

Plymouth Soup Run Report June 2023

The month in numbers

- 2,796 meals served, equivalent to 93 per night, 6% up on June 2022 and 16% up on May 2023.
- 14,908 meals served year to date.
- An average of 27 clients supported at each Saturday morning session prioritising rough sleepers.
- 23 referrals made to the Path Rough Sleeper Team.
- 62 sleeping bags and 17 blankets given out.

Resourcing the service

- As in May, our regular food suppliers continued their support, but increasingly, we are buying food.
- Despite teams catering for higher numbers, on five nights in June, teams had to restock mid-run to be able to ensure enough food for the final stop.
- A generous cash donation was received from the Waitrose 'Community Matters' fund.
- A donation of sleeping bags was organised by Harbour Energy.
- A kind member of the public regularly arrives on Saturday mornings with breakfast ingredients.

More than food

- Toiletries and clothing were in demand as usual, and the monthly total number of sleeping bags and blankets given out (see above) was the highest recorded this year.
- A survey of Saturday morning clients revealed the value that they place on support in addition to food and drinks, including a shower, clothing and housing advice, and above all 'someone who listens'.
- We completed the first quarter of the new tranche of Household Support Funding awarded by Plymouth City Council (PCC). This has enabled us to support 62 (mostly single person) households with help ranging from food and laundry vouchers and bus tickets to get to hospital appointments, to sleeping bags, bed linen, electrical goods and other home-making items.

Teams, partnerships and networking.

- To mark Volunteers' Week 1-7 June 2023, we celebrated our numerous teams and volunteers through social media posts and awarding of certificates.
- During June, teams included volunteers from eight churches, six philanthropic or community groups, three businesses or workplace groups, and the Devon and Somerset Fire Service.
- We are looking for teams to cover some Tuesday evenings from September and are pleased that representatives from a local business who are considering providing a team joined us on a recent run.
- Colleagues from Path and PCC lent expert support on Saturday mornings and some evenings, and StreetVet volunteers joined Monday evening runs to tend clients' companion animals.
- A Health and Social Care student joined one evening run, and two Podiatry students observed and supported footcare sessions.
- The Soup Run Coordinator attended weekly Rough Sleeper meetings and Risk Assessment meetings, and was also notified of concerns regarding individuals which were then passed on to team leaders.
- Soup Run representatives participated in meetings of the Next Meal Global Forum, Plymouth Food Aid Network, and Plymouth University's partnership project on food equality ('FoodSequal').

Client health and wellbeing

- During June, two families in B&B accommodation were supported, and food was taken to a person in temporary accommodation who was too ill to come out to the Soup Run.
- The NHS Mass Vaccination team joined us one Sunday to give COVID-19 vaccinations.
- Water and sunscreen were made available to clients.
- On three occasions, teams dispensed first aid and provided clients with wound dressings, one client was connected with specialist diabetic support, and three emergency dental referrals were made.
- At a Saturday morning session, volunteer podiatrists from Forgotten Feet/Plymouth University treated seven patients including three referred by the Health Inclusion Pathway, Plymouth team.
- Through exemplary teamwork among the Soup Run, PCC and BCHA, one highly vulnerable female client was supported at short notice to access emergency accommodation.

Themes and quotes

- Despite sometimes inclement weather and high numbers waiting to collect food, runs were generally harmonious: *"A lovely evening with everyone in good spirits"; "All in all, a busy night but lots of engagement and some great conversations"; "A really lovely calm evening"*.
- Some clients were in significant financial hardship *"Thank you. I haven't eaten all day because I've run out of money until my pension is paid next week."*
- Clients shared the ups in their lives: *"Good news about a new job going well"*, but also the downs: three rough sleepers had property taken off them or damaged, and felt unsafe.