

## **Plymouth Soup Run Report to PCC for May 2023**

### **The month in numbers**

- 2,483 meals served, equivalent to 80 per night, 3% down from May 2022 and 6% down from April 2023 – still high numbers but a welcome respite from the increases seen up to last month.
- 12,112 meals served year to date.
- An average of 25 clients supported at each Saturday morning session prioritising rough sleepers.
- 22 referrals made to the Path Rough Sleeper Team.
- 46 sleeping bags and 24 blankets given out.

### **Resourcing the service**

- Our regular food suppliers continued their support but, increasingly, we are buying in food to ensure that we have enough and can offer quality and balance. Twice in May, there were last minute visits to supermarkets to ensure that there was food to give to clients at the final stop.
- We thank Plymouth City Council for a grant from the Household Support Fund which will enable us to help some of the city's most needy and disadvantaged citizens with food and other costs.

### **More than food**

- The weather improved over the month, but clothing was in heavy demand as were toiletries.
- Saturday morning sessions provided the opportunity for clients to relax and discuss their concerns in a safe environment, and to join in board and card games or art activities with our volunteer artist.
- Recognising that our clients use the service for diverse reasons, we are consulting them to give them a voice, provide an accurate representation of areas of need, and ensure that needs are met.

### **Teams, partnerships and networking.**

- Teams from nine Plymouth and Cornwall businesses volunteered on the Soup Run this month.
- Colleagues from Path, PCC, Citizen's Advice, HeadsCount and Shelter lent expert support on Saturday mornings and some evenings, and StreetVet joined Monday evening runs.
- Three 'Access to Medicine' students volunteered with us; one subsequently referred a person to the Soup Run, resulting in their being accommodated. In total, five Soup Run clients were successfully moved into accommodation and one reconnected through partnership working with Path.
- A Soup Run representative mentored medical students exploring the challenges of treating patients with complex needs; discussions are under way to continue similar work in the new academic year.
- The Soup Run Coordinator attended weekly Rough Sleeper meetings, Risk Assessment meetings, and one regarding the Out of Hours service. Soup Run volunteers participated in meetings of the Changing Futures Volunteer Network, Plymouth Food Aid Network, and Plymouth University's partnership projects on food equality (FoodSequal) and on tackling male violence against women and girls.
- Team representatives came together in a meeting of the Plymouth Soup Run Development Group to exchange information, coordinate activities, and discuss current issues and opportunities.

### **Client health and wellbeing**

- Most clients are single plus some couples but, throughout May, a self-referring family of three with a 2-year-old child, who are in accommodation but without any funds, have been helped with food at the runs, a food bank voucher, and food parcels from Soup Run colleagues at St Paul's Church Efford.
- Volunteer podiatrists from Forgotten Feet treated 15 clients at two Saturday morning sessions; Plymouth University podiatry student observers attend, gaining valuable community experience.
- Three clients were assisted with transport to hospital and others were signposted or referred to Harbour, Four Greens Community Trust, the HIPP GP, Spark, and the Community Dental Clinic.
- A research paper has been published featuring the Saturday morning rough sleeper sessions: 'Embedding health and wellbeing opportunities for people experiencing homelessness in a wider support system' (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10225991/>).

### **Themes and quotes**

- The increasing number of dogs brought to the first stop add to an already challenging management task in running the service; it is often necessary to ask owners to keep their dogs under control and away from each other. Otherwise, we have seen little in the way of negative interactions this month:
- *"Despite individual circumstances there was a lot of humour and many laughs."*
- *"A real joy to hear someone's reaction to the fact that he has accommodation from tomorrow ... I've never heard anyone quite so delighted and grateful before."*
- *"At Mayflower Street, one man seemed surprised that it was all free ... lots of appreciative comments."*
- *"A member of the public passing the service one night thanked the team and donated £20."*