

## Forces Prayerline Launch in UK

On 6 November 2008 a new personnel support service, the Forces Prayerline UK, was officially launched in the United Kingdom.

The Prayerline is for *any* member of the Forces community who would like prayer for *any* reason. So it's for those in uniform *and* their families.

For those going through tough times, whose loved one is ill or on operations, for those seeking encouragement or just worried about the future, the Forces Prayerline may be just the support, comfort and encouragement they need.

Just phoning 0845-26-37-223 (or 0800 23 333 23 from Germany) will connect callers to a trained volunteer who will listen, provide encouragement and pray for them there and then.

The service is manned by volunteers from churches across the UK. The line is open 7 days a week, during the day and in the evening. It's totally confidential and anonymous. It's not a counselling or advice service, although volunteers will be able to provide basic contact details for the military welfare services and chaplains of the minority faith groups.

The service is provided by an established Christian broadcasting charity, UCB who have been running a prayerline in the UK and Ireland for several years, and which now receives tens of thousands of calls per year. With their help we established the Forces Prayerline in Germany in 2005, but this year sees it extended to the whole of the UK.

In launching the Forces Prayerline in UK, Col Eaton said

“The Forces welfare services are brilliant when there's a crisis – as I discovered when a young RAF airman of mine tragically committed suicide. But through prayer we may be able to reach people *before* the crisis breaks, bringing hope to those in despair, encouragement to those who are dispirited and comfort to those who are suffering. In one case, a young man called Dan had lost everything – his job, his girlfriend and his self-worth – as a result of drink and drugs. As he was on the verge of suicide, he phoned the Prayerline and the resulting prayer turned his life around. He now has a new job, new friends and has left his addictions behind him.

Of course, if the Prayerline saves lives or marriages, that's brilliant. But it's not just for those in dire straits; it's for everyday situations too, when we're concerned about work, the kids, our mates, our family, our next posting. So even for those everyday issues, I believe the Prayerline will be a tremendous blessing and encouragement for those that use it.”

Those numbers again: call 0845-26-37-223 if you're in the UK or 0800 23 333 23 if you're in Germany. Opening times vary: go to [www.ucb.co.uk](http://www.ucb.co.uk) and click on 'Prayer' for details.

**See Below for Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)**

## **Forces Prayerline – Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)**

### *So what is the Forces Prayerline?*

The Forces Prayerline is a new personnel service being launched this month across the UK for all members of the Forces and their families.

### *How does it work?*

You simply call a special number – 0845 26 37 223 - and you'll be connected to a trained volunteer who will listen, encourage and pray for you there and then.

### *Who is the Forces Prayerline for?*

It's for any member of the Armed Forces and their families.

### *What is the aim?*

The aim really of the Forces Prayerline is to enable members of the Armed Forces and their families to receive comfort, encouragement, hope and God's blessing through prayer.

### *What's the purpose of Forces Prayerline?*

Modern life is very stressful for most of us, and nowhere more so than in the Forces. We're heavily committed on operations these days and, when we're not on operations, many of the Armed Forces are busy training for the next one. Consequently there's a lot of separation, a lot of pressure and that puts a real strain on families and relationships. Prayer can be a real antidote to pressure and help people to see things from a higher perspective.

### *Is it just a last resort?*

Some people may well use it as a last resort, but it's not just for that. It's for any situation where a person feels that prayer would be helpful, whether it's a major crisis such as the death of a loved one or a marriage breakdown or everyday situations such as a difficult colleague at work, children settling into a new school, a new posting or worries about an upcoming operational tour.

### *The Armed Forces have their own padres and churches, so when would people ring a prayerline?*

The padres and churches do a great job, but they can't be everywhere all the time. And not everyone wants to be linked to a church, but they may still want prayer from in an anonymous and confidential setting.

### *Is it a counselling service?*

It's not a counselling service and volunteers are trained not to give advice. But they will encourage callers to seek the help of trained professionals, such as their chaplain or doctor, if the situation warrants.

### *How does it relate to existing welfare services?*

Forces Prayerline complements the chaplains and existing welfare services. It may also be used by those who don't need support from elsewhere, but are looking for comfort, reassurance or encouragement e.g. the family of a young serviceman deployed overseas, the wife worried about her children's exams or the sailor concerned about his family back home.

### *How does it link to the Forces welfare services?*

UCB will pass on contact details for the Forces welfare services where appropriate.

### *Where is the service available?* In the UK and Germany.

*What is the Forces Prayerline number?* 0845 2637223. [0800 2333323 in Germany.]

*How much will calls cost?*

In the UK calls are charged to the caller at local rate. [The Germany service is free.]

*How much will it cost the MOD?*

The actual service costs nothing; it's provided by a charity and the operators are volunteers. The only cost is that of providing information such as posters and leaflets. [and in Germany there is an operating cost of about £300 per annum.]

*How long has it been going?*

Forces Prayerline was launched in Germany in October 2005; the official UK launch was in November 2008.

*How much has it been used?*

UK stats will be gathered once it's launched. [We estimate that there have been about 250 calls per year in Germany.]

*What is the demand likely to be?*

Hard to predict, but based on the demand for UCB's existing prayerline we might expect demand to build up to several hundred calls per year. But, like any welfare or emergency line, its value cannot simply be measured by the number of calls.

*Will the service be extended to other theatres?*

There are no firm plans at present to extend Forces Prayerline beyond UK and Germany, however the possibility has not been ruled out.

*What about multi-faith?*

Forces Prayerline is open to anyone of any faith or even no professed faith who wants prayer. The initiative follows others, for example, to set up prayer rooms and temples for the different faiths, and demonstrates once again that the Armed Forces are fully committed to the spiritual welfare of service personnel and their families.

*Who provides the service?*

The service is provided by United Christian Broadcasters or UCB, who are a registered charity with a long track record in this area. Their UCB Prayerline on which this service is based, started in 1995 and takes around 80,000 calls a year.

UCB are a non-denominational Christian charity whose focus is the delivery of radio and TV on satellite, cable, the Internet and digital radio. They have a government licence for DAB radio and broadcast to London, the north and central England.

*What about security?*

Firstly, servicemen and women are well aware that no classified information should be discussed on an open telephone line. However, even if they breach the rules, the service is confidential, so the risk of a security breach is minimal.

*What about the vetting of operators?*

There is no legal requirement for operators to be CRB-checked since they do not have direct access to children or vulnerable adults. However all operators are approved by their church minister and monitored by supervisors.

*What training do Forces Prayerline operators get?*

Volunteers are given the equivalent of 2 days' formal training which covers issues such as confidentiality as well as all the situations they are likely to encounter.

*Will callers be proselytised?*

Volunteers will focus on encouragement and prayer for the caller's situation. They will not pressurise anyone to change their faith or denomination.

*Are there any circumstances under which confidentiality would be broken?*

There are exceptional circumstances in which Prayerline volunteers would break confidentiality. These are where they have grounds to believe that serious crimes such as child abuse, murder or rape have been or are about to be committed. They will also intervene where possible in potential suicide cases. Such instances are very rare.