

Plymouth Soup Run Report for November 2022

- We served 1,935 meals in November, an average of 65 meals per night, equivalent to 7 meals or 10% fewer per night than November 2021, and 19 meals or 23% fewer than October 2022. The reduction in late October and persisting into November is attributed to a combination of worsening weather and clients on benefits being in receipt of cost-of-living payments. Numbers started to grow again towards the end of the month. We received a number of phone calls and emails from people asking for food parcels. These were passed to community partners, or the people were invited to Shekinah on a Saturday morning when we can provide them with food.
- The cold and wet weather undoubtedly deterred some from coming out, but those that did often had high support needs: *"... at Mayflower Street, one man was drenched and needed a complete change of clothes. Another was very keen for a sleeping bag and a hot drink, rather than food."* *"People with accommodation are starting to ask for blankets because they are cold."* Reduced numbers did mean that teams had more time to interact with clients, underlining the importance of providing continuity and a listening ear to share people's good news and worries.
- The Soup Run had the opportunity to apply to the Household Support Fund managed by Plymouth City Council and we were fortunate to receive a grant that will be used from December 2022 until March 2023 to help clients keep warm over the colder months.
- Our regular food sources continued their support, and we received regular food donations on a Saturday morning. On two nights, teams benefited from food donations brought to Soup Run stops. On another occasion, a member of the public brought some jumpers to give to clients. Warm clothing, ambient food and toiletries were in high demand as ever.
- We were contacted by a lot of people offering to volunteer at Christmas and more generally. Several businesses provided volunteers and welcome items including clothing, and StreetVet volunteers came out fortnightly to tend the companion animals of our clients.
- 10 referrals were made to the Path Rough Sleeper Team. 45 sleeping bags, 6 blankets and 1 rucksack were given out to rough sleepers. On two occasions, the Soup Run paid for overnight accommodation for clients who had no other options, and teams helped two other clients reach their B&B accommodation. Two medical emergencies involving paramedic intervention occurred in November, one on the street and one at Shekinah.
- As the weather deteriorates further, the Saturday morning sessions at Shekinah assume greater importance. For much of November, the service was devoted to rough sleepers and night shelter users, while other clients, e.g. those in B&Bs were supported at the door and given a take away lunch. An average of 19 clients were supported each week in November. Most who came inside had a cooked breakfast and take-away lunch. Many took a shower and were provided with clean clothing or laundry vouchers.
- The Saturday morning sessions continue to be highly conducive to concentrated work with clients, facilitating placement in accommodation or reconnection. Specific health interventions were made possible through the presence of the Health Inclusion Pathway, Plymouth (HIPP) clinical lead, podiatrists from 'Forgotten Feet' and practitioners from PCC Public Health and Livewell offering smoking cessation advice and vapes. Medical, Social Work and Occupational Therapy students, a peer mentor from Heads Count, volunteers from PCC and Path, and an artist also supported the sessions in November.
- Soup Run representatives participated in meetings of the Plymouth Food Aid Network, the Next Meal Global Forum, the HIPP pre-launch event, a Plymouth University/PCC event on tackling male violence against women and girls, and a stakeholder meeting of the Plymouth University FoodSEqual (Food Systems Equality) project in which the Soup Run is a community partner.
- The Soup Run provided refreshments at a Covid and flu vaccination clinic at Hamoaze House on 4th November, and will host a Covid vaccination drop-in at the Sunday Soup Kitchen on 11th December.
- Our Christmas appeal Reverse Advent Calendar was launched (see Facebook @plymouthsoup run), and donations are coming in steadily, as well as in response to our ongoing Amazon Wish List.
- We are planning a service of remembrance to be held outside Plymouth Methodist Central Hall at 8.15pm on Wednesday 21st December to honour the memory of those we loved who have experienced homelessness, and whom we have lost this year.