

**U-Evolve Child Protection Policy**

Date reviewed and presented to board for agreement: 1st June 2022

**Scope and Purpose of this Policy**

This policy applies to all board trustees, paid staff, volunteers and sessional workers, agency staff, students, interns, or anyone working on behalf of U-Evolve (“U-Evolve Staff”).

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that we protect and safeguard children and young people who U-Evolve assist or otherwise become aware of, in the course of its work.

This policy and applicable procedures shall be used by U-evolve staff at all times and at all venues where we provide services or otherwise become aware of young people at risk of harm and as such, will not adopt the practices or procedures of our partners in discharging these functions.

**Policy Statement:**

The mental health and wellbeing of young people is central to what we do. U-Evolve is committed to supporting, promoting and safeguarding the welfare of children and young people at risk of harm. We recognise that *“Child Protection is Everyone’s Responsibility”* and understand the vital role we play in supporting the child protection process by raising our concerns where appropriate and safeguarding children at risk of harm. We will ensure that our policies and procedures reflect best practice and that staff and volunteers are aware of how to respond when they receive any information or disclosure or have any concerns relating to the safety and wellbeing of a child or a young adult at risk of harm.

U-Evolve seek to promote an environment where staff are confident of their obligations and feel supported and assured in taking action by raising their concerns where they see it necessary, and in line with this policy and U-Evolve Child protection procedures.

U-Evolve seek to ensure that staff are not discouraged from raising concerns for fear of getting it wrong, and staff will be supported through the child protection process and will not be reprimanded for raising concerns where these concerns are later found to be immaterial. Where staff have a legitimate concern, they will be supported to raise it in line with policy and procedure regardless of the outcome.

**Aims of Policy**:

To provide U-Evolve Staff with clear policies and procedures for responding to concerns or actual information relating to the safety and wellbeing of a child or young adult at risk of harm

To ensure that, as far as it practical, U-Evolve adopts safe practice around responding to these concerns.

To ensure staff are supported as far as practicable to raise concerns and to help maintain staff wellbeing during the process.

**Scottish Government Policy and Local Guidance**

Child protection in Scotland is seen in the wider context of “Getting it Right for Every Child” (GIRFEC) approach and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). GIRFEC promotes action to improve the wellbeing of all children and young people in eight wellbeing indicators. These state that children must be safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible and included (SHANARRI). We are also directed by Keep the Promise 2020 regarding care experienced young people.

**Edinburgh and Lothians Multi-agency Child Protection Procedure**

Inter-agency co-operation is key to ensuring that children and young people can be safeguarded. During the discharge of our duties in pursuit of our charitable purpose, U-Evolve – due to the nature of our work – are likely to come into contact with, or otherwise become aware of, children and young people at risk of harm.

In safeguarding these young people, U-Evolve adhere to the procedures set out in the Edinburgh and Lothians Multi-Agency Child Protection Procedure, which this policy and corresponding procedures seek to implement.

The Edinburgh and Lothians Multi-Agency Child Protection Procedure, administered by the Core Agencies (Social Work, Police, Health etc), operates as follows:

* A concern is raised
* The relevant Agencies gathers information to investigate the concern
* Where a child protection issue is identified, Interagency Referral discussions are conducted
* Interim safety plan is put in place, actions are agreed in forming safety plan
* Child Protection Case Conference
* Child Safety Plan created
* Plan Implemented

**U-Evolve’s role in the functioning of the Edinburgh and Lothian Child Protection Procedure**

U-Evolve staff have a key role to play in the proper functioning and operation of child protection procedures.

U-Evolve staff as part of their role may be required by law to:

* Raise formal concerns for a child’s welfare:
  + It is the role of U-Evolve to make the Core Agencies aware of their concerns of child abuse/harm
* Share appropriate and relevant information with the Core Agencies regarding their investigations
  + The Core Agencies will conduct investigations to assess if there is a child protection issue. U-Evolve must comply with all requests and provide the information required by the Core Agencies.
* Take part in Inter-Agency Referral discussions, Child Case Conferences etc
  + The Core Agencies will need to determine next steps and may request you attend meetings around this and actively contribute with your professional judgement and thoughts given your knowledge of the child/young person.

As far as practicable, U-Evolve will ensure that staff are available to take part in child protection activities as directed by the Core Agencies, in order to contribute to discussions around the child or young person.

At times, staff may believe that raising concerns may impact on their professional relationship with service users, that raising the concern may cause a service user to disengage from services or cause other service users to disengage. If staff have concerns of these nature, they should discuss it with the safeguarding officer, however, staff have a duty to raise concerns and should not be discouraged from doing so for fear of any potential reaction from the service user, other service users or any other party.

**Data Protection and Data Sharing**

Staff should remain vigilant when handling safeguarding data as this includes particularly sensitive information. In processing data, staff should adhere to U-Evolve’s Data Protection Policies and Procedures in processing data, including always maintaining data security in the storage and sharing of personal data.

Data Protection concerns should never prevent a member of staff from making a disclosure to safeguard a child, as we have a duty to make disclosures and raise concerns where appropriate. However, data sharing for the purpose of safeguarding should always be proportionate and should include only that which is necessary for the purposes of safeguarding the child.

**Consent**

U-Evolve staff do not need the young persons or parents' consent to share information with the Core Agencies in line with this policy – we have a duty to share this information to safeguard a young person. However, it is best practice to include and inform the child of the reason why you are sharing information and actions which will be taken as a result of the disclosure. If you have a good reason not to advise the child of the disclosure at the time, for example, as you believe it may further negatively effect their wellbeing, then you must discuss this with the child protection officer. If it is decided not to advise the child of the disclosure at this time, you must record the reasons for this in the incident reporting form and make this clear to the Core Agency dealing with the safeguarding issue. In most cases, you should advise the child.

U-Evolve staff shall not inform a parent or carer of the disclosure without first having discussed this with the Core Agency involved.

**Record Keeping**

U-Evolve staff shall keep all records of their observations, reports of harm they make, IRD and case conference discussion notes and incident reports in the service users case file in line with the U-Evolve Data Protection Policy and U-Evolve Data Storage and Retention Schedule.

**When a service user is treated as a child for the purposes of child protection**

For the purposes of child protection legislation, a child is someone who is under the age of 16. Where a person is 16 and over, U-Evolve Adult Protection Policies and Procedures apply and these should be consulted by staff in the first instance.

**What is meant by harm?**

Harm of a child for the purposes of this policy and child protection procedures constitutes any act or inaction, or course of conduct which may injure a child physically or otherwise damage their development and wellbeing.

Harm can include:

* Physical harm
* Emotional harm
* Sexual harm
* Neglect
* Radicalisation

For more information on harm and harmful acts which may constitute abuse and require child protection procedures to be consulted, please see the Child Protection Harm and Harm Indicators Guidance.

**How can we identify a child at risk of harm?**

U-Evolve staff may be informed directly by the young person, peers, or their parents that they are at risk of harm or have been harmed.

U-Evolve may observe harm indicators which also may be indicative that a young person has been harmed. Although harm indicators are not conclusive proof that a child has been harmed or abused, they may in all the circumstances point towards it.

Harm indicators include:

* Unexplained bruising or injuries
* appear quiet, withdrawn, or afraid to tell you something that sounds as if they have been hurt by someone
* be afraid to go home
* appear constantly hungry, tired or untidy
* be left unattended or unsupervised
* have too much responsibility for their age
* be acting in a sexually inappropriate way
* be misusing drugs or alcohol
* any sudden change in behaviour or how they are presenting

U-Evolve may become aware of the behaviour of the responsible adult or carer which concerns them such as:

* be acting in an aggressive, violent, sexual or emotionally abusive manner towards a child or young person
* be misusing alcohol or drugs while caring for a child
* leave their child unattended or with people who are unsuitable, or otherwise neglecting the child

Where U-Evolve Staff believe that a child is at risk of harm, they should follow the reporting procedure following this policy. For more information on Harm Indicators, please see the U-Evolve Adult and Child Harm and Harm Indicators Guidance.

**Emergency First Aid:**

Where staff have received appropriate first aid training and a child is seriously injured and cannot wait for an ambulance to arrive, staff are permitted to carry out emergency first aid at their discretion, and where there is no other suitably qualified individual available. There is no expectation for staff to carry out first aid and not doing so will not be viewed in a negative light under any circumstances and it will ultimately be staff members personal choice if they carry out first aid.

**Recruitment:**

To ensure child protection within U-Evolve, as part of the recruitment process there will be full enquiries made of prospective employee’s including a PVG check under the Protection of Vulnerable Groups Scheme as well as seeking suitable references.

**Whistleblowing:**

Where U-Evolve staff believe that another member of staff is involved in - or causing harm to - a service user or any other person, they should follow Whistleblowing procedures without delay.

**Induction and CPD**

U-evolve shall ensure that all new members of staff will receive full induction training on this policy and attributed procedures. This will take place as soon as practicable from the new employee’s start date.

Thereafter, all staff will receive ongoing CPD training on this policy, procedures and/or wider child protection awareness training on a 6-month basis. This will also afford staff the opportunity to discuss any practical difficulties with their use of this policy and procedures as well as to ensure that their sensitivity to safeguarding issues remains appropriate and action is taken when required. Ongoing support will always be available to staff regarding safeguarding issues for their manager, their clinical supervisors and the Child Protection Officer.

The Safeguarding Policy will be readily available to all the U-Evolve Staff and they should be clear about their responsibilities to identify and share concerns about children.

**Failure to abide by this Policy:**

U-Evolve staff must abide by the U-Evolve Child Protection code of conduct at all times.

U-Evolve recognise the pressures and difficulties raising safeguarding issues for the service users they assist. U-evolve staff will not face disciplinary action where:

* Staff had legitimate concerns which they deemed reportable, and these concerns transpired to be misplaced. It is important that staff feel supported to raise safeguarding concerns without fearing the repercussions of getting it wrong.
* Staff, despite their best efforts, do not identify safeguarding concerns when they exist. U-Evolve recognise that children may face abuse and there is not information for staff to attribute their behaviours to abuse

However, where staff wilfully, recklessly or negligently fail to raise genuine concerns in adherence to this policy and attributed procedures, this may amount to gross misconduct.

Where staff have any concerns regarding their ability to undertake their duties in relation to safeguarding, whether it be an individual case or a matter of general training and understanding, they must raise this immediately with their manager and U-Evolve will endeavour to support that member of staff in their safeguarding duties and responsibilities.

**Assistance for U-Evolve Staff:**

We understand that dealing with children who have been the subject of potential harm/abuse and making disclosures regarding that potential harm/abuse may be difficult for staff and may cause distress.

Where staff feel distressed during the process of safeguarding a child, they are strongly advised to speak to their manager.

U-Evolve shall provide staff who have initiated or taken part in the child protection procedure, a debrief to discuss their thoughts and emotions as a result of the case and their needs going forward. We will endeavour to do this within 24 hours of the incident taking place.

As far as practicable, U-Evolve will strive to assist staff with any distress they have through reasonable adjustment and assistance accessing services if necessary.

**Review of this Policy**

This policy and attributed procedures shall be reviewed annually. Any changes or amendments to the policy will be made in response to changes in legislation and/or national and/or local guidance.

Where changes are made to this policy or procedures, all staff will be provided training on this prior to the polcy and procedures taking effect.

Staff are encouraged to feed back to their manager regarding any practical difficulties – whether actual or potential – in discharging their duties under this policy. Such comments will be considered in reviewing or updating our child protection framework

**Supporting Legislation and Guidance**

* National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021
* The Edinburgh and Lothians Inter-Agency Child Protection Procedures (2015)
* Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014
* Children (Scotland) Act 1995
* Children’s Hearing (Scotland) Act 2011
* Police (Scotland) Act 1967
* Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968
* National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland (2014)
* Human Rights Act (1998)
* Data Protection Act (2018) and UK GDPR