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Social Return on Investment Report

Lifeline Aotearoa
A service of Presbyterian Support Northern

Author

Dr Sheri Zeng, Senior Researcher/Evaluator, Presbyterian Support Northern

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Dr Lauren Donnan, Service and Evaluation Manager, Presbyterian Support Northern

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Conflict of Interest Declaration

Lifeline is a Presbyterian Support Northern service and this evaluation report has been conducted by the Presbyterian Support Northern Service Evaluation Team. Recognising the potential for perceived conflicts of interest in internally conducted evaluations, the report has been submitted for independent external assurance through the Social Value International (SVI). The assurance process provides independent scrutiny of the methodology, assumptions, evidence, and reporting against recognised Social Value Principles and standards, helping to strengthen the credibility, transparency, and robustness of the findings.

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Message from the General Manager

At Presbyterian Support Northern, we are committed to ensuring that people and whānau can access the right support, at the right time, in the moments that matter most. Lifeline stands at the frontline of this commitment - providing immediate, compassionate, and life-saving support to thousands of New Zealanders annually.

Every call, every text, and every conversation represents a moment of courage. Reaching out for help is not easy, and Lifeline's role is to meet that courage with care, expertise, and connection. This report affirms what we see every day: Lifeline makes a profound difference in people's lives, often when they are at their most vulnerable.

The Social Return on Investment (SROI) analysis provides an important way of understanding the broader value of Lifeline. Importantly, much of this value is created through skilled, compassionate interventions - listening without judgement, supporting people to develop safety plans, and helping them navigate moments of high risk. These are not just services; they are pathways to hope, stability, and recovery. While no single measure can fully capture the human impact of crisis support, this SROI analysis forms part of a broader programme of evaluation and learning that includes the experiences, perspectives, and voices of the people and whānau Lifeline supports.

This report also highlights a critical reality: Lifeline operates in an environment of sustained demand and increasing complexity. The need for accessible, high-quality crisis support continues to grow, and so too does the importance of ensuring that services like Lifeline are supported to respond effectively and sustainably.



Grenville Hendricks

**General Manager, Social Services
Presbyterian Support Northern**



As a service largely funded through community support, Lifeline reflects the collective commitment of Aotearoa New Zealand to care for one another. It is a powerful expression of social solidarity—people helping people in times of need. Sustaining this impact, however, requires ongoing commitment across communities, funders, and the wider health and social sector.

I would like to acknowledge the dedication of our Lifeline staff and volunteers, who bring skill, compassion, and professionalism to every interaction. Their work is often unseen, but its impact is immeasurable.

This SROI report strengthens our understanding of Lifeline's value and reinforces the importance of continued and sustainable investment in crisis support services. As an organisation, we remain committed to strengthening Lifeline as a vital part of the wider social and mental health system - ensuring that no one has to face a moment of crisis alone.

Ki te kotahi te kākaho ka whati, ki te kāpuia e kore e whati.

**When we stand alone we are vulnerable, but together we are
unbreakable.**





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For more than 60 years, Lifeline has provided confidential emotional support to people experiencing distress, uncertainty, and crisis across Aotearoa New Zealand. Every day, qualified counsellors provide a trusted point of connection when people need support most.

Through free, confidential phone and text services, Lifeline offers a safe space where people can talk, be heard, and receive support.

49,399

People supported
through phone and text
interactions annually

\$14.73M

Estimated annual
social value

\$7.50 : 1

Social value created
for every \$1 invested

**Up to
\$12.10 : 1**

Potential value under an
alternative evidence-
informed scenario

Key Insights

- Lifeline creates significant social value through earlier intervention, crisis support, and timely connection to care.
- People are better able to cope, feel safer, and regain stability during difficult times.
- Early prevention and timely crisis support help prevent distress from escalating, reducing pressure on emergency and acute mental health services.
- The value created extends beyond callers to whānau, communities, and the wider health and social support system.
- Using deliberately conservative assumptions, every \$1 invested is estimated to generate \$7.50 in social value, with higher value demonstrated under alternative evidence-informed scenarios.
- These findings demonstrate that investment in Lifeline is an investment in prevention, resilience, and a stronger mental health and suicide prevention system for Aotearoa New Zealand.

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The Growing Need for Support

Across Aotearoa¹ New Zealand, increasing numbers of people are experiencing emotional distress, loneliness, financial pressure, relationship difficulties, grief, and wellbeing challenges. While these issues affect individuals differently, they are often interconnected and can have a significant impact on wellbeing, resilience, relationships, and overall quality of life (Stats NZ, 2023).

Recent evidence suggests that psychological distress remains a significant concern across Aotearoa New Zealand, particularly among young people, Māori,² Pacific peoples,³ and those experiencing socioeconomic disadvantage (Ministry of Health, 2025). At the same time, loneliness and social isolation continue to affect many New Zealanders, despite growing recognition that social connection is a fundamental contributor to reducing distress and supporting positive wellbeing and mental health (Stats NZ, 2023).

14% of adults experienced high or very high psychological distress

23% of young people reported high psychological distress

630 suspected self-inflicted deaths in 2024/25⁴

Source: Suicide data and statistics, Health New Zealand; Ministry of Health, 2024/2025



1. Aotearoa is the Māori name for New Zealand. In recognition of both Te Reo Māori and English as official languages of Aotearoa New Zealand, this report uses the terms Aotearoa, New Zealand, and Aotearoa New Zealand interchangeably.
2. Māori are the indigenous people of Aotearoa New Zealand and are recognised as tangata whenua (people of the land).
3. Pacific peoples refers to people living in New Zealand who identify with, or trace their ancestry to, Pacific Island nations and cultures.
4. In New Zealand, a death can only be formally classified as suicide following completion of a coronial investigation. As coronial investigations can take several years to conclude, this report uses the most recent suspected self-inflicted death statistics published by the Chief Coroner. Historically, there has been little difference between suspected and subsequently confirmed suicide figures.
5. Whānau is a Māori term for family, including extended family and wider support networks. The concept reflects relationships, care, belonging, and collective responsibility.

Many individuals and whānau⁵ are also navigating increasing pressure associated with the cost of living, housing affordability, financial hardship, employment uncertainty, caregiving responsibilities, and changing family circumstances. These challenges can accumulate over time, contributing to emotional overwhelm, reduced coping capability, and an increased need for support.

For some individuals, distress may escalate to thoughts of self-harm or suicide. Suicide remains a significant public health issue in Aotearoa New Zealand and continues to have a profound impact on individuals, families, whānau, and communities. In 2024/25, 630 people died by suspected suicide - approximately 12 deaths every week. Māori and males continue to be disproportionately affected, highlighting the ongoing importance of accessible mental health, crisis support, and suicide prevention services (Health New Zealand, 2025).

Despite growing need, barriers to accessing support remain. Services are not always available when support is needed, waiting times can be long, and some people may not feel comfortable seeking help from family, friends, or formal support services. For others, simply knowing where to turn can be a challenge.

In this environment, accessible and compassionate support is critical. Crisis helplines play an important role in providing timely support, human connection, and a safe space for people experiencing distress, loneliness, uncertainty, or crisis.

This ongoing demand reinforces the importance of ensuring that timely, accessible crisis support remains available across Aotearoa New Zealand.



Why Timely Support Makes a Difference



When people experience emotional distress, loneliness, grief, relationship difficulties, financial stress, thoughts of self-harm or suicide, or other challenges that affect their wellbeing and safety, timely support can play a critical role in determining what happens next.

Many people experiencing distress or emotional challenges do not seek help immediately from formal services. Barriers such as cost, waiting times, stigma, uncertainty about where to turn, and the availability of services outside normal business hours can prevent people from accessing support when they need it most. Recent evidence from the New Zealand Health Survey and Te Hiringa Mahara reports highlights ongoing unmet need for mental health and addiction support, with many New Zealanders reporting that they wanted professional support but were unable to access it.

Crisis helplines help bridge this gap by providing timely, accessible, and confidential support. They offer a safe space where people can talk openly about their experiences, feel heard and understood, and receive support without judgement.

Research has consistently demonstrated that crisis helplines can reduce emotional distress, decrease feelings of isolation, improve immediate safety, encourage help-seeking behaviour, and support people to navigate difficult situations more effectively (Gould et al., 2007; Hoffberg et al., 2020). Crisis helplines are also recognised as an important component of broader mental health and suicide prevention systems, providing support at times when other services may be unavailable or difficult to access.

Alongside mental health promotion, early intervention, treatment, and suicide prevention initiatives, crisis helplines provide a critical point of connection and support for people whose distress may otherwise escalate.

Importantly, crisis helplines do not replace clinical services, family support, or community services. Instead, they complement these supports by providing an accessible point of support during moments of distress, uncertainty, or crisis.

By offering timely support, crisis helplines help people feel less alone, better able to cope, safer, and more connected to ongoing sources of support (World Health Organization, 2018). In doing so, they contribute not only to individual wellbeing, but also to a broader system of prevention, early intervention, crisis support, and recovery. For many people, the right support at the right time can change what happens next.

Crisis helplines play an important role across the spectrum of mental health and suicide prevention, from early intervention and prevention through to crisis support and connection with ongoing care.

About Lifeline

For more than 60 years, Lifeline has been supporting people across Aotearoa New Zealand during some of the most difficult moments of their lives.

Lifeline provides free, confidential, and accessible crisis support for people experiencing emotional distress, suicidal crisis, thoughts of self-harm, mental health challenges, and other situations where timely support is needed. Through its 0800 LIFELINE helpline, Suicide Crisis Helpline (0508 TAUTOKO), and HELP text service (4357), Lifeline offers a safe space where people can talk, be heard, and receive support when they need it most.



Lifeline provides an accessible point of crisis intervention for people experiencing distress or crisis. It also operates New Zealand's only dedicated national Suicide Crisis Helpline (Tautoko), providing specialised support for people at risk of suicide. The service is available nationwide, ensuring people can access support regardless of where they live.

Lifeline's qualified counsellors provide crisis intervention, risk assessment, safety planning, and referrals to other services where appropriate. While Lifeline does not replace clinical, emergency, or community-based services, it plays a distinctive role within New Zealand's mental health, wellbeing, and suicide prevention system. As an accessible and confidential service, Lifeline supports early intervention, responds to people in distress or crisis, and helps connect individuals with ongoing sources of support and care when needed (Ministry of Health, 2025).

For many people, contacting Lifeline is an important first step towards safety and recovery. Early support can reduce distress, strengthen coping, encourage help-seeking, and connect people to ongoing support before situations become more serious.

At its heart, Lifeline exists to ensure that people have somewhere to turn for support, connection, and hope when they need it most.

How We Measured Social Value

This report uses Social Return on Investment (SROI), an internationally recognised framework that helps organisations understand and measure the social value created through their activities.

SROI goes beyond traditional output measures, such as the number of calls answered or texts responded to. Instead, it focuses on the difference a service makes in people's lives and estimates the value of those outcomes.

While SROI provides a structured way of understanding and valuing outcomes, it forms one part of Lifeline's broader approach to evaluation and learning, which also incorporates stakeholder experiences, service data, practitioner insights, and continuous service improvement activities.

The anonymous nature of the service is an important feature of Lifeline's accessibility and safety. However, it also limits the ability to routinely collect outcome data directly from service users, making a Forecast SROI approach the most appropriate.

Forecast SROI estimates the social value likely to be created based on available evidence, stakeholder insights, operational data, and established research.

The analysis was informed by:

- Lifeline operational data⁶
- Stakeholder evidence (including staff surveys and service leader insights)
- International evidence on crisis helplines and emotional support services
- New Zealand Treasury Cost Benefit Analysis Tool (CBAX) financial proxies (New Zealand Treasury, 2025)
- Social Value International's principles and guidance (Social Value International)

6. This analysis is based on Lifeline operational data covering the most recent 12-month period. Outcome incidence estimates were informed by detailed analysis of operational data collected between 1 January and 31 March 2026 and applied to annual service activity data to estimate the social value likely to be generated over a 12-month period.

Note: Relevant references supporting the methodology, evidence base, and valuation approach are provided in the References section on Page 32.

Forecasting and modelling

As Lifeline provides a confidential crisis support service, it is not possible to routinely follow up every caller or texter to measure long-term outcomes directly.

To address this challenge, the analysis used a conservative forecasting and outcome modelling approach. Operational data from answered calls and responded text conversations were combined with stakeholder evidence, research literature, and service records to estimate the number of people likely to experience each outcome.

Annual service activity was based on observed service utilisation data from the most recent 12-month period, while outcome incidence was modelled using issue-specific cohorts and evidence-informed assumptions. Conservative attribution and deadweight adjustments were then applied to minimise the risk of overclaiming.

Outcome cohorts were developed to minimise overlap between outcomes and reduce the risk of double counting.

Where direct evidence was unavailable, assumptions were informed by the best available research and stakeholder evidence and were intentionally conservative.

During part of the analysis period, Lifeline operated with reduced overnight service hours due to funding constraints. As a result, the service activity used within this analysis may not fully reflect unmet demand for crisis support. The findings should therefore be interpreted within the context of a service operating under constrained funding conditions.

This approach is consistent with established Forecast SROI practice and enables the social value created through anonymous crisis support services to be estimated in a transparent and evidence-informed way (Social Value International).

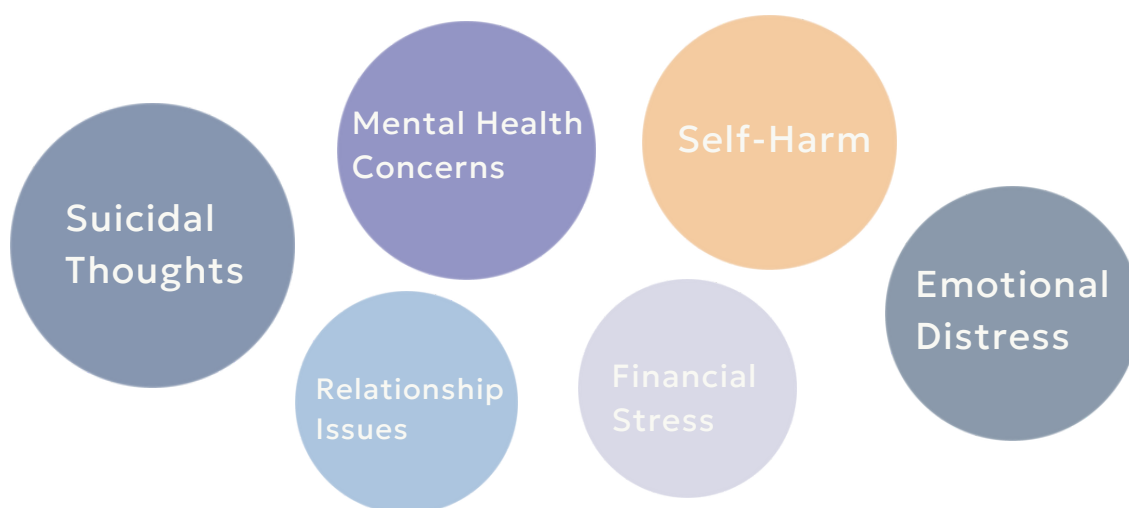
Who Reached Out to Lifeline?



Answered calls and responded text conversations annually

*Demand exceeds current capacity, with more than 100,000 calls received annually.

People contact Lifeline for many different reasons, reflecting the broad spectrum of mental health challenges, emotional distress, relationship difficulties, and suicide-related concerns experienced across Aotearoa.



Key Insights

- Emotional distress, anxiety, depression, and broader mental health concerns remain among the most common reasons people seek support.
- People contact Lifeline with a diverse range of often overlapping challenges, including emotional distress, relationship difficulties, financial stress, self-harm, and suicidal thoughts.
- The diversity of presenting issues demonstrates that people turn to Lifeline not only during periods of crisis, but also when seeking support, reassurance, understanding, connection, and a safe space to talk

Every conversation represents an opportunity for early intervention. Whether someone is experiencing emotional distress, loneliness, self-harm, or suicidal thoughts, timely support can reduce escalation, strengthen safety, and connect people with the help they need. This highlights Lifeline's important contribution across the mental health and suicide prevention system.

What Difference Does Lifeline Make?

Improved Mental Wellbeing Through Early Crisis Support

People feel calmer, more hopeful, and better able to cope with life's challenges⁷

Emotional distress is one of the most common reasons people reach out to Lifeline. Many callers and texters contact the service while experiencing anxiety, depression, grief, relationship difficulties, financial stress, or overwhelming emotions. For many, reaching out represents an important first step towards support at a time when they feel unable to cope alone.

Through compassionate listening, emotional support, and skilled crisis intervention, Lifeline helps people regulate emotional distress, restore hope, strengthen coping, and improve confidence in managing difficult situations. Timely intervention can also help prevent distress from escalating into more serious mental health crises.

Improved mental and emotional wellbeing is more than simply feeling better in the moment. Feeling calmer, more hopeful, and better able to cope can strengthen resilience, facilitate healthier relationships, improve day-to-day functioning, and reduce the likelihood that distress escalates into crisis.

By providing timely, accessible, and confidential support, Lifeline plays an important role across the continuum of mental health support - from early intervention and emotional wellbeing through to crisis response, suicide prevention, and connection with ongoing care.

This outcome is consistently supported by international evidence demonstrating that crisis helplines reduce emotional distress, improve hope and coping, and provide an effective early intervention before difficulties become more severe (Gould et al., 2007; Hoffberg et al., 2020).

7. This outcome was identified through stakeholder evidence and international research as one of the most common and immediate outcomes associated with crisis helpline support and was therefore included in the SROI model.

What Difference Does Lifeline Make?

Reduced Loneliness and Increased Social Connection

People feel heard, less alone, and better connected to supportive relationships

Feeling connected to others is widely recognised as one of the strongest protective factors for mental wellbeing and suicide prevention. Social connection strengthens resilience, promotes hope, and supports people's ability to cope during difficult times (Allen et al., 2021; Ministry of Health, 2025).

Many people contact Lifeline because they feel isolated, disconnected, misunderstood, or have no one they feel comfortable talking to. These experiences may arise from grief, relationship breakdowns, mental health challenges, financial pressures, caregiving responsibilities, or other significant life events.

For many people, a Lifeline conversation provides an opportunity to connect with another person at a time when they feel alone or overwhelmed. Feeling genuinely heard and understood can reduce loneliness, strengthen hope, and remind people that support is available.

Compassionate conversations help restore a sense of belonging and strengthen social connection. They can also increase people's confidence to seek further support from family, friends, health professionals, and community services when needed.

Strong social connections are consistently associated with better mental health, greater resilience, and lower psychological distress. Conversely, prolonged loneliness and social isolation are recognised risk factors for poorer wellbeing, worsening mental health, and suicide risk (Holt-Lunstad et al., 2015; Ministry of Health, 2025).

By fostering meaningful human connection during times of distress, Lifeline strengthens one of the most important protective factors for mental wellbeing and suicide prevention.

What Difference Does Lifeline Make?

Improved Immediate Safety and Crisis Stabilisation

People experiencing elevated risk are supported to stay safe, stabilise immediate distress, and identify practical next steps

Some people contact Lifeline during periods of heightened risk, acute distress, or immediate vulnerability.

These conversations may involve suicidal thoughts, self-harm concerns, abuse, violence, personal safety issues, or situations where people feel overwhelmed and unsure how to keep themselves safe. In these moments, timely access to support can be critical.

Lifeline's qualified counsellors provide emotional support, risk assessment, safety planning, and crisis intervention. Through these conversations, people are supported to reduce immediate risk, strengthen coping strategies, consider alternative actions, and connect with additional support where appropriate.

This outcome sits at the heart of Lifeline's role within Aotearoa New Zealand's suicide prevention and crisis support system. Immediate safety creates the conditions for recovery, resilience, and longer-term wellbeing. By helping people stabilise during moments of acute distress, Lifeline enables individuals to move from immediate crisis towards greater safety, hope, and recovery.

Immediate safety is a critical first step within New Zealand's suicide prevention system, creating the conditions for ongoing support, recovery, and longer-term wellbeing (Ministry of Health, 2025).

What Difference Does Lifeline Make?

Reduced Pressure on Emergency and Acute Mental Health Services

People experiencing acute distress are supported to stabilise their situation before it escalates to the point where emergency or acute mental health responses are required

Some people contact Lifeline during periods of acute distress, elevated risk, or personal crisis. These situations may involve suicidal thoughts, self-harm concerns, abuse, violence, or other circumstances where distress has the potential to escalate rapidly. Without timely support, some individuals may experience further deterioration that increases the likelihood of emergency or acute mental health intervention.

Lifeline's trained counsellors and volunteers provide emotional support, risk assessment, crisis de-escalation, safety planning, and referrals where appropriate. Through timely conversations, many people are able to stabilise their immediate situation, strengthen coping strategies, identify practical next steps, and remain connected with appropriate follow-up support. These changes reduce the likelihood that distress will continue to escalate.

When people receive support before their situation reaches crisis point, the need for higher-intensity responses may be reduced. Although not every emergency can be prevented, timely intervention creates an opportunity to interrupt escalation before specialist emergency services become necessary.

What Difference Does Lifeline Make?

Reducing crisis escalation creates value well beyond the individual. Earlier intervention may reduce demand on ambulance services, Police responses, emergency departments, and acute mental health services, allowing specialist resources to remain available for people whose needs require immediate clinical intervention.

Within New Zealand's suicide prevention and mental health system, Lifeline provides an accessible point of intervention before many situations reach their highest level of acuity. By supporting people early, reducing escalation, and connecting individuals with ongoing care, Lifeline contributes to a more responsive, sustainable, and effective crisis support system.

While emergency responses remain essential for many people experiencing severe crises, timely access to Lifeline creates an opportunity for some situations to be resolved safely before higher-intensity interventions become necessary (Ministry of Health, 2025).

What Difference Does Lifeline Make?

Connecting People to Ongoing Support

Sometimes the most important outcome is knowing where to turn next. Connecting people to the right support at the right time can influence outcomes long after the conversation ends.

For many people, reaching out to Lifeline is not the end of their journey - it is an important step in it.

Some callers and texters contact Lifeline feeling overwhelmed, uncertain, or unsure where to turn for help. Others may not have previously sought support or may be experiencing barriers to accessing services.

Through compassionate conversations, information sharing, referrals, and encouragement, Lifeline helps people identify appropriate formal and informal sources of support and take the next step towards getting the help they need.

Access to support is important because people rarely navigate significant challenges alone. Early connection to appropriate support can help strengthen coping strategies, improve wellbeing, reduce isolation, and prevent challenges from escalating over time.

This outcome highlights Lifeline's role as a gateway to support, helping people connect with the services, resources, and relationships that can continue supporting them beyond the initial conversation.

While the outcomes of these referrals and connections may occur beyond Lifeline's direct involvement, the service plays an important role in helping people recognise available options and increasing their willingness to seek support.

For some people, a conversation with Lifeline provides the confidence, information, or encouragement needed to take the next step towards support, safety, and wellbeing.

Social Value Created

Not every interaction creates the same level of value. However, taken together, Lifeline's interventions generate substantial measurable social value across individuals, whānau, and the wider system.

\$14.73 Million

Estimated annual
social value

Using a Forecast Social Return on Investment (SROI) approach, this analysis estimates that Lifeline generates \$14.73 million in annual social value.

\$7.50 : 1

Estimated social value created for every \$1 invested

For every \$1 invested in Lifeline, the service is estimated to generate approximately \$7.50 of social value through improvements in mental wellbeing, enhanced safety, earlier intervention, reduced crisis escalation, and increased access to ongoing support.

These outcomes benefit not only the people contacting Lifeline, but also their whānau, communities, emergency services, health services, and the wider public system.

Timely crisis intervention can prevent problems from escalating, reduce avoidable demand on emergency and acute services, and help people access the right support before situations become more severe.

Illustrating the range of estimated social value

\$7.50:1

Primary estimate

Based on the primary evidence-informed assumptions and conservative counterfactual adjustments.

\$12.10:1

Alternative evidence-informed scenario

Based on an alternative but still evidence-informed set of counterfactual assumptions.

Understanding these estimates

The primary estimate represents the headline finding of this report and is based on conservative counterfactual assumptions to avoid over-claiming social value.

An alternative evidence-informed scenario illustrates how the estimated SROI changes under a different but still plausible set of counterfactual assumptions. This scenario illustrates the potential social value Lifeline could generate while the primary estimate remains the headline result reported throughout this analysis.

Together, these scenarios demonstrate that Lifeline consistently creates substantial social value, with the magnitude varying according to different evidence-informed counterfactual assumptions. Both estimates are derived using evidence-informed modelling and should be interpreted as indicative rather than precise predictions of future social value.

Note: The primary estimate remains the headline result of this report. The alternative scenario is presented to illustrate how the estimated social value may vary under a different but still evidence-informed set of assumptions.

The report highlights the primary estimate and one illustrative alternative scenario. The full technical analysis contains the complete sensitivity analysis.

Why Continued Investment Matters

This analysis demonstrates that Lifeline creates meaningful social value by supporting people experiencing emotional distress, crisis, and heightened vulnerability. Through timely conversations, crisis intervention, and connection to further support, Lifeline contributes to improved wellbeing, stronger social connection, enhanced safety, and reduced pressure on health and social support systems.

These findings closely align with the priorities outlined in New Zealand's Suicide Prevention Action Plan 2025–2029, which recognises that suicide prevention extends beyond responding to suicidal crises. The Action Plan highlights the importance of prevention, early intervention, strengthening protective factors, timely access to support, coordinated responses across services, and improving pathways to ongoing care.

Lifeline contributes to these priorities by providing timely support, de-escalating distress before it intensifies, strengthening hope and social connection, supporting safety planning, and helping people access appropriate ongoing support. For many callers and texters, these conversations represent an early intervention that reduces the likelihood of further deterioration and promotes recovery before more intensive services are required.

Continued investment in Lifeline should therefore be viewed as more than funding a crisis helpline. It represents investment in prevention, early intervention, crisis response, suicide prevention, and strengthening community wellbeing. It also contributes to reducing pressure on emergency departments, ambulance services, police, and acute mental health services by providing timely support before situations escalate.

Importantly, this report adopted a conservative Forecast SROI methodology. The primary estimate was derived using evidence-informed assumptions and conservative counterfactual adjustments to avoid over-claiming social value. Alternative evidence-informed scenarios demonstrate that the estimated social value remains substantial under different plausible assumptions.

The findings presented in this report were generated during a period when Lifeline was operating with reduced overnight hours due to funding constraints. Despite these challenges, the service continued to generate substantial social value, highlighting both its effectiveness and the importance of sustainable investment to ensure timely support remains available when people need it most.

As demand for mental health and crisis support continues to grow across Aotearoa New Zealand, ensuring that people can access timely, compassionate support remains an essential part of strengthening community wellbeing and advancing New Zealand's suicide prevention priorities. Sustained investment in Lifeline is therefore an investment not only in responding to crisis, but also in creating the conditions that help prevent harm, strengthen resilience, and support healthier communities.



The Opportunity for Greater Impact

This analysis demonstrates the significant value created through Lifeline's services. At the same time, it highlights an important opportunity: with greater service capacity, even more people could receive support and additional social value could be created.

To illustrate the potential impact of increased service capacity, an indicative scenario was modelled assuming Lifeline could support approximately 20% more interactions while maintaining similar service quality, outcome achievement rates, and effectiveness. This scenario is intended to demonstrate the potential value of expanded capacity rather than predict future performance.

If service capacity increased:

- Annual supported interactions could increase from **49,399** to approximately **59,279**
- Estimated annual social value could increase from **\$14.73 million** to approximately **\$17.68 million**

This represents an additional:

\$2.95 million in estimated annual social value



While actual outcomes would depend on future demand, workforce capacity, funding arrangements, and service delivery conditions, this scenario demonstrates the additional social value that could be created if more people were able to access timely support and crisis intervention.

The analysis also highlights the opportunity cost of constrained service capacity. When demand exceeds available capacity, some people may experience delays or be unable to access support when they need it most. This represents not only unmet demand but also social value that could otherwise have been created.

This report was completed during a period in which Lifeline was operating with reduced overnight service availability following funding constraints introduced in March 2026. The scenario presented here is therefore grounded in a real service context rather than being purely theoretical.

As demand for crisis support continues to grow across Aotearoa New Zealand, expanding access to timely support has the potential to create substantial additional social value while strengthening New Zealand's wider mental health and suicide prevention system.

Every additional conversation has the potential to create meaningful change for individuals, whānau, and communities.



More Than a Service

This analysis primarily focuses on outcomes experienced by people who directly contacted Lifeline. However, Lifeline's contribution extends beyond individual callers and texters.

For many New Zealanders, Lifeline represents a trusted, visible, and recognisable source of support within Aotearoa New Zealand's mental health and suicide prevention system. Even for people who never make contact, knowing that support is available can strengthen confidence that help is accessible during times of distress.

Beyond its direct impact on callers and texters, Lifeline contributes to a broader community safety net. By providing free, accessible crisis support, Lifeline helps strengthen New Zealand's suicide prevention system, promotes early intervention, and provides an important pathway into ongoing care when people need it most.

The benefits of Lifeline also extend beyond the individual. When people receive timely emotional support, the positive effects may flow through to whānau, friends, workplaces, and communities. Although these wider social benefits have not been monetised within this SROI analysis, they represent an important part of Lifeline's broader contribution across Aotearoa New Zealand.

The reflections below from Lifeline staff and volunteers, collected during stakeholder engagement, illustrate the broader role Lifeline plays in supporting individuals, whānau, and communities.

“ Our work is a privilege and a responsibility. We support people during some of the most vulnerable moments of their lives. ”

“ A call to Lifeline often fills a critical gap when other support is unavailable, difficult to access, or simply out of reach. ”

“ Support provided at an early stage can help prevent distress from escalating into crisis. ”

Looking Beyond the Numbers

While this analysis estimates that Lifeline generates \$7.50 of social value for every \$1 invested, the true value of the service extends beyond what can be measured or monetised.

SROI provides one way of understanding Lifeline's impact, but it cannot fully capture the complexity of human experiences, relationships, hope, recovery, or the reassurance created simply by knowing that support is available when it is needed most.

Behind every statistic is a person navigating one of the most difficult moments of their life. Some people contact Lifeline because they feel overwhelmed, isolated, uncertain, or unsafe. Others reach out during periods of acute emotional distress or crisis. For many, having someone who listens without judgement represents the first step towards hope, safety, and recovery.

One of the strongest messages emerging from this analysis is that wellbeing is deeply interconnected. Emotional distress, loneliness, relationship difficulties, financial pressures, and concerns about safety rarely occur in isolation. Timely emotional support can therefore influence many aspects of a person's life beyond the immediate crisis.

This interconnected understanding of wellbeing is consistent with Te Whare Tapa Whā, a widely recognised Māori model of health, which recognises that mental and emotional wellbeing (taha hinengaro) is closely connected with whānau (taha whānau), physical wellbeing (taha tinana), and spiritual wellbeing (taha wairua). From both Māori and Western wellbeing perspectives, helping someone feel safer, heard, and supported can strengthen wellbeing across multiple dimensions of life.

The findings also reinforce the importance of prevention and early intervention. Many people contact Lifeline before difficulties escalate into more serious crises. Supporting people during these moments aligns closely with New Zealand's Suicide Prevention Action Plan 2025–2029, which emphasises timely access to support, early intervention, community wellbeing, and reducing suicide risk before crisis intensifies.

The value created by Lifeline also extends beyond individual callers and texters. Families, whānau, friends, workplaces, and communities may all benefit when people receive timely emotional support and are better able to remain safe, connected, and engaged in everyday life. Although these broader benefits have not been monetised within this SROI analysis, they represent an important part of Lifeline's contribution to Aotearoa New Zealand.

Looking ahead, the demand for accessible emotional support is unlikely to diminish. Social and economic pressures, loneliness, uncertainty, and mental health challenges continue to affect communities across Aotearoa New Zealand. Ensuring support is available when people need it will remain an important part of strengthening resilience, wellbeing, and suicide prevention.

Ultimately, Lifeline's greatest value cannot be reduced to a financial ratio. Its true value lies in changing what happens next for people who reach out during some of the most difficult moments of their lives.

**Not every life changed can be monetised,
but every interaction has the potential to
change what happens next.**

Limitations and Mitigation Strategies

This analysis provides an evidence-informed estimate of the social value created through Lifeline's services. As with all social impact evaluations, the findings should be interpreted alongside the limitations and assumptions inherent within a Forecast SROI approach.

Anonymous service environment

Lifeline operates as an anonymous crisis support service. As a result, it is not possible to routinely follow up callers and texters to directly observe longer-term outcomes.

To address this limitation, the analysis adopted a Forecast SROI approach, combining operational data, stakeholder evidence, published research, and evidence-informed outcome modelling to estimate likely social value.

Forecast assumptions

Some outcomes could not be directly observed and therefore required evidence-informed assumptions regarding outcome incidence, attribution, and deadweight.

Many outcomes experienced by callers and texters may also be influenced by family members, health services, community organisations, and other life circumstances. Conservative attribution adjustments were therefore applied throughout the analysis to recognise these wider influences and reduce the risk of overclaiming Lifeline's contribution.

Sensitivity analysis demonstrated that the findings remained positive under alternative evidence-informed assumptions.

Service context

During part of the analysis period, Lifeline operated with reduced overnight service hours due to funding constraints. Consequently, the activity analysed reflects service delivery under these conditions and may not fully capture unmet demand or the potential social value that could be generated if greater service capacity were available.

Independent assurance

Although this analysis was undertaken internally by Presbyterian Support Northern, the completed report will be independently assured against the Social Value International Assurance Standard. This process provides additional scrutiny of the methodology, assumptions, evidence, and application of recognised Social Value Principles, strengthening the transparency and credibility of the findings.

Despite these limitations, the findings provide a credible, evidence-informed, and deliberately conservative estimate of the meaningful difference Lifeline creates for individuals, whānau, communities, and the wider support system across Aotearoa New Zealand.

References

A wider range of literature and government resources were used to support this SROI analysis. Only a selection of key references is listed below.

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**Ki te kotahi te kākaho ka whati, ki te
kāpuia e kore e whati.**

**When we stand alone we are
vulnerable, but together we are
unbreakable.**



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