



U-evolve Annual Report

Supporting Edinburgh's young people
post-pandemic

21
22



"This seems much better than counselling was. I feel more comfortable and under less pressure"

Alex*

*names have been changed



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About us

U-evolve started in 2015 because of the growing need for a different therapeutic approach for North Edinburgh's trauma experienced young people. Seven years on, we support young people across Edinburgh with our proven and unique Therapeutic Coaching model of support. Specialising in supporting young people with multiple Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs).

There are 10 recognised ACEs including abuse, neglect, community violence, loss of a caregiver, growing up in a household where adults are experiencing poor mental health or harmful alcohol or drug use. The number of adults with four or more ACEs is increasing year-on-year, with a 2021 Scottish Government survey finding that 15%, or 1 in 7, adults in Scotland have 4+ ACEs. Our trauma-informed and trauma-sensitive approach support minimises the impact of ACEs on young people and is in ever increasing demand.

Our mission

To deliver 1:1 Therapeutic Coaching and mental health and wellbeing workshops to young people and their network of support.

Our vision

A world where young people are mentally strong, emotionally secure and believe in themselves.

Welcome from Becky

At U-evolve we are committed to supporting young people to build resilience, and this last year we've really had to practice what we preach. Going into a second year of the Covid-19 pandemic - continued restrictions and lockdown - our resilience as individuals, as a staff team, and as an organisation was tested.

However, like the amazing young people we work with we have continued to grow, develop and have fun through this difficult time. We have welcomed new Board members and four new positions to the staff team, and their brilliant contributions have supported us to move closer to our vision of every young person in Scotland having the confidence, resilience and secure sense of self they need to thrive.

We continued to build on our partnerships with Broughton High School, Craigroyston Community High School and Spartans Alternative School, and it's been a privilege to work with their incredible young people. We also reached our goal of being accessible to all young people by opening our referral process. Now, young people and their carers can refer directly into our service, no matter where in the city they are.

We were also successful in our partnership bid for the Community Mental Health Fund. We have expanded our work to the South East of Edinburgh, meaning we can reach even more young people with our life changing services. It's been an exciting opportunity to build new partnerships with Canongate Youth, Edinburgh and Lothians Greenspace Trust, and The Edinburgh Old Town Trust.

I want to say a huge thank you to everyone who has supported us over the year. To the Board, the staff team, our partners in schools and the wider community, our funders and fundraisers, but mostly the young people we work with. You continue to bring inspiration, hope and positive energy to U-evolve. I can't wait to see what the next year brings.

Becky Duff
CEO

Welcome from Shelley

I have been a Trustee with U-evolve since 2013 when our founder Eilidh Macdonald-Harte created the magic of what we do. I have bittersweet feelings about stepping down as Chair this year but the time is right as U-evolve sets the strategy for the coming years.

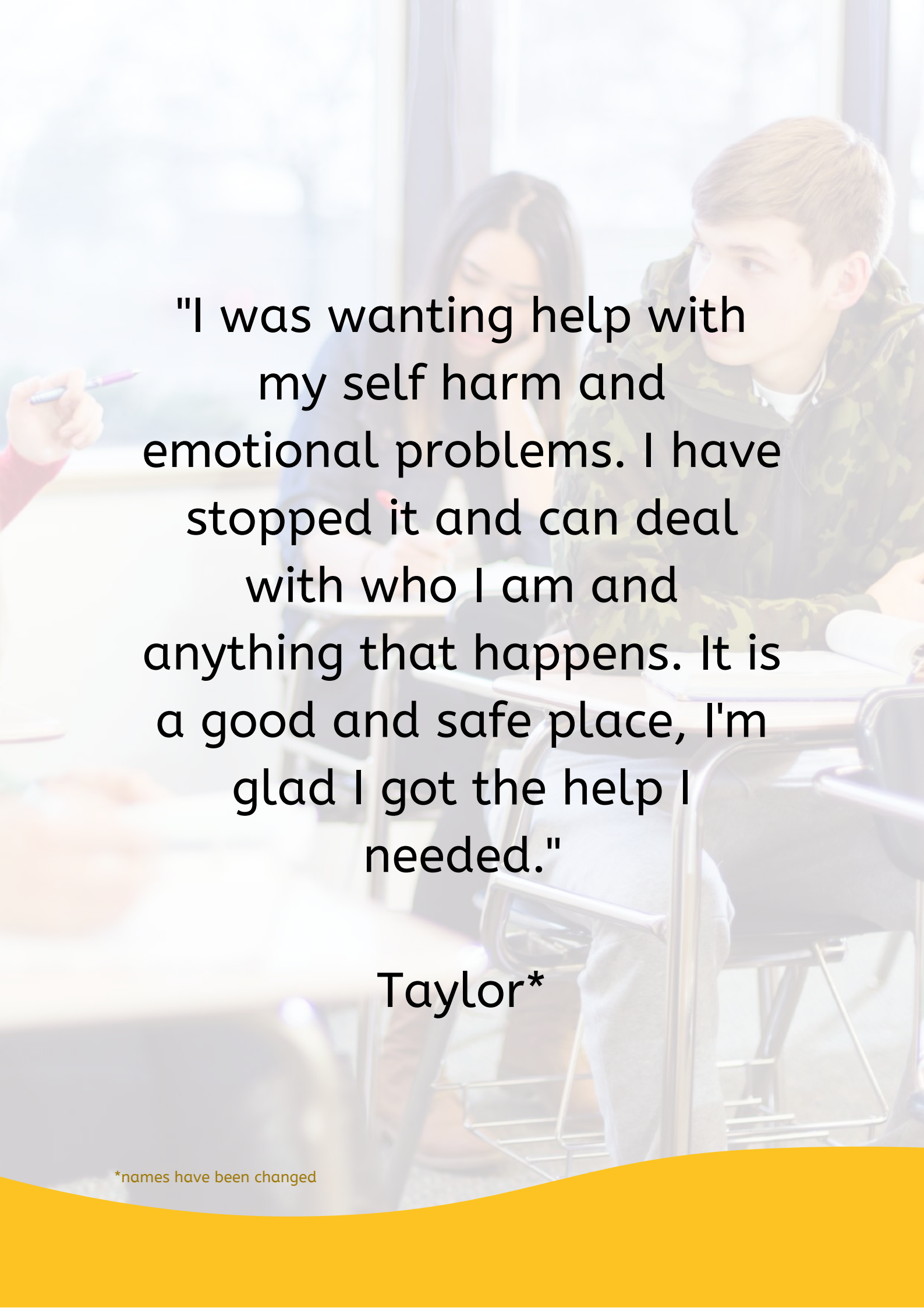
We have created and grown a fabulous charity that delivers a unique mental health service with amazing results for young people. U-evolve will continue in its mission to create confident, resilient and secure young people and expand its much-needed services in innovative and collaborative ways across Edinburgh.

As Becky says, we are moving from one crisis to another and the need for U-evolve is even greater than before.

I'm grateful for the support of those who believe in us. Thank you to our partners, schools, funders, trustees and our amazing team. And of course, the wonderful young people we have the privilege of working with.

I will always be immensely proud of U-evolve.

Shelley Hutton
Chair



"I was wanting help with my self harm and emotional problems. I have stopped it and can deal with who I am and anything that happens. It is a good and safe place, I'm glad I got the help I needed."

Taylor*

*names have been changed

The big picture

Last year, we talked about the importance of supporting young people through the pandemic. This year, we're talking about the importance of supporting young people post-pandemic. When restrictions lifted and life started to return to the way we remembered it before, lots of us were left feeling confused, anxious, and grieving. For our young people who have missed years of consistent access to education, who hadn't stepped foot in their high schools since transitioning from primary school, who hadn't seen friends in person for months at a time, and who had lost loved ones for whom they could not mourn – their lives have not returned to “normal”.

- More than 1 in 7 adults in Scotland report having four or more Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). This number is much higher than has been reported in previous years, and it is climbing.
- Between April 2021 – September 2021, there was an 81% increase in referrals for children and young people's mental health services compared to the same period in 2019. [Nuffield Trust, 2022]
- Over 2,000 young people waited more than a year to receive CAMHS treatment as of March 2021, representing the worst figures on record. [The Herald, 2021]
- Nearly half of 17-19 year-olds with a diagnosable mental health disorder has self-harmed or attempted suicide at some point, rising to 52.7% for young women [NHS Digital, 2018]

Our reach


You could say we've had a busy year! We have supported more young people than ever before, delivered more groupworks, and trained more professionals than ever before in our seven year history.



Our impact

Most importantly, this increased reach has meant that:

- 97% of the young people we support report feeling better about their problems after working with U-evolve
- 77% of young people report improved self-esteem after working with U-evolve
- 50% reduction in young people reporting “Very High” stress levels after working with U-evolve
- 50% reduction in young people reporting “Very High” levels of emotional distress after working U-evolve

A group of four young people (three women and one man) are sitting in a circle in a bright, sunlit room. They are all smiling and appear to be in a positive conversation. The room has large windows in the background, and the overall atmosphere is warm and supportive.

"I used to be angry all of the time but now I understand where it is coming from it has helped me feel calm. It has made such a big difference."

Harley*

*names have been changed

Therapeutic Coaching

Therapeutic Coaching is a Coaching-Counselling-hybrid that incorporates youth work methods to give young people with multiple Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) the flexible and relational support they need to pursue positive futures.

Therapeutic Coaching is a bit like PE for mental health!

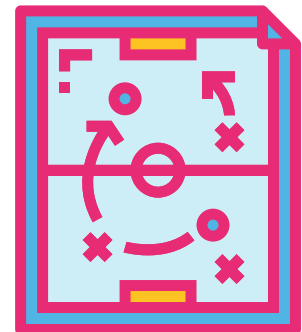


Psychoeducation

Using psychoeducation, we teach young people the science behind mental health. Learning the theory helps to understand emotions and reactions whilst also teaching young people that their feelings are normal and everyone has mental health.

Therapeutic tools

We apply this theory by learning strategies and tools to keep mentally healthy, regulate reactions, and develop healthy coping mechanisms. Proven therapeutic tools such as stress reduction and self regulation techniques give young people the tools they need for the rest of their lives.



Youth lead

All of this is underpinned by our youth lead approach. Whatever a young person's interests, we work these into sessions from the start. This demonstrates that they are being listened to, helps them to feel safe, and builds a good relationship with their Coach; essential for building trust.

Our services

We offer a 360-service package; working with young people directly, with peer groups and with the adults in the lives of young people.



1:1 Support

Weekly, hourly, long-term support delivered to young people struggling with their mental health for as long as they need it.



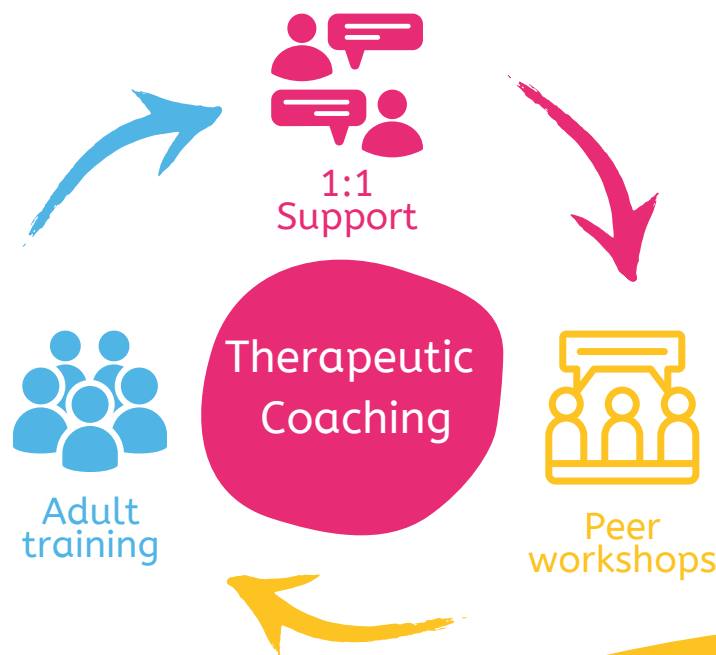
Peer workshops

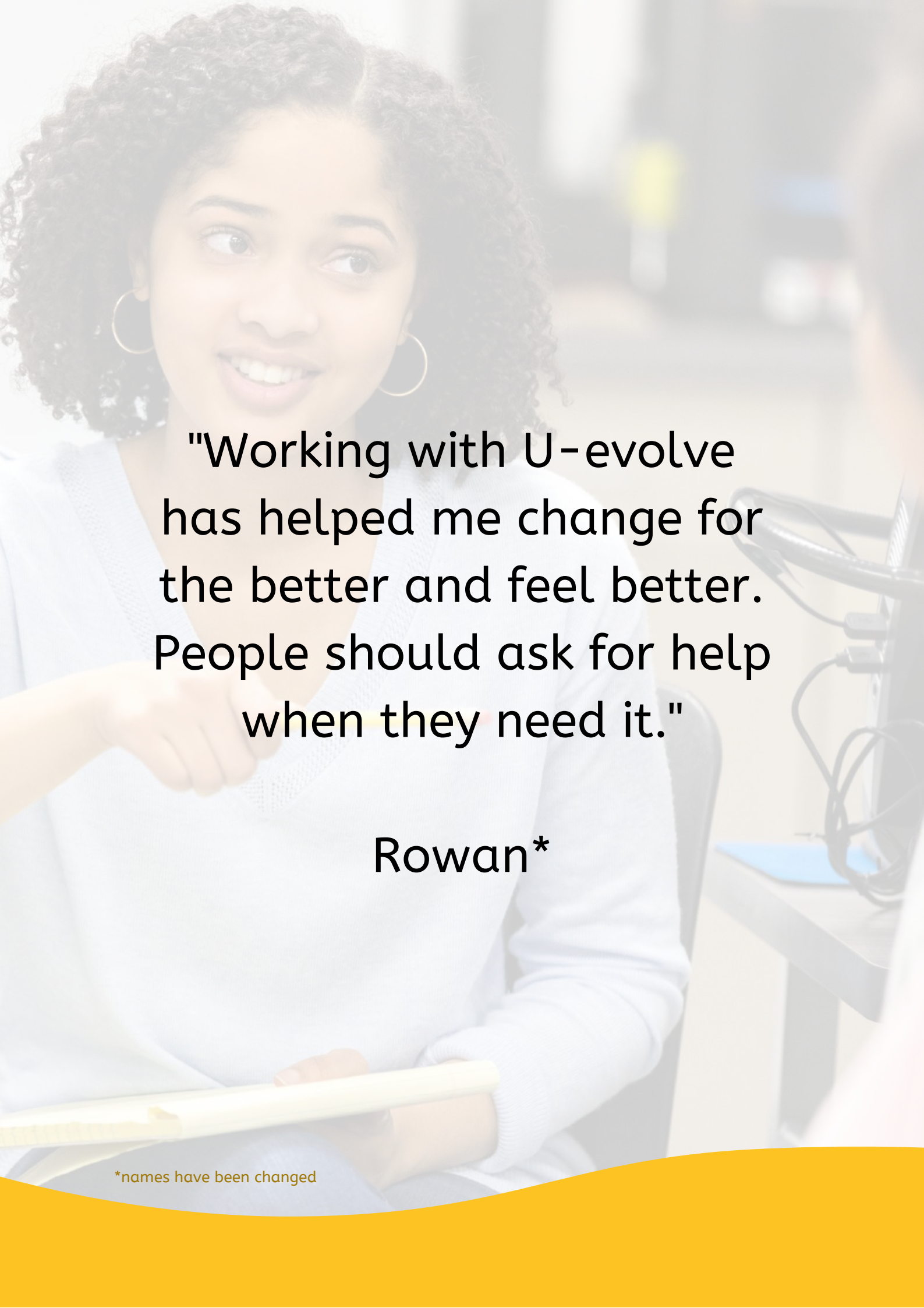
Tailored group sessions with young people to cover topical issues and provide a mental health education, delivered in schools and youth groups.



Adult training

Training for adults in the lives of young people; workshops for parents/guardians on supporting their young people and upskilling for frontline professionals to develop trauma skills and awareness as well as self compassion.





"Working with U-evolve
has helped me change for
the better and feel better.
People should ask for help
when they need it."

Rowan*

*names have been changed



Case studies

The best way to understand our work and the impact it has, is to hear from our young people about their experiences. All names have been changed for anonymity.

Charlie's Story

When we first met Charlie, they were really struggling with their mental health and were regularly self-harming. Charlie told us that they felt really low and couldn't feel "anything more than okay". Over time, Charlie told their Coach that they were feeling suicidal.

Charlie's Coach was immediately able to support Charlie to get the help they needed. Developing a plan together to keep Charlie safe gave them tools to reach out when they needed to talk, to stay in control and to keep calm so that they could overcome these feelings. With support from their Coach, Charlie was able to speak to their mum, school, and GP about how they were feeling. Together, and with Charlie's safety plan, we were all able to support Charlie through these scary and difficult feelings.

Today, Charlie is in a much better place. They feel motivated and hopeful about their future, a future they almost didn't have. When we first met Charlie, they rated their self-esteem at 8*, which is very low. Now, Charlie rates themselves at 16, above average, which is a huge jump in a few months.

*using Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale

Sam's Story

Sam* came to U-evolve desperate for support, with no control of their emotions and in a constant state of distress. They were exhausted, unable to concentrate in school, and surrounded by difficult relationships. Sam's relationship with their mother had deteriorated to the point where they no longer had contact and Sam's friendships were also breaking down. Sam was spending more and more time alone, withdrawing from those around them, and their lifestyle was become increasingly chaotic. The stress and distress they were experiencing was visibly apparent, and school staff were concerned for Sam's wellbeing.

With support from their Coach, Sam learnt about the stress response system; how stress works, what triggers their stress, and how to respond healthily. They worked on finding relaxation techniques that worked for them and would help Sam stay in control and handle challenging situations. We taught Sam about the different types of wellbeing and, with support, Sam asked for help with their sleep, diet, exercise, social life, and fulfilment.

Together, Sam and their Coach worked through a bespoke long-term programme of support that tackled all of these challenges. Now, Sam has rekindled a relationship with their mother and built meaningful friendships in which they are valued. The outgoing, confident, and happy young person they are today is in stark contrast to the distressed version of themselves we met originally. They have made huge progress and have implemented positive changes to every aspect of their life. Sam has said:

“I can hardly remember the person I was when we began working together and it's only been a few months. I know now that I don't have to rely on other people to feel good. I can recover and accomplish my goals.”



Andy's Story

Andy first came to U-evolve after the death of one of their parents. This lifechanging loss had left Andy struggling to cope with their grief, feeling very angry all of the time, and frightened when they were alone in certain areas. Andy didn't like the angry person they had become, and they lived in fear of another devastating loss.

Together, Andy and their Coach started work on Andy's main concern – anger. Andy didn't understand it and was afraid of it, it made them feel out of control but was increasingly become their default emotion. By helping Andy to understand the science behind anger, and how closely this is related to grief, they were able to understand it and start to control it. By thinking about when they were feeling anger, what was triggering it and the impact it was having on their life, Andy was able to understand the root cause. We helped Andy with psychoeducation, teaching them the way we react when our brains are constantly feeling in danger. Andy could recognise their default reaction and was able to start retraining their brain so that they feel safe in everyday life.

Andy told us, “Now it's easier to talk about the way I feel, and I'm more in control of my emotions. I'm more likely to try new things. I wouldn't have done things before that scared me”.

Morgan's Story

When Morgan first came to U-evolve they had been trying to mask their very low self-esteem for a long time and had become an expert at hiding their true feelings. Whilst they appeared happy and popular on the outside, Morgan told us that on the inside they felt empty, incapable, and worthless. Their relationships were mainly toxic, and those around them were continually tearing Morgan down. Terrified of confrontation and upsetting others, Morgan continually apologised for things that weren't their fault and accepted others talking down to them.

At first, Morgan found working 1:1 on their feelings really difficult. So, for the first few sessions, we found a topic that interested Morgan and worked on a project together with no pressure to discuss difficult topics. This let Morgan and their Coach get to know each other, helped Morgan to relax in a space that they could enjoy something without being judged.

Once Morgan was comfortable, we were able to help them to reset the negative image they had of themselves. Morgan and their Coach worked on changing how Morgan saw themselves, teaching them self-compassion tools like journalling and talking to themselves as though they were talking to someone they loved. Morgan became more confident and their self-esteem improved, soon they were able to stand up for themselves and set boundaries so that people stopped taking advantage of them. Morgan has stopped blaming themselves for everything and thinking of themselves as worthless. Their new confidence has allowed them to make changes to their friend group so that they only surround themselves with people that respect them and that they can trust.



Groupwork: Strategies for Stress and Sleep

This case study looks at one of our groupwork programmes from late 2021 - early 2022.

Programmes are tailored to the needs of each group. In this case, young people told us that they needed support to cope with stress, and general and social anxiety. This group were looking to develop healthy strategies to support their overall wellbeing, and to deal with challenging situations between teachers and students.


A bespoke programme was designed to incorporate these topics. Using psychoeducation to help the group understand their mental health and therapeutic tools to develop coping strategies. Topics included stress management, understanding mental health, identifying when something isn't right and how to support your own mental health, with onus on sleep, self-care, and self-compassion.

"This has really helped my mental health; I feel I can support myself better and I feel a lot more confident in general"

"Coming here made my day. It's been great to get things off my chest and it always cheers me up after a difficult day"

"It's a nice safe space to be able to talk. It's helped me be a happier person and more positive"

"I take sleep more seriously. I no longer sleep with my light on, and I've made my room a more peaceful environment. I even got over my fear of the dark"

A close-up photograph of a person's hands carefully stacking a tall tower of light-colored wooden blocks. The person's face is partially visible in the background, looking down at the blocks. The image has a soft, purple and blue color overlay. The text is centered over the image in a white, sans-serif font.

"Ian has been a great support to us parents, giving us encouragement and strategies to help us try to better understand the reasons behind T's behaviour and why [they] struggle with some things.

*names have been changed

Financial summary

Our signed financial accounts for year-end March 2022 are available on request from hello@u-evolve.org and from our website.



Future Plans

We know the coming year is going to be tough, with the consequences of the cost-of-living crisis coming into full force.

Over the next year, we will welcome a new chair to our Board and work with the community to develop our next three-year strategy. This will set out our ambitions, goals and vision for U-evolve as we continue on our journey.

We will listen to young people and their communities, and make sure the services and support we offer are responding to their changing and growing needs. We will have the right structure in place to make this happen, including where our funding comes from. Ensuring that we can sustain, scale and innovate over this coming year and beyond.

North Edinburgh is where we started and where our heart will always be. While we grow into the wider city, we will continue to be active community advocates for young people, working with North Edinburgh's R2 group and other coalitions to ensure that the voices and experiences of young people are heard.

Thank you, Funders

A huge and heartfelt thank you to all of our Funders, your support has enabled us to support a generation through a global pandemic without a break in our service. From all at U-evolve, and all those that we support, thank you.

Arnold Clark

Bailie Gifford

Christina Mary Hendrie Trust

Edinburgh Lothian Trust Fund

EVOG

Gannachy Trust

Mrs M A Lascelles Charitable Trust

National Lottery Awards for All

Peter Vardy

Robertson Trust

Sir Tom Hunter Foundation

St James's Place

Swinton Paterson Trust

Tartan Blanket Co.

Tiny Changes

Trefoil

Trusthouse

YPI - Edinburgh Academy

Thank you, Partners

We would like to thank all of the school staff for choosing our service to support their young people and working alongside us to help their pupils thrive.

Balerno High School

Broughton High School

Craigroyston Community High School

Spartans Alternative School

This year we have been delighted to partner with the following organisations as part of the South East Partnership, supporting a new catchment area within Edinburgh

Canongate Youth

Edinburgh & Lothian Green Space Trust

Edinburgh Old Town Development Trust





Thank you, Supporters

A final note to our Supporters. Whether you have donated, shared a social media post, taken on a fundraising challenge, or told someone about our services; thank you! At U-evolve we are building a community of individuals who want better mental health support for our young people, more access to services, and value better understanding in our communities: thank you for being part of this mission. We could not do this without you!



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