

## Plymouth Soup Run Report for January 2023

- We served 2,342 meals in January, an average of 76 meals per night, equivalent to 2 meals or 3% more than January 2022, and 8 meals or 12% more than December 2022. As well as providing food on the nightly run, we received several requests for food parcels. The increase from December to January was unexpected, and teams had to augment their supplies with a return to base or to buy food from outlets on four occasions to ensure that everyone was fed.
- A drier month than December but warm clothing was in high demand and, more than anything, we felt the need for our clients to have someone to talk to in the low period following Christmas and New Year. The Soup Run is an important moment in their day and a point of contact for regular clients who check in with us, and others whom we look out for if they haven't been seen. As the last service out at night we often encounter people new to the city and rough sleeping or in a sudden crisis: *"A gentleman who had found himself stranded in Plymouth was helped to get a bus back to Glasgow"; "Student J has no money, so we made sure he had food and toiletries"; "L just out of prison was signposted to Shekinah tomorrow."*
- We continue to receive donations from our usual food sources but increasingly supplement these with purchased food. The last of our Christmas appeal donations came in this month and we now look ahead to new opportunities for resourcing our service. One of our regular Sunday volunteers set off at the end of January to take part in the Atlas Mountain Race, cycling 1,302km from Marrakesh to Essauria on the Moroccan coast to raise funds for the Soup Run.
- In the New Year, a number of new business teams worked alongside experienced volunteers and will eventually 'fly solo'. Clients' companion animals benefitted as usual from attention from StreetVet's volunteers. Representatives from Changing Futures and Shelter joined us to gain an understanding of our work, as did the Senior Commissioning Manager at PCC and a colleague who plan to run a team in February.
- Six referrals were made to the Path Rough Sleeper Team (RST) in addition to contacts made between Path staff and clients at Soup Run stops and at Shekinah on Saturday mornings. The Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) was activated twice in January for a total of nine days. In a model of collaboration, daily contact and a Path presence at the evening Soup Run stops maximised the chances of street homeless clients being located, and Soup Run volunteers and a Path staff member helped get people to their emergency accommodation. The Soup Run paid for two nights' accommodation for a vulnerable client when SWEP ended.
- 40 sleeping bags were given out to rough sleepers, plus 20 blankets, some of the latter to help people in accommodation keep warm. We continued to provide clients with bespoke support in the form of 'warm goods' thanks to a grant from the Plymouth City Council (PCC) Household Support Fund. To date, a total of 133 items ranging from vacuum flasks to hot water bottles and slow cookers have been given to 73 people, the majority in accommodation but impacted by the high cost of living. In addition, we distributed 'warm packs' supplied by Transforming Plymouth Together from the same fund. We also shared information with teams and clients on the PCC-sponsored 'Warm and welcoming spaces' in the city.
- Saturday morning sessions at Shekinah continued with an average of 27 clients, the majority rough sleepers, being supported at each session. Most came in for a cooked breakfast, the opportunity of a shower and clean clothing, and all were provided with a take-away lunch. The sessions are conducive to personalised support with very good outcomes, especially in terms of accommodation and reconnection of clients. Clients were helped with budgeting and CV writing. Our visiting artist held two creative sessions, and each week saw people enjoying mindful colouring, board games, cards and chess. Volunteers from HeadsCount, PCC and Forgotten Feet supported clients, the latter seeing 12 patients over two sessions: *"My feet feel a million dollars now!"*
- Teams came together in our bi-monthly Soup Run Development Group meeting to share news and discuss resources and strategy. The Soup Run was represented in meetings of the Changing Futures Volunteer Network, the Violence Against Women and Girls Knowledge Exchange Group, the Next Meal Global Forum, and the Plymouth Social Isolation Forum Showcase Event. Collaborative activities were discussed with the Health Inclusion Pathway, Plymouth (HIPP) and Optometry and Dietetics colleagues from Plymouth University. A talk was delivered to Dietetics and Nutrition undergraduates on 'Why are people hungry and homeless in Plymouth?'
- The NHS Mass Vaccination team provided COVID-19 and flu vaccinations at two drop-in clinics on 8<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> January at the Sunday Soup Kitchen at Shekinah, and at the four Soup Run stops. The team said: *"These clinics have been really successful not only giving vaccinations but also having conversations with some very vulnerable people"*.