

Plymouth Soup Run Report for April 2023

The month in numbers

- 2,543 meals served, equivalent to 85 per night, 20% up on April 2022 and 6% up on March 2023.
- 9,629 meals served year to date.
- Numbers fluctuated during the month with the highest week being 24% higher than the lowest week, when a short-lived drop was attributed to clients receiving a cost-of-living payment.
- An average of 22 clients supported at each Saturday morning session prioritising rough sleepers.
- 16 referrals made to the Path Rough Sleeper Team.
- 59 sleeping bags and 9 blankets given out.

Resourcing the service

- Food supplies were sourced from redistributed food suppliers including FareShare South West, and the Coop Depot, and from local stores, supplemented by purchases to meet needs and offer balance.
- A generous donation of funding has been confirmed from the Community Grants managed by 11 Plymouth City Councillors.
- Members of the public kindly made ad hoc donations of food and orders via our Amazon Wish List.
- Drawing on central funds and team donations, we were able to mark Easter with a fishcake and chips supper on Good Friday, Easter decoration making on the Saturday, and an Easter Sunday roast dinner with Easter eggs for everyone.

More than food

- The chilly weather continued into April and warm clothing was in demand, plus underwear, socks, and toiletries; one client desperately needed shoes.
- The 68 sleeping bags or blankets given out is close to a record and represents a major cost.
- Accommodation was arranged for several clients via Saturday morning sessions and evening runs, and emergency weekend accommodation in a B&B was funded for a vulnerable client.

Teams, partnerships and networking.

- Plymouth and Cornwall businesses and various other workplace groups including unions continued to be strong supporters of the Soup Run.
- Our close partnership with Path and Shekinah continued, and colleagues from Citizen's Advice, HeadsCount, Shelter, PCC and the Health Inclusion Pathway, Plymouth (HIPP) lent expert support, as well as StreetVet tending companion animals.
- Three off-duty police officers joined a Sunday soup kitchen.
- Duke of Edinburgh Award and Marjon students completed their placements during April.
- Soup Run representatives hosted a session with first year dental students as part of their Inter-Professional Engagement module, discussing homelessness and related health challenges.
- A large group of Soup Run volunteers enjoyed a visit to Shekinah's new premises at Stonehouse Creek.
- Soup Run volunteers participated in meetings the Plymouth Rough Sleeper Strategy Implementation Group, Plymouth Food Aid Network, and the Plymouth University FoodSequal project.

Client health and wellbeing

- Three volunteer podiatrists from Forgotten Feet treated clients at two Saturday morning sessions, and provided an opportunity for four Plymouth University podiatry student observers to attend.
- With the opportunity to make direct referrals to the Dental School Community Clinic, two clients in urgent need of treatment were helped.

Themes

- No two nights are the same; teams are prepared for some being much more or less calm than others.
- Time to talk to clients, build relationships and identify support needs is as vital as ever: *"A high level of need with people talking about accommodation, health and dental pain." "[S] was distraught and grieving for [his young wife] who had died."*
- Despite a brief lull in numbers for a few days, rising need was clearly evident: *"There was a very long queue of people patiently waiting for us to open this Sunday." "Just when we think it can't get any busier, we served 134 people." "... probably the busiest week ever!". "So many different people out on the run now, never have I seen it this bad."*
- Not all needs are being met: *"Two couples who have been street homeless for a while were very low."*