

Plymouth Soup Run Report for May 2022

In May 2022:

- Plymouth Soup Run served 2,553 meals (an average of 82 meals per night, equivalent to 12 meals or 17% more per night than April 2022, and 11 meals or 16% more per night than May 2021; all figures rounded). The year-to-date figure of 11,307 meals served represents a significant increase of 16% over 2021. Weekends are our busiest times; 1,036 meals were served on Saturdays and Sundays during the month.
- Delivery of two food parcels to clients in B&Bs was arranged through church partners, and food was delivered to one person rough sleeping in a tent.
- Most nights, as well as the prepared hot meal, drinks and snacks, ambient food is made available for clients to take. Donations of food from individuals, businesses, and surplus food redistribution projects continue to be made, but it is becoming more and more challenging to feed the numbers that we are seeing, as reported by teams: *"We had just enough food"*; *"Nothing left at the end of the evening"*; *Everything was given out tonight not a crumb left"*.
- Teams made 18 referrals to the Path Rough Sleeper Team, and gave out 65 sleeping bags or blankets to rough sleepers – both numbers double those reported in April.
- We had been asked to look out for a vulnerable female who was located and placed in emergency accommodation with assistance from Path, and we contacted PCC/Community Connections on behalf of two other clients. Also, in order to assist one client who had secured work, the Soup Run funded temporary accommodation to tide him over until he could support himself, and helped him with work clothing.
- Soup Run representatives participated in the official opening of the new FareShare surplus food redistribution depot, and in the events welcoming the new Lord Mayor of Plymouth and her Deputy. They also joined various meetings: Creative Solutions Forum, Plymouth Food Aid Network, Plymouth Homelessness Prevention Partnership, and PCC/Changing Futures programme. Soup Run team representatives came together in the bi-monthly meeting of the Soup Run Development Group.
- Excellent collaboration continues to be enjoyed with Alliance partners, especially the Path Rough Sleeper Team and Shekinah; and partners from Trevi/Spark, PCC/Community Connections/Public Health, Livewell, Path and StreetVet have joined our teams of volunteers to provide specialist support to clients. StreetVet arranged a delivery of dog food via the pet food bank 'Brambles' to a client who is having difficulty feeding himself and his dog.
- The pilot opening of Shekinah on Saturday mornings for rough sleepers and those in emergency accommodation has been very well attended with over 20 clients accessing the service each week. They were able to meet mental health peer mentors, get advice on eyecare and smoking cessation, and participate in art sessions.
- As always, the health of our clients is a concern; several were connected with the Outreach GP service. Clients' mental health issues, expressions of distress and behavioural challenges continue to be evident. We try to provide support through giving time to conversation with them – *"We were busy just with listening to the guys on the street"* – and through partnership with Heads Count whose peer mentors join the Saturday morning sessions.
- In parallel with increased numbers this month, teams have seen more examples of negative behaviour – *"For the first time for ages I had to remind people not to push forward while waiting to be served"* – extending into aggression between clients in relation to competition for food and other underlying issues. The police were called on one occasion.
- As often said, the Soup Run is about more than food. We are currently carrying out a survey to help us provide a service that is effective and comprehensive in all respects, and also to inform partners about our client community's circumstances and needs.