

Plymouth Soup Run Report for March 2023

The month in numbers

- 2,474 meals served, equivalent to 80 per night, 11% up on March 2022. 9% more meals were served than the shorter month of February 2023, although slightly fewer (-1.5%) per night.
- 7,086 meals served year to date.
- Average of 29 clients supported at each Saturday morning session prioritising rough sleepers.
- 20 referrals made to the Path Rough Sleeper Team.
- 54 sleeping bags or blankets given out.

Food supplies and donations

- We thank our usual sources of redistributed food including FareShare South West, and the Coop Depot, plus Devon and Cornwall Food Association, Fresh Food for Now, the Cornwall Bakery, and Samway Brothers.
- Additional food was purchased for most nights and, as in February, sometimes mid run.

More than food

- Most nights, warm clothing was in demand, and underwear, socks, and toiletries were distributed.
- We completed the distribution of 'warm goods' bought with a grant from Plymouth City Council's Household Support Fund. A total of 118 (mostly single-person) households were supported, receiving a total of 294 items including blankets, sleeping bags, kettles, slow cookers, vacuum flasks, hot water bottles, and insulated food bags.
- One client was enrolled in a gym, the travel costs were covered for another client to reconnect them with their home location, and 10 were given donated vouchers for the National Marine Aquarium.
- We marked International Women's Day by giving a posy of spring flowers to women clients.

Teams, partnerships and networking.

- As well as our regular church, community, philanthropic and social group teams, volunteers joined us from businesses including Fat Face, Obedaire, Nandos, Mark Holt, and the Cornwall Bakery, and from the Health Inclusion Pathway, Plymouth (HIPP), the Land Registry, and Saltash Health Centre.
- Close collaboration continued with Path and Shekinah, and colleagues from Path, Citizen's Advice, HeadsCount, Livewell, Shelter, and PCC provided expert support at weekends.
- We supported SWEP implementation and delivered food to SWEP clients accommodated at Shekinah.
- Referrals for help with food provision were received from the JobCentre and PCC.
- A Marjon Youth and Community Work student joined us on placement for several nights.
- Team representatives attended a meeting of the Soup Run Development Group to share information and plan future services.
- Soup Run volunteers participated in meetings of the Changing Futures Volunteer Network, Next Meal Global Forum, and Plymouth Food Aid Network.

Client health and wellbeing

- Volunteer podiatrists from Forgotten Feet treated clients at two Saturday morning sessions.
- Two clients needing urgent treatment were referred to the Dental School Community Clinic.
- The Mass Vaccination Team gave winter flu and COVID-19 vaccinations at one Sunday session at Shekinah and at the mobile run stops.

Themes

- Teams are noting an increase not only in numbers of meals served but also in expression of distress and need for support: *"Sometimes the level of need we see is quite overwhelming."*
- People are very hungry and often undeterred by the weather: *"On Sunday, in dreadful weather, heavy rain and wind, 117 people came to the Soup Run for food."*
- Companion animals are important in the lives of a significant number of clients, especially, but not exclusively those who are street homeless. We are getting more requests for help when clients are struggling to meet the cost of cat and dog food. Fortunately, StreetVet volunteers join the Soup Run on Mondays, providing veterinary care and food, and teams supply food on other nights.