

## Plymouth Soup Run Report for First Quarter: January-March 2024

### March in numbers

- 2,586 meals served, average 83 per night.
- 42 sleeping bags, 12 blankets and 2 roll mats given out.
- 32 referrals made to the Path Rough Sleeper Team.

### January-March in numbers

- 7,541 meals served, average 83 per night; 580 per week; 5% up on 2023
- 133 sleeping bags given out, average 10 per week.
- 65 referrals made to the Path Rough Sleeper Team, average 5 per week.

### Themes and quotes

- It rained on 40 days during the quarter. February was particularly wet with rainfall more than double the long-term average. This impacted on teams but even more so on people coming out and queueing for food: *"The rain was incessant, turning to sleet and then snow by the time we had headed for home."* *"Lots of weather-worn people served who so needed what we were able to provide."* Teams helped advise clients about Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) arrangements.
- There was a continuing high level of need and distress: *"A busy night with a number of complex issues. A high level of need at Mayflower Street. Hard to give everyone who needed it enough support."* We were frequently reminded that clients depended on the Soup Run for support and for the opportunity to share the ups and downs in their lives: *"A very joyous C. was bursting to share with us that he had been finally allocated a flat!"* *"R. is really fed up about his situation."* *"I don't need a hospital, I need a home."*
- As ever, teams expressed concerns for the health and wellbeing of clients: *"Extra food requested by a client who is pregnant and for another's friend recovering from surgery."* *"We served a family with a baby - they had no food."* *"Another person released from prison with nothing."* Emergency B&B accommodation was provided to vulnerable clients, and some needed assistance with transport to reach the night shelter safely. Paramedics were called on several occasions and teams dispensed first aid. Close liaison continued with the Health Inclusion Pathway, Plymouth team, with volunteer participation in the national Pathway conference and the NHS 'Feel Good Friday' event in Stonehouse. Staff from the West Devon and East Cornwall Breast Screening Department and the NHS Mass Vaccination Team joined runs. 'Forgotten Feet' volunteer podiatrists treated clients at Saturday morning rough sleeper sessions.
- The move of Shekinah from Bath Street to Stonehouse Creek impacted particularly on the Sunday team: *"Throughout the day, people young and old shared poignant memories of Shekinah, Bath Street, culminating in a wonderful mural. The words and illustrations say it all."* But by the end of March, Sunday evening preparations had resumed in the spacious new location, with plans for Saturday morning rough sleeper sessions to begin on 13<sup>th</sup> April. Measures were taken to support rough sleepers in the interim.

### Resources

- Food supplies came from supermarkets, local shops, FairShare, and members of the public. The generous support of a local fish and chip business was invaluable during the transfer of the Shekinah premises.
- The Household Support Fund enabled 269 households to receive 615 items over the financial year. They included 12 families with children and 3 two-person households. However, the overwhelming majority were 254 single people impacted by social isolation as well as economic hardship. The Fund also supported Sunday morning opening of Shekinah for rough sleepers until the end of February.

### Networking

- Teams came from 9 churches, 16 businesses or workplace groups, and 7 community or philanthropic groups. Duke of Edinburgh and University students were regular volunteers, especially on weekends.
- Close liaison with Alliance members, particularly Path and Shekinah, and meetings with the police facilitated coordination and good information sharing in the best interests of clients.
- The Lord and Lady Mayoress and their chaplain joined the Soup Run one night. Partners from Path, Shelter, Trevi, Spark and StreetVet regularly joined runs to offer specialist support.
- Volunteers came together twice as the Plymouth Soup Run Development Group. Soup Run representatives attended numerous meetings including the Rough Sleeper Strategy Implementation Group, weekly rough sleeper meetings, Changing Futures, Plymouth Food Aid Network, and safeguarding meetings.