

Plymouth Soup Run Report for July 2023

Trends

- A difficult month. The highest number of people ever were supported by Plymouth Soup Run in July.
- The pressure on teams was keenly felt. Even with good information sharing and advance planning, it was necessary to restock with food and drinks mid-run at least four times during the month.
- The level of individual need was high, often exceeding the resources of teams to resolve.
- Tensions among clients boiled over into aggression on four occasions, twice necessitating involvement of the police.

The month in numbers

- 3118 meals served, equivalent to 101 per night, 22% up on July 2022 and 8% up on June 2023.
- 18,026 meals served year to date.
- An average of 21 clients supported at each Saturday morning session prioritising rough sleepers.
- 23 referrals made to the Path Rough Sleeper Team.
- 52 sleeping bags, 6 roll mats and 3 blankets given out.

Resourcing the service

- The trend towards supplementing food from regular suppliers with purchases continued.
- As ever, funding was essential to complement donations, with £500 being spent just on sleeping bags.
- Kind members of the public donated food and other goods in person or via our Amazon Wish List.

More than food

- Unseasonal weather left volunteers and clients soaked on occasions, with high demand for waterproof clothing and the need to replace wet sleeping bags.
- Thanks to Household Support Funding awarded by Plymouth City Council (PCC), we were able support 34 clients with 65 items including food and laundry vouchers and bus tickets to get to hospital appointments, as well as more substantial home-making goods.

Client health and wellbeing

- During July, 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.
- At one Saturday morning session, a volunteer podiatrist from Forgotten Feet/Plymouth University supported by a student observer treated six patients, some in serious need for footcare and referral to other health services.
- Two referrals were made for emergency dental treatment.
- Concerns for the mental and physical health of several clients led to calls to the Ambulance Service or Social Services and one client being taken directly to hospital.
- A highly vulnerable woman was supported to access emergency accommodation, and a male client under threat of violence was helped to relocate with accommodation initially paid for by the Soup Run.

Teams, partnerships and networking.

- During July, teams included volunteers from eight churches, five philanthropic or community groups, two businesses, and two health service providers.
- A colleague from Path lent expert support on Saturday mornings and some evenings, two support profession trainees volunteered on Saturday mornings, and StreetVet volunteers joined Monday evening runs to tend clients' companion animals.
- The Soup Run Coordinator participated in weekly Rough Sleeper meetings, a multi-agency meeting about a client in common, and the inaugural meeting of the Female Innovations Group. She was also alerted to concerns regarding individuals which were then passed on to team leaders.
- Soup Run volunteers attended meetings of the Next Meal Global Forum, Plymouth Food Aid Network, Plymouth Digital Inclusion Forum, PCC's Cost of Living event, training by PCC on Food Safety, Food Plymouth People's Assembly, and PCC/Plymouth University's meeting 'Is Food All We Need', and were interviewed by BBC Radio Devon on increasing demand for the Soup Run's services.

Team quotes

- *"Lots of clothing given out. [Two volunteers] kindly gave away their own jackets!"*
- *"There was lots of conversation and laughter despite some dire circumstances."*
- *"[A client] was asked to leave her accommodation today. She has a shopping trolley full of her belongings. At the moment there is nothing in place for her."*
- *"At the end of the evening there was nothing left not even a drop of hot drink or soup!"*
- *"[A client] said: 'The Soup Run are life-savers! Thank you. This is the first food I've had all day.'"*