



## Press Release for World Homeless Day 2020

# Plymouth Soup Run – supporting people affected by homelessness

Each night on the streets of Plymouth a team of Soup Run volunteers provides food to people who are homeless, hungry and vulnerable. Some will be sleeping on the streets. Some will be living in hostels, bed and breakfasts, or 'sofa-surfing' with friends. Some will be living in insecure and sub-standard housing. All will find it difficult to make ends meet and/or prepare food for themselves, risking the damage to their health and wellbeing that hunger brings.

*"I came off work - I couldn't afford food anymore."* (Service user)

*"We are conscious we may be the only food our clients regularly access."* (Volunteer)

The Plymouth Soup Run is a volunteer-led service supported by a large number of churches and faith-based, secular, professional and social groups. It depends on funds raised by volunteers and grants, and receives donations of food from businesses and individuals around the city and beyond.

Demand for the Soup Run's services is high and has been rising steadily over recent years. In 2019, we served almost 27,000 meals. By the end of September 2020 we had served around 21,400 meals projecting to an even higher annual total this year.

We are one of the last services out on the streets of Plymouth and so are often the first point of contact for people who are street homeless and in need of support. We work closely with the Rough Sleeper Team from Path (Plymouth Access to Housing), completing referrals and signposting people to other services in the city. Volunteers also prepare food to be taken out by Path to rough sleepers early the following morning.

*"If it wasn't for the Soup Run, most of us would be starving."* (Service user)

Covid-19 brought particular new challenges in the need to adapt practices to keep everyone safe and to support residents in accommodation set up to respond to the pandemic. Similarly, the Soup Run provided food and volunteer staff for the emergency winter accommodation set up in Plymouth during the coldest months of 2019/20.

*"We are grateful to the Plymouth Soup Run for being such a vital partner in that (and much else) ...."*  
(Path).

Food and hot drinks meet the most basic needs of our service users, but it doesn't stop there. Soup Run teams carry sleeping bags and emergency clothing to help keep people safe and warm, and toiletries to support health and hygiene. Most importantly we offer a friendly and non-judgemental ear to people who sometimes have nowhere else to turn and live lives of loneliness and exclusion. This human connection enables us to make practical links for people, be it to housing advice, paramedic, GP or mental health services, dental treatment, virus screening or veterinary care for companion animals.

*"The Soup Run is like a little lifeline for us"* (Service user)

*"The Soup Run is about people and for people. We could do little without our generous food donors, hard-working volunteers and network of professional colleagues, plus the trust of our service users".*  
(Volunteer)