

## **Plymouth Soup Run Report for November 2023**

### **Trends and quotes**

- November started with Storm Ciaran, and the Soup Run assisted in directing people to emergency accommodation. The efforts of the team that night were recognised on social, print and broadcast news media. Volunteers and clients were soaked by pouring rain many times during the month, which ended with emergency accommodation being provided again for rough sleepers due to plunging temperatures.
- Numbers were generally down, reflecting the impact of the hostile weather and possibly also clients receiving cost-of-living payments as in November 2022. Nevertheless, even on the worst nights, significant numbers of people came for food and support, underlining the current high level of need and the value of human contact: *'... lots of chats and help [for people] soothed the atmosphere and all our souls.'*
- It was a difficult month for rough sleepers and any able to move into accommodation were grateful: *'Lots of requests for sleeping bags .... plus a number of rough sleepers fed up regarding their situation, [but] one man was delighted to tell us he is going into George House tomorrow. Similarly, one team's 'moment of the night was: 'A female asking for pyjamas as she was newly accommodated and looking forward to her first shower in a month .... we obliged with a full set of clothes including pyjamas.'*
- Volunteers needed to use de-escalation skills in the face of aggression among clients several times during the month. The occasional presence of police patrols was requested and welcomed by teams.

### **The month in numbers**

- 2,329 meals served, 20% fewer per night than October 2023, but 20% more than November 2022.
- 29,452 meals served year-to-date, 11% more than the same period in 2022.
- An average of 24 clients supported by Saturday or Sunday morning sessions for rough sleepers and night shelter users.
- 26 referrals made to the Path Rough Sleeper Team.
- 42 sleeping bags, 21 blankets and 2 roll mats given out.

### **Resourcing the service**

- In response to our Reverse Advent Calendar appeal, donations of cash and goods are starting to flow in.
- The Soup Run will be operating every night over Christmas and New Year and planning is under way to support people at what will be a difficult time for those who are affected by homelessness, isolation and poverty. A generous donation from Saltash Waitrose is helping provide festive extras for teams to share with clients.
- As well as continuing support from FareShare South West and the Co-op, teams are supported by other local businesses and food outlets, plus ad hoc donations of food from kind members of the public.

### **More than food**

- Household Support Funding enabled us to open Shekinah on Sunday mornings from the beginning of November. Clients could shower, have a change of clothing and join in recreational activities. Chess, Scrabble and card games proved popular, as well as painting, making remembrance poppy wreaths and clay modelling.
- Warm and waterproof clothing and replacement sleeping bags continue to be in high demand.
- We learned that a client whose driving medical had been made possible through a grant from the New Beginnings Fund administered by the Soup Run and Path was now able to take up employment.

### **Client health and wellbeing**

- Food was delivered throughout the month to a client with mobility issues accommodated in a B&B.
- At a Saturday morning session, two volunteer podiatrists from Forgotten Feet treated five patients.
- The NHS Mass Vaccination team nurses attended a Sunday run to give flu and Covid-19 vaccinations.
- Paramedic help was sought for one client in a mental health crisis, and a woman suffering domestic violence was signposted to support services.
- Our Coordinator liaised closely with the police. On two occasions, officers sought help from teams to trace at risk individuals, and we responded to a police request for food and clothing for a vulnerable woman.

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

- In November, teams included volunteers from nine churches, seven philanthropic or community groups, and eight business or workplace groups. Plymouth University dietetics students joined several weekend sessions.
- StreetVet volunteers joined Monday runs and a local canine client appears in the StreetVet 2024 calendar.
- Our Coordinator participated in weekly Rough Sleeper meetings. Volunteers attended a PCC/Plymouth University project meeting on combating Violence Against Women and Girls, and the Next Meal Global Forum. Teams came together in a planning and information sharing meeting of the Soup Run Development Group.
- The 'Script-in-hand' theatre group performed a play 'It shouldn't be like this' based on Soup Run client stories, highlighting the causes and impact of homelessness, and raising funds for local support activities.
- A service of Remembrance for clients that we loved and have lost during 2023 will be held at 8.15pm on Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> December outside Plymouth Methodist Central Hall. All welcome.