

Plymouth Soup Run Report for April 2022

In April 2022:

- Plymouth Soup Run served 2119 meals (an average of 71 meals per night, equivalent to 1 meal or 2% less per night than March 2022, and 4 meals or 6% more per night than April 2021; all figures rounded). The increase over 2021 is less than earlier in the year, but the year-to-date figure of 8754 meals served still represents a significant increase of 16% over 2021. Sundays always see the highest number of clients – we served 129 meals on Easter Sunday.
- Additional ambient food was offered to clients on most nights. Meals were taken the homes of two clients who were too unwell to come and collect food. Delivery of food parcels to five others was arranged through church partners, each parcel containing a 3-day supply of fresh and ambient food.
- We continued to receive donations of food from individuals, businesses, and surplus food redistribution projects, and have been fortunate to receive a cash donation from a local church and a donation of underwear from another.
- Teams made nine referrals to the Path Rough Sleeper Team plus two to HISS, and gave out 33 sleeping bags or blankets to rough sleepers. In exceptional cases, the Soup Run helped fund temporary accommodation for individuals with no other options.
- There continued to be a demand for warm clothing and on some Saturday evenings, volunteers from FatFace generously provide clothing packs and toiletries donated by Drake Circus stores.
- There have been particular concerns for a number of vulnerable young women. The possibility to connect them with Trevi/Spark staff who join the Sunday soup kitchen has been beneficial.
- Our Duke of Edinburgh Award students who have helped pack snacks over recent months have completed their assignment and will be missed. Other partners who have joined runs include StreetVet, Path and university student volunteers, and we welcomed two new teams this month.
- A Soup Run representative participated in the visit by TRH the Earl and Countess of Wessex to the Devon and Cornwall Food Action depot. They also joined various meetings: Creative Solutions Forum, Plymouth Food Aid Network, Next Meal Global Forum, PCC/Changing Futures programme.
- Excellent collaboration with Alliance partners, especially the Path Rough Sleeper Team and Shekinah, enabled the Soup Run to share timely information on people in crisis and receive valuable feedback.
- The pilot opening of Shekinah on Saturday mornings for rough sleepers and those in emergency accommodation continued to be well attended. Clients were able to meet mental health peer mentors, get advice on oral healthcare and blood borne viruses (including Hepatitis C testing), join art sessions and make Easter decorations. On one Saturday, there was a take-away only service due to impacts of Covid, with individual support provided as needed.
- The health of our clients is a continuing concern as reflected in a statement we made on 7th April - World Health Day (<https://www.plymouthsouprun.org.uk/world-health-day-7th-april-2022/>; <https://www.facebook.com/219196825382517/photos/a.227393794562820/992445114724347/>). We are trying to address this proactively through the inclusion of health providers in the Saturday morning sessions as above. In addition, the community outreach nurses joined the Sunday soup kitchen one week and offered Covid vaccinations. We also encouraged engagement with a health promotion and Covid vaccination event at which we provided refreshments.
- Clients' mental health issues and consequent behavioural challenges are particularly evident. Teams routinely reported back on the behaviour of two clients in the interests of their own wellbeing and that of other clients and volunteers who encounter their aggressive behaviour.
- The Plymouth Soup Run provides teams with agreed guidelines on standards of practice, and these have been updated recently to incorporate additional guidance on food safety and the changing Covid situation, as well as advice on looking after our volunteers based on trauma-informed principles. We are especially conscious of the need to support volunteers who are impacted by clients' circumstances and, sadly, the not infrequent deaths that touch all of us who have worked with and cared for those clients.