LIFELINE
AOTEAROA

History

1963

Beginnings

Lifeline was founded in Sydney, Australia in 1963 by the late Reverend Dr. Sir Alan Walker. Sir Walker had received a call from a distressed man who later took his own life. Determined not to let isolation and lack of support be the cause of more deaths, Sir Alan Walker launched a crisis support line after two years of planning and preparation.

18 January
1964

A Life Line for Sydney

The Christchurch Methodist Community Mission Superintendent Rev W. A. Falkingham was studying social work programmes in Australia and discovered that Sydney was preparing to launch a Telephone Ministry using a name coined from the newspaper ‘ a Life Line for Sydney’.

30 June
1964

The First Call

Geof Hill took the first New Zealand Life Line call, answering the call to 32-370 with the words “This is Life Line. May we help you?”

1 July
1964

Lifeline Christchurch Launched

On 1st July Lifeline Christchurch was officially launched to provide personal and telephone counselling to those in need and services the Mid and North Canterbury regions, Kaikoura, Christchurch city, and the West Coast.

October
1964

Early Beginnings Of Lifeline Auckland

In Auckland, a group of ministers of various denominations, driven by Dr D.O. Williams met together to organise a counselling centre in the new Methodist building on Queen Street.

May
1965

The Interchurch Counselling Centre Opened

Based on Queen Street, the office operated with a face to face team, and an outreach team for people in crisis. It was then decided to incorporate a telephone counselling service to be known as the Samaritan Lifeline in Auckland.

21 February
1966

Auckland Lifeline Opens

With 80 volunteer telephone counsellors, it covered the free calling area of greater Auckland, and the Hibiscus Coast.

December
1966

Lifeline Christchurch Became A 24 hour Service

November
1967

Lifeline Invercargill Established

Later adopted the name 'Southland'.

January
1970

The Surviving Loss By Homicide Group Was Started In Auckland

July
1970

Lifeline Hawkes Bay Established

Based in Taradale about halfway between Napier and Hastings and covered the free-calling area of Hawkes Bay. Originally there were Centres in both Napier and Hastings.

March
1971

Youthline Begins

Sponsored by Lifeline to cater for the needs of young people up to the age of 25. A team of 26 people aged 18-25 provided help to other young people struggling with dilemmas of adolescence.

October
1972

Lifeline Whangarei Opens

Lifeline Whangarei opened a helpline and face to face service and covered the largely urban area of Whangarei, and financed a free-phone service from Wellsford in the south, through Cape Reinga in the north, and across to both the east and west coasts.

March
1974

Lifeline Nelson Established

Servicing the free calling area of Nelson; provided a free-phone service from Murchison in the South to Collingwood in the North West.

February
1975

Rev W.A Falkingham Honoured With An M.B.E

In her birthday honours, the Queen honoured the founder of Lifeline Christchurch Rev W.A Falkingham with an M.B.E for his work in the social services field.

March
1977

Christchurch Approach Changed

Christchurch redirected their approach to prevention rather than assistance after client suicide numbers increased.

May
1977

Auckland Lifeline Moves To Airedale Street

Lifeline Auckland moved to new premises at the 'open circle' on Airedale Street. For the first time the Face to Face service and the Telephone helplines where combined into the same building.

September
1977

Dr D.O. Williams Given O.B.E

The founder of Auckland Lifeline was given the O.B.E for his work.

April
1981

Lifeline Pukekohe Established

October
1981

Christchurch Gets Third Line And Teleprinter Service

A third line was installed in Christchurch and Lifeline began a Teleprinter service linking the profoundly deaf with the hearing world.

June
1982

Rev W. Falkingham Retired

Upon his retirement there was 8 Lifeline centres in New Zealand which where a direct result of his foresight.

October
1982

Lifeline South Canterbury Established

Based in Timaru.

July
1983

Teleprinter Line Introduced

Enabling the Auckland Lifeline counsellors to attend to the many practical problems on behalf of the deaf community.

February
1984

Lifeline Marlborough Established

Located in Blenheim and covered the free-calling area that extended from Kekerengu to the south, the Rai Valley in the west, and the Marlborough Sounds to the north.

January
1986

Lifeline Wairarapa Established

Based in Masterton, the centre was originally known as South Wairarapa, and was based in Carterton, but dropped 'South' when the Samaritan centre in Masterton closed. Covered as far north as Eketahuna, and as far south as Featherston, and all the towns in between.

December
1986

Dr D.O. Williams Of Auckland Lifeline Passed Away

June
1988

Kidsline Begins

Kidsline began in Auckland for children aged between 9- and 13 to call between the hours of 4pm and 6pm.

February
1990

Lifeline Auckland Moves

Auckland Lifeline moved into rent free space provided by Presbyterian Support Northern at 95 Great South Road, Remuera where it is still located today.

January
1992

Lifeline Waikato Established

Located in Hamilton and serviced the Greater Waikato, King Country, Thames, Coromandel and Bay of Plenty – including both small urban and rural communities.

March
1993

Chinese Lifeline Began

Offering limited hour's service in Cantonese and Mandarin based in the Auckland centre.

July
1993

Lifeline Tairawhiti Established

Based in Gisborne and closed down 12 months later.

September
1996

Lifeline Otago Established

Based in Dunedin.

January
1998

Gambling Helpline Launched

Lifeline launched a 24 hour helpline for problem gamblers.

March
1998

Lifeline Auckland Gets PTE Status

Lifeline Auckland was provided with PTE status (NZQA Accreditation as a private training establishment).

February

Kidsline Opens In Christchurch

1999

Christchurch Lifeline opened its 0800 Kidsline service in line with the Auckland Centre.

August

2001

Lifeline Southland Ceased To Be A Member Of Lifeline NZ

March

2002

Chinese Lifeline Gets National 0800 Number

February

2004

Lifeline Pukekohe Closes

December

2004

Lifeline Otago Closed

April

2005

FAC's 211 Line Commences

FAC's 211 Line began in Bay of Plenty with Youthline as pilot (MSD Funded), incorporating SHINE, and Family Violence Information Line.

September

2005

Lifeline South Canterbury Closed

July

2006

National Depression Initiative Contract Awarded To Auckland

This included the National Depression Helpline & future services that will offer text, emails, phone and web chat modalities.

January

2009

Suicide Prevention Education Programmes Adapted

Livingworks Suicide Prevention education programmes adapted and delivered nationally to include bi-cultural content.

March

2009

New Contracts Introduced

Warmline (ADHB Contract) & Victims of Crime line introduced to Auckland.

August

2010

MSD Fund The Canterbury Earthquake Support Line

October

2010

Christchurch Lifeline Opens Email Counselling Services

April

2011

Suicide Crisis Helpline Launched

Launch of 0508 TAUTOKO (Lifeline funded service with media campaign through Maori Television aimed at Maori population).

October

2012

Auckland Office Refurbished

ASB Community Trust funds a full refurbishment of Great South Road offices.

Prison Helpline Pilot

Three month pilot for ‘Prison Helpline’ partnership with Northern Region corrections Facility.

1 April

2013

Lifeline Launch Rebranding

1 July

2013

ACC Contract Awarded

Face to Face services awarded Sensitive Claims ACC contract for services in 5 regions.

23 December

2013

Lifeline Merge

Eight of the nine Lifeline affiliated offices merge to form one single Lifeline Aotearoa with a support head office in Great South Road. These include Northland, Auckland, Waikato, Hawkes Bay, Taranaki, Wairarapa, Marlborough and Christchurch. One single telephony and database platform are established. Lifeline Nelson vote to stay independent and change name to Life Linc.

1 April

2015

Chinese Lifeline Closes

1 June

2015

Lifeline Whangarei Closes

6 February

2016

NZQA Approved Programme For Kidsline

Kidsline launched NZQA Approved Gateway Youth Development Programme in Christchurch.

12 May

2016

Christchurch Branch Moves Premises

June

2016

Radical Restructure Announced

All branches except Waikato, Christchurch and Auckland close. Kidsline restructure with minimised team, and funding situation (1 year reserve), made public.

1 July

2016

Wairarapa & Taranaki Branches Closed

1 December

2016

Lifeline Merge With Presbyterian Support Northern (PSN)

One of the largest non-government organisations in the health and social service sector, PSN, committed to 18 months of operational support while looking to also help solve Lifeline's long-term funding issues.

May

2018

Text Support Launched

Lifeline launched its free text support service – HELP (4357) as part of its suicide prevention strategy to increase access to support for people in distress.

December

2020

Kidsline merges with Barnardos 0800 Whatsup

Child-centred helpline Kidsline joined Barnardos, complementing its existing 0800 What's Up telephone counselling and webchat service.