

Plymouth Soup Run Report for May 2026

The month in numbers

- 3,012 meals were served on nightly runs, averaging 97 per night, plus 264 meals (breakfasts and packed lunches) served at Saturday morning rough sleeper sessions at Shekinah. The total number of meals served, at 3,276, was 9% more than May 2025 and 8% more than April 2026.
- 73 sleeping bags, 25 blankets and 11 roll mats were given out.

Key points

- **Changeable weather and variable numbers:** While late May saw some record high temperatures, it was much cooler at the beginning and middle of the month: *"Bitterly cold and windy especially at Mayflower Street."* *"It was quite chilly so lots of gloves and socks requests"*. And the final run of the month went out on *"a surprisingly chilly evening"*. The number of people served was similarly variable, with the same team seeing a record 145 people one night and only 70 on their next run. Notwithstanding these variations, the total for the month was our highest ever, reflecting a continuing and growing need. Warmer evenings often brought some tension and frayed tempers. Most situations were manageable by our experienced teams of volunteers, but support from the police was sought on two occasions.
- **Diverse needs:** Not surprisingly, demand ranged from warm clothing and blankets to cold water. A humbling moment was when one client shared *"what difference it makes to how you feel, when you have clean underwear in hot weather"*. Other forms of support reflecting the various things that make a difference to people's daily lives included providing rucksacks to keep possessions safe and dry, laundry vouchers, a bike lock, bus tickets to get to hospital appointments, signposting to specialist support services for refugees, and emergency accommodation for a rough sleeper struggling with their circumstances. The Soup Run is also active supporting people outside normal run times. A typical example is responding to a request at short notice from a professional to help a vulnerable person who hadn't eaten for two days. A food delivery was arranged for them and, in the words of the professional, they were *"looking forward to having something to eat"*.
- **Being there:** The Soup Run is one of the few positive constants in many people's lives – there to witness their low and high moments. On one night alone, volunteers comforted two brothers who had just learned of the death of their cousin, and shared the joy of another client who *"was delighted to tell us that she had just found out that she was a granny and has a grandson"*. On many nights, the distress of people who felt no way out of their situation was palpable, tempered by the occasional and welcome news of accommodation offers for a fortunate few.
- **Health and wellbeing:** Concerns about physical and mental health are always evident and we were grateful for continuing support from the Health Inclusion Pathway, Plymouth, Transforming Plymouth Together, and Forgotten Feet. The 'wear and tear' of rough sleeping and general deprivation were evident in, e.g., foot and skin conditions needing treatment via first aid or specialist care. General welfare concerns were felt for two wheelchair users who regularly come to runs, one of whom is rough sleeping, for several people discharged from hospital and in need of support, and for a regular client who had not been seen for some time and who was located in hospital. The Soup Run participated in two community health events organised by Plymouth Social Isolation Forum and Devon Mental Health Alliance.
- **Resourcing and managing the runs:** Over the month, in addition to our regular suppliers, we had a number of unexpected donations of food and other goods. The food ranged from homemade curry and rice brought by kind supporters, to surplus supplies provided by Plymouth City Council following a bomb disposal incident in the city. Goody bags from a business and one of our church teams plus anoraks from a philanthropic project were welcome extras for clients. Some adjustments and team-to-team support were needed to ensure that runs could take place every night. New volunteers joined us and *"loved the experience"*. Finally, thanks are due to Devonport Lifehouse for making their kitchen available to one of our teams.