

25 Years of Crossline in Coventry

Isaiah 60:3 “Nations will come to your light and kings to the brightness of your dawn”.

Crossline in Coventry was launched on **January 6th 1992 at 5.00pm** and took its first call within 10 minutes of opening. The service was set up to help distressed people living in Coventry and Warwickshire. Trained volunteers recruited from the churches in Coventry and Warwickshire gave their time voluntarily between the hours of 5pm and 2.30am to work for Crossline. Crossline was the area's first Christian Helpline and was set up by Coventry City Mission.

The vision came from a British Association of City Missions meeting in the summer of 1990 when the founder of Crossline Plymouth spoke to the CCM Trustees. There then followed a time of recruiting and training volunteer listeners through 1991. Julie Lancaster was appointed a Volunteer Co-ordinator for Crossline in November 1991.

God's hand was seen at work in this ministry from the start with God making the way for Crossline to be allocated a “Golden Number” of **603603**. This led the CCM Director to be drawn to **Isaiah 60:3 “Nations will come to your light and kings to the brightness of your dawn”**. This was seen as a prophetic word for Crossline in Coventry and one that as this story unfolded over the next 25 years has been fulfilled.



500 calls were received in the first year. The service operated from CCM's building from 5pm – 10pm and then was diverted to **listener's homes from 10pm – 2.30am.**

In 1993 the hours changed from 6pm – 2.30am and in 1995 following a grant from BT a room at Deedmore Road was refurbished for Crossline to operate out of.

In May 1996 the first paid Co-ordinator of Crossline(Coventry), John Pither, was appointed.

This led to a publicity redesign – still the same one used today – and to the development of the training course which became accredited as a Telephone Listening Course by the Association of Christian Counsellors in 2001.

Calls continued to increase steadily and by 2001 had reached 1600/year. These calls were by now beginning to come from further afield than Coventry and Warwickshire.



In 2002 as part of the 10th Anniversary of Crossline in Coventry a Conference was arranged and to which representatives of other Christian Helplines and Prayerlines in the UK were invited. This was followed by a further meeting for those interested in looking to form a **Christian Helplines Association (CHA)**. During the conference we were reminded that it is “**Moments that Matter**” when we pick up the phone it is a moment that matters to both the caller and the person listening.



The CHA was launched in May 2004 at the Christian Resources Exhibition. It has proved invaluable for networking, supporting, encouraging and praying for each

other. Today it has 12 members who run Helplines, Prayerlines and chat on line, all seeking to bring the love of God to those who contact them.

Over the 25 years Crossline in Coventry has been through several telephone number changes. From 0203 603 603 to 01203 603 603 to 024 76603603 - all of these being forced on us by BT.

In 2008, 4 Crossline services in England from Coventry, Hull, Plymouth and Scunthorpe agreed to start Call Sharing together with a new number 0845 33 77 789 and



using a virtual call centre to distribute the calls to listeners logged on to take them. Again God's hand was clearly in the setting up of this at that time. What should have cost over a £1000 by God's grace through Christian's at the provider only cost us just over £100 and that was for the new publicity. The hours of the line were now 6pm to Midnight.

Over the next 4 years we saw a rapid growth in calls to the service from 4,000 calls per year to over 12,000 a year. During this time the training course was continually updated and also videoed, the service achieved a recognised quality standard in telephone helpline work through the Mental Health Helplines Partnership, and calls were being received from over 200 different parts of the UK and also some international calls.



Part of The National Christian Helpline

In 2013, Crossline Coventry became part of the National Christian Helpline on 0300 111 0101. This was made up of 5 helplines working together, Premier Lifeline and the 4 Crossline's. The service operates from 9am to Midnight every day.

In the last 12 months we have together answered over 93,000 calls – on average about 17 an hour with the equivalent of 4 hours of

calls every hour of people being listened too and prayed for. These calls can be anything from asking for prayer through to a Christian discussion or indeed to someone who is either self-harming or suicidal

The prophetic word from **Isaiah 60:3** has truly been fulfilled with nations coming to our light. In the last year calls have come from the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Australia, Barbados, Israel and the USA, along with huge numbers from the UK and Ireland. Crossline has grown from a local based helpline to one that takes calls from all over the world.

Feedback from callers is often positive. Here is a sample of some typical ones:- **“Thank you for understanding what I am going through.” “I can face it now thank you for giving me hope & peace” “Thank you for listening to me you’ve helped me see my situation from a different (more positive) perspective.”**

During the 25 years about 110 volunteers have answered the calls. Crossline listeners have described some of the positive benefits they experience from listening to others in this way:- **“I get a real buzz from being able to support people who are struggling, just by sitting in my living room.” “Just knowing that God is using you and speaking to the callers through you.” “Very humbling to be used by God in such a way to have been called to do this you get a real buzz and adrenaline rush from letting the Holy Spirit work through you.”**



We give thanks to God for the many people who have been helped through this ministry over the last 25 years and for God’s faithful promise to us through His word that we have seen fulfilled. We thank God for those who have given hours of time to make this possible as volunteers. We pray with expectancy for all He has planned for the future.

John Pither, Crossline Coventry Manager. April 2017