

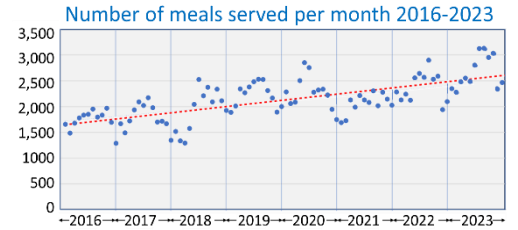


Plymouth Soup Run Summary Report for 2023

Key points

- The service operated nightly without fail, often in hostile, wet and windy weather.
- Client numbers increased by 12% in 2023.
- The level of need and individual client complexity also rose significantly.
- A sense of despondency was felt by rough sleepers with no accommodation options.
- Generous support was received from the general public, and church, corporate, philanthropic, and council sources.

During 2023, the use of our service was higher than ever, especially mid-year. This continued historical seasonal variation on top of a trend over the years towards an ever increasing need for food and other forms of support. Teams reported nightly via a blog on the numbers of clients seen, the level and nature of wider support provided, and any significant issues. This feedback formed the material for monthly reports to our partners. In addition, we posted on social media to convey news and raise awareness of homelessness and wider disadvantage. This report is a synthesis of information shared during the year.



The year in numbers

- 31,910 meals were served in 2023, equivalent to 87 per night. 84% of clients were male and 16% female.
- Monthly numbers ranged from 2,270 to 3,122 (81 to 101 per night), presenting a planning and catering challenge. Teams sometimes had to restock mid-run, but no clients ever went without food and hot drinks.
- On occasions throughout the year, food parcels were given to clients in particular need, and meals were delivered to families in B&Bs, and to individuals too ill to come to the run.
- An average of 22 referrals were made each month to the Path Rough Sleeper Team.
- 632 sleeping bags and 167 blankets were given out, equal to 67 items per month, 15 per week or 2 per night. Some were for people in accommodation struggling to keep warm.
- A morning session at Shekinah prioritising rough sleepers was held every Saturday and, from November, also on Sundays, each session supporting an average of 25 people.



More than food

- We surveyed clients coming to our Saturday morning rough sleeper sessions and found that, after food and drink, 'someone who listens' was the most important support on offer. Despite pressure of numbers, all teams endeavoured to provide a non-judgemental listening ear and human contact, as a dependable source of support for people with lives often marked by social isolation, chaos and stigma.
- Outer clothing, underwear, shoes and toiletries were in high demand and provided by teams.
- A Department for Work and Pensions Household Support Fund grant awarded via Plymouth City Council (PCC) extended our possibilities for helping people in targeted ways. We provided practical help with laundry vouchers, food vouchers, or bus tickets, and vacuum flasks, hot water bottles and sleeping bags to ease the discomfort of rough sleeping. We also provided electrical goods, furniture and bedding for people setting up home. During 2023, 245 households, mostly single-person, were supported with 527 items.
- Our 'New Beginnings' fund jointly administered with Path has helped several clients with personalised support including a power bank for a healthcare device, and funding for an employment medical examination.



Client health and wellbeing

The engagement that resulted from clients coming to the Soup Run provided abundant opportunities to support them with their health and wellbeing through first aid, foot care, vaccinations, help to attend medical appointments, health signposting and referral, e.g.:

- Teams were in frequent contact with the Health Inclusion Pathway, Plymouth (HIPP) service to refer clients and support patient engagement, including with specialist services e.g. for diabetes.
 - Volunteer podiatrists from the Charity Forgotten Feet joined 19 Saturday morning sessions, treating an average of six patients each time, and providing community outreach experience for podiatry students.
 - Throughout the year, paramedics and the police provided invaluable support for clients with serious physical or mental health issues.
 - Many clients were supported with bus tickets or taxis to attend hospital appointments, the Cumberland Centre, or the Derriford Emergency Department.
 - Direct referrals were made to the Peninsula Dental Social Enterprise Community Clinic for 10 clients needing emergency treatment.
 - The University Hospitals Plymouth Mass Vaccination team gave Covid 19 and flu vaccinations on nine dates.



- On several nights during the year, we arranged emergency accommodation for particularly vulnerable clients who otherwise had no option but to sleep on the streets.
- Extremes of weather meant that, at times, we were providing street homeless people with warm and waterproof clothing or replacing wet sleeping bags, and at other times, offering water and sunscreen.
- We were saddened by the deaths of too many clients during the year, and came together for a service on 22nd December to remember and honour them, and offer each other support.

Resourcing the service

We estimate that food and other items to the value of at least £40,000 were given out by Plymouth Soup Run over the course of the year. Our network of teams all raised funding and attracted in-kind donations to enable them to operate the service. In addition, we received generous support centrally from diverse donors ranging from individual members of the public to corporate and local authority sources. Donations are too numerous to list here but have been acknowledged in reports and on social media. Some examples of how we were able to resource our activities include:



- Several food producers and retailers regularly provided surplus fresh food, and food outlets supported our Christmas effort. We also utilised food redistribution projects.
- Several churches funded their 'home teams' or donated into central funding for the collective programme.
- Members of the public and volunteers made regular cash contributions, delivered food and clothing donations, or funded items on our Amazon wish list.



- We received significant cash donations from a food business foundation, a Plymouth-based charity and a workplace trade union group.
- Two sponsored cycle rides, a local one organised by a client, and another in Morocco in which a volunteer participated raised a total of £2,962.
- PCC Councillors' Community Grants were used to support all teams, and awards from the Household Support Fund and Rough Sleeper Initiative supported specific activities targeting people who were street homeless, and to help all clients impacted by cost of living rises.
- Our Reverse Advent Calendar Appeal attracted an abundance of toiletries, food and drink items, and clothing.

Teams, partnerships and networking

Relationships with clients, fellow team members, professional partners, and colleagues in other services continued to be an essential element and enduring strength of Plymouth Soup Run. They helped us keep our feet on the ground while contributing to practical and strategic activities in the city to combat disadvantage.

- In a typical month, teams included volunteers from nine churches, six business or workplace teams, and six philanthropic or community groups. They were often accompanied by partners from e.g. StreetVet, PCC, Shelter, and Caritas, or city councillors.
- Teams met bimonthly as the Plymouth Soup Run Development Group to share information and plan activities.
- Throughout the year, we worked closely with the Plymouth Alliance, having particularly strong collaborations with Path and Shekinah on regular activities and on the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) response.
- Soup Run representatives attended meetings including the Rough Sleeper Strategy Implementation Group, Plymouth Food Aid Network, Changing Futures, Next Meal, and the Health Inclusion Pathway, Plymouth.
- Team skills and capacity were built through training in e.g. food safety and naloxone administration.
- University students and Duke of Edinburgh Scheme students regularly joined teams, and Soup Run representatives gave talks to school and university cohorts including medicine, dentistry and dietetics.



- Other opportunities to raise awareness of homelessness and related social issues included collaboration with a community theatre group and participation in Plymouth Social Isolation Forum.
- Our clients are the reason we are there and the reason we do what we do. With them, we have shared moments of anxiety and frustration at life's challenges, sorrow at a bereavement, joy at finding accommodation, simple pleasure at being served by a firefighter or from a City Bus, and smiles when receiving a Christmas gift. We thank them for their trust in us.