

Plymouth Soup Run Report for November 2024

The month in numbers

- 2,717 meals served, equivalent to 91 per night.
- 79 sleeping bags and 14 blankets given out.
- 55 referrals made to the Path Rough Sleeper Team.

Key points

- The total number of meals served in November 2024 was 8% more than October 2024 and 17% more than November 2023. This is at a time of year when we generally start to see a reduction in numbers as the weather deteriorates.
- Nightly numbers of meals served fluctuated greatly, ranging from 53 to 119. On three nights, teams had to restock mid-run. Food was taken to the B&Bs of two clients who were unable to come out.
- Adjustments to Soup Run stops were necessitated by the November 5th fireworks on the Hoe, and the potential civil emergency on 18th November near our Martin Street stop. Every effort was made to ensure that clients were advised in advance.
- Path referrals were much higher than October, albeit some being repeats. This, and the 53% increase in the number of sleeping bags given out - often to replace wet ones - reflected the impact of cold and wet weather. Accordingly, warm clothing was in high demand too.
- The weekly presence of a Changing Futures team member was welcomed to provide mental health support. A member of the Path Rough Sleeper team accompanied the Soup Run on occasions to advise clients of accommodation offers, including in response to severe weather, and arranged emergency accommodation and linkage to appropriate services for a vulnerable woman. Emergency accommodation was also provided as respite for two vulnerable male clients.
- Many teams remarked on having peaceful runs, but a few nights were marred by aggressive behaviour. Sometimes, hostility targeted towards individual clients called for intervention to support them. For example, one rough sleeper was provided with day-rider bus tickets so that he could remain in a safe and relatively warm environment during the day.
- A grant from the UK Government/DWP Household Support Fund allocated to the Soup Run by Plymouth City Council enabled us to support some clients setting up home, and others struggling to keep warm as the weather turned colder.
- We launched our Reverse Advent Calendar Appeal towards the beginning of the month and, by its end, donations were starting to arrive. This will enable us to provide Christmas gifts to all of our clients as well as replenish stocks of food and non-food items. The season of giving started early for one team that would not be on duty again before Christmas and wished to treat the people whom they had been serving and had got to know well over the year.
- We are delighted to report recognition of two Soup Runners' efforts: Jo Connett from the St Paul's Church Efford team was named as this year's 'Plymouth Community Hero' for her voluntary work "with the most vulnerable people in our city" and invited to switch on the Barbican Christmas lights. And in the West Country Women 2024 Awards, Lyndsey Withers won the Women in STEM category for her voluntary work with Plymouth Soup Run and University Hospitals Plymouth NHS Trust.