

Plymouth Soup Run Report for June 2022

In June 2022:

- Plymouth Soup Run served 2,634 meals (an average of 88 meals per night, equivalent to 6 meals or 7% more per night than May 2022, and 17 meals or 24% more per night than June 2021; all figures rounded). The year-to-date figure of 13,941 meals served represents a significant increase of 18% over 2021. The 2022 figures include meals served on Saturday mornings at Shekinah. However, even factoring those out, June 2022 saw an increase of 17% over June 2021. *13th June team: "The busiest Monday I think I have EVER seen! [At] the first stop [they] seemed to just keep on coming."*
- Families in B&Bs came to the Soup Run on four occasions and arrangements were made to deliver food parcels to them as well as to another vulnerable client confined to home.
- We are extremely grateful for continuing support from our food donors enabling us to provide hot food, drinks and snacks plus ambient food available for clients to choose. However, this month, as in May, the increase in demand for food is putting pressure on our resources. Two teams had to call in at a supermarket to restock during the evening due to unexpectedly high numbers, despite our efforts to share information on demand and plan ahead.
- Teams made 26 referrals to the Path Rough Sleeper Team, and gave out 73 sleeping bags or blankets to rough sleepers – consolidating increases seen in May. Requests for sleeping bags often exceeded supply. The unseasonal weather led to requests for warm and waterproof clothing as well as the usual requests for underwear and toiletries.
- Soup Run representatives joined meetings of the Rough Sleeper Strategy Implementation Group and Plymouth Food Aid Network, and attended an event to receive a generous donation from the Devonport Field Gun Association. Interest in volunteering with the Soup Run remains high with new teams and new volunteers being welcomed this month.
- As ever, our collaboration with Alliance partners, especially the Path Rough Sleeper Team and Shekinah is excellent; and partners from Trevi/Spark, Path and StreetVet have joined our teams of volunteers to provide specialist support to clients. The police made contact three times to request help in locating vulnerable people.
- The pilot opening of Shekinah on Saturday mornings for rough sleepers and those in emergency accommodation continued to be very well attended by 20+ clients each week. As well as enjoying a cooked breakfast and taking a shower, they were able to access podiatry care and oral health advice, meet mental health peer mentors, and connect with Alliance staff. As we enter the final month of the funded phase of the pilot, we have prepared a budget estimate for continuation of the service, and we are committed to supporting the service if funding can be sourced.
- Teams reported fewer instances of negative behaviour from clients this month, although some tensions were observed. In general, the health of our clients continues to be a concern with frequent expressions of distress: *"[We saw] several evidently 'broken' people"*. An ambulance was called for one client with a badly cut arm and who was also feeling suicidal. A client with a foot injury was checked by a passing ambulance crew, two clients were taken to the Cumberland Centre for urgent medical attention, and another with a suspected drug overdose was assisted by a medically trained team member.
- The deaths during June of four clients well known to us saddened volunteers. Any death is tragic but even more so when we lose people with very complex needs whom we have seen to be struggling. We shall continue to tap into our personal and collective resources to understand the challenges that our clients experience and raise concerns with other services when we feel that clients are not coping.