- Drake Circus businesses, led by 'Fat Face' provided clothing and other products to one of our Saturday teams and volunteered regularly on their run.
- StreetVet joined the Monday team fortnightly to treat client's companion animals and we are getting frequent requests for pet food.
- Our normal Tuesday team is no longer able to go out each week, so immediate gaps are being filled by other teams, and additional providers for Tuesdays are being recruited.
- The Saturday morning drop-in at Shekinah for rough sleepers and winter provision users, operating since 6th November 2021 and supported by Soup Run and Alliance staff volunteers, continues to go well. For many clients, the opportunity to come indoors, have a hot meal and relax in safety is clearly very welcome. During January, Plymouth University awarded a Higher Education Innovation Fund grant to the activity. This will support operations for six months including bringing in health and wellbeing practitioners each week.