

Plymouth Soup Run Report for October 2022

In October 2022:

- Plymouth Soup Run served 2,581 meals. Numbers per night declined towards the end of the month as the weather worsened, but there was still an average of 83 meals being served per night, equivalent to 10 meals or 14% more per night than October 2021. With only a small differential of -1%, the October figure was essentially the same as September 2022. The year-to-date figure at 24,501 continues to represent a significant increase of 20% over 2021.
- On two nights during the month, a local restaurant generously provided cooked meals for teams to take out. Our regular food sources continued with their support although some teams reported a reduction in the amount of surplus food available. Ambient food was in high demand as were toiletries and clothing, especially, warm and waterproof coats.
- The month saw two important dates in the calendar: 10th October was World Homeless Day. The Soup Run took the opportunity to write to the three Plymouth MPs to draw attention to our concerns over growing demand and fears for continued increases in homelessness as the dual crises of cost of living and housing shortages bite. 16th October was World Food Day with the message this year of 'leave no one behind', which resonates with our aims as we strive to reach the most marginalised people in our city
- 12 referrals were made to the Path Rough Sleeper Team, and information was shared with Path and Shekinah to provide updates on several clients. 51 sleeping bags and 2 blankets were given out to rough sleepers. In addition to arrangements made through the Saturday morning sessions (see below), emergency accommodation was arranged for two vulnerable female clients through liaison with Alliance partners and PCC. The Soup Run also paid for three nights' B&B accommodation for a vulnerable male client.
- As well as our regular service at the Soup Run stops, we continued to provide meals to a family of four in B&B accommodation until they were housed mid-month. Other clients in B&Bs requested food that they could prepare with just a kettle to heat water. The winter provision at Hamoaze House opened at the beginning of the month and we provided a stock of food for clients.
- October was a peaceful month generally, and teams appreciated the opportunity and time for quality conversations with clients: *"... lots of chances to chat with people about situations and the weird times we live in!"* Nevertheless, anxiety was evident in the demeanour of some clients and teams had to call on support from the police on two occasions to deal with wellbeing concerns and/or aggression.
- With the deteriorating weather, the Saturday morning sessions at Shekinah for rough sleepers and those in emergency accommodation are even more important. An average of 25 clients were supported each week in October, most having a cooked breakfast and take-away lunch. Many took a shower and were provided with clean clothing or laundry vouchers. It is clear that the environment is conducive to concentrated work, exemplified with the result one week of five people being accommodated through the efforts of Path staff, and Soup Run and PCC volunteers. A medical student, a peer mentor from Heads Count and an artist also supported the sessions. Through participating in art activities: *"... everyday worries don't go away, but they can be 'parked' for a while."*
- We welcomed new teams from local businesses this month as well as several new volunteers. Soup Run representatives participated in meetings of the Plymouth Food Aid Network/Food Plymouth, the Rough Sleeper Strategy Implementation Group, and the Creative Solutions Forum, and a Plymouth University conference on food value chains and food security.
- Our coordinator Hilary Knight was awarded a Master of Education Honoris Causa by Plymouth Marjon University in recognition to her contribution to education and to the Plymouth Soup Run. On the same day, the Soup Run Development Group met for its regular information sharing meeting and we took the opportunity to bid farewell to Maddie Maddison and thank her for her outstanding service leading the Hope Baptist Church Monday team for 10 years.
- We are making the final arrangements to launch our Christmas appeal through a Reverse Advent Calendar. This will be available on Facebook and Twitter @plymouthsoupun.