

Plymouth Soup Run Report for February 2022

In February 2022:

- Plymouth Soup Run served 2122 meals (an average of 76 meals per night, equivalent to 2 meals or 3% more per night than January 2022, and 14 meals or 23% more per night than February 2021; all figures rounded). This increase over February 2021 confirms our observation that we are not seeing a winter dip in demand.
- We continue to receive donations of food from individuals, businesses, and surplus food redistribution projects. Our membership of FareShare Southwest is proving beneficial.
- As well as the usual hot meal, snacks and drinks given out, we were able to provide clients with supplies of dried and tinned food, and eggs.
- Our coordinator was alerted by authorities to two families with young children in B&Bs who were without any food. Within hours, food parcels were delivered to their accommodation. A kettle was provided to one of the families who had been placed in a room without running water or any means of heating water.
- Contacts at Plymouth City Council have been prompt in following up concerns that we have raised regarding support for prison leavers, B&B provisions, and referrals for food aid for clients placed in emergency accommodation in Plymouth by neighbouring local authorities without reference to PCC.
- Teams made 32 referrals to the Path Rough Sleeper Team and 2 to HISS. They reported 86 instances of meeting other rough sleepers at the Soup Run throughout the week, at Shekinah on Saturday mornings, or at the Sunday Soup Kitchen (some instances will have been of the same individuals on different occasions). 58 sleeping bags or blankets and three rucksacks were given out mainly to rough sleepers. Two sleeping bags were given to clients in B&Bs without adequate bedding.
- Warm coats, hats, gloves, scarves, underwear and toiletries were distributed most nights.
- The Soup Run's strong collaboration with Alliance partners, notably Path and Shekinah, continued with support being provided when SWEP (Severe Weather Emergency Protocol) was called during storm Eunice.
- The pilot opening of Shekinah on Saturday mornings for rough sleepers and those in emergency accommodation was well attended. Clients were able to receive attention from the Community Outreach nurses and meet mental health peer mentors, as well as joining art sessions to provide a recreational outlet.
- A Shekinah worker attending the Saturday sessions provided follow-up support for vulnerable clients at the Soup Kitchen on some Sundays. Support workers from Path and Trevi joined the Sunday Soup Kitchen each week to advise clients, and Plymouth University Islamic Society members and medical students served food and distributed toiletries. Our Sunday preparations were helped by Duke of Edinburgh Award students.
- Soup Run representatives joined Creative Solutions Forum discussions, and attended meetings of the Rough Sleeper Strategy Implementation Group and the Plymouth Homelessness Prevention Partnership. Our annual report for 2021 was presented at the latter meeting.
- The mental health of clients continues to be a concern with very challenging behaviour being encountered on many occasions. Teams share information with each other and with services to forewarn volunteers of potential issues and mitigate risk. An ambulance was called one night for a client who had collapsed at the first Soup Run stop.
- Our overall impression from the month is that people are very hungry, are undeterred by hostile weather from coming to get food, and are demonstrating ever higher levels of need and complexity.