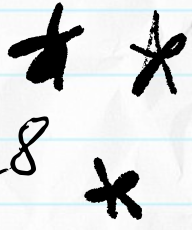




Strategy 25-28

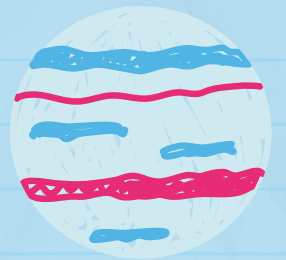


CREATING SPACE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

'space' to be themselves,
to feel better, to be safe,
to just be...



the spaces we create in terms
of our services: individual &
group support, drop in,
Young Voices. Spaces for
young people to get support,
to be heard, to be young
people



CREATING SPACE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Strategy at a glance



Creating Space for Young People

This strategy is all about giving young people the space to be themselves—safe, supported, and free to explore their feelings. Whether through 1:1 support, drop-ins, or workshops, U-evolve is dedicated to giving young people the room they need to breathe and grow.



Living our Values

U-evolve is powered by kindness, empathy, inclusivity, collaboration, and a passion for learning. These values shape how we support young people and each other, making sure everyone feels valued and welcome.



Tailored Mental Health Support

Our services have developed to include Art Therapy and Counselling alongside Mental Health Coaching and group programmes on topics like self-esteem and anxiety. Young people can mix and match support to suit their needs—whether it's working through emotions with a therapist or simply having a chat over tea at the drop-in, we're here to help in whatever way works best for them.



Young People at the Heart

Young people are the driving force behind what we do. Through our Young Voices programme, they share their insights and play a key role in shaping our services and future plans.



Bold Vision for Mental Health

We're working towards a future where every young person has access to compassionate mental health support. Our person-centred and inclusive approach ensures we stay focused on what matters most.



Growing Together

We're investing in our amazing team, developing trauma skills and resilience. Partnering with others and welcoming fresh talent helps us adapt and grow to meet new challenges.



Sustainability for the Future

Securing long-term funding means we can keep making a real difference, offering support that helps young people feel better and reach their potential.

Welcome!

Hello, welcome to U-evolve's 25-28 Strategy! Thanks for your interest in where we are and where we're off to next.

As we gear up to celebrate our 10th birthday (!), we're taking a moment to look back on all the growth, change, and impact we've had along the way. The process of putting together this new strategy has been a year in the making, with input from our trustees, staff, funders, partners, and – most importantly – young people. We knew it was important to take our time, step back, and really think about where we are, what matters most to us, and what kind of future we want to create together. And that's where the theme of "space" came into play – a space to reflect, to grow, and to reimagine what's possible. It's been a powerful process that's helped us see what changes we need to make to better support young people and to ensure our own sustainability as an organization. I'm so grateful to everyone who's been part of this journey for their honesty, dedication, and energy.

At U-evolve, we've realised just how much we value "space" – space to think, space to be creative, space to unplug from the noise of everyday life. In a world that's constantly moving, it's often hard to carve out that time for ourselves. But as we continue to evolve, we're learning how to create more of that space for ourselves – and we want young people to experience it too.

Our strategy is firmly grounded in the principles of the Mental Health (Scotland) Act, Trauma-Informed Practice, GIRFEC (Getting It Right for Every Child), and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, ensuring that the rights and wellbeing of children and young people are at the centre of our decision-making and service delivery. Together, these frameworks guide our strategy in creating an empathetic, supportive, inclusive, and rights-based environment where children and young people are empowered, heard, and respected.

I am incredibly proud to be the CEO at U-evolve, working alongside a fantastic board and a committed, supportive and enthusiastic staff team. We have achieved a lot and made a difference to the lives of thousands of young people, but there is still so much work to do.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'SM' or similar initials, written in a cursive style.

Susie McIntyre
CEO



About U-evolve

U-evolve is an Edinburgh youth mental health charity supporting 11-21-year-olds. Founded in 2015, we support ~200 young people annually with free to access Coaching, Counselling and Therapeutic services. Each year we deliver over 1,000 hours of individual support to help Edinburgh's young people feel better.



Mission

We exist to listen to and support young people to feel better, be confident in who they are and to learn techniques to take control of their lives. We work alongside young people to understand what they need and create our services around them.

Vision

That all young people experience positive mental health and have access to compassionate and inclusive support when they need it.

We work towards our mission & vision by

- Living by our values and placing these at the heart of everything we do
- Creating a culture which is focused on relationships
- Listening to our young people
- Being trauma skilled in our approach
- Working alongside the communities who surround our young people
- Being ambitious in our vision.



Our services

We offer both 1:1 support and group services for young people – it's just one of the ways we make our services as accessible as possible. Young people can choose what works best for them, whether that's attending one service or hopping between different ones. We're all about giving young people the space they need to find the right support, in the way that suits them best.



Individual support



Our individual support gives young people regular catch ups with their Coach, Art Therapist or Counsellor. 1:1 support gives young people the space to chat through anything they are finding difficult, learn more about their emotions, and work towards their goals. We offer **Mental Health Coaching**, **Art Therapy**, or **Counselling** and work with each young person to decide which service will suit them best.

Drop-ins

We provide weekly drop-in sessions from our Hub in Leith. Our drop-in provides a safe space where young people can take part in creative activities, get information about support, or simply have a chat and a cup of tea! We organise weekly themes but activities are driven by those who attend.



Young Voices

Young Voices allows young volunteers to have a say in the issues that matter to them around mental health and mental health support. Our Young Voices groups play an active role in shaping how we work at U-evolve and is an opportunity to gain volunteering hours, advocacy experience, and make a real difference.



Group workshops

We run group programmes to help young people connect, share experiences, and learn new ways to support their wellbeing. Our programme regularly changes based on what young people need, but can include topics like identity, anxiety, self-esteem and stress management. Group programmes often use art and the outdoors to support wellbeing.



Engaging Young People

At the heart of U-evolve is our commitment to listening to young people. Creating accessible ways for young people to participate in the broader scope of the charity has been our focus over the last 12-months. We're therefore delighted to be co-presenting "Creating Space for Young People" alongside our fantastic collaborators who helped get us here!



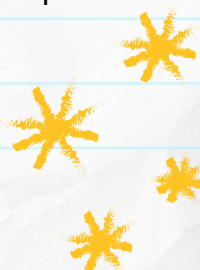
Young people have been involved every step of the way in developing this, chatting with us both one-on-one and in group sessions. We worked closely with our young voices groups, who shared what mental health means to them, what they need from services, and where they think U-evolve should head. Their input has been key in reshaping how we talk about our services, and they played a massive role in helping us land on our main theme: "creating space".

We asked young people, *what does space mean to you?*

- Space means: "Family"
- Space means: "Friends"
- Space means: "Relief"
- Space means: "Rest, relaxation, freedom"
- "Finally having the chance to think about your thoughts"
- "A space where I can be with myself and my thoughts"
- "A space where you can be who you want to be"
- "You can be you...not [living] up to someone else's expectations"
- "Not having to mask, that's exhausting"

Landing on "Space"

We ended up on the same page with the theme of "space" without even trying. While the strategy was coming together, the idea of using outer space as a visual theme was casually suggested. The next night at Young Voices, the group created a roadmap of their journey, with ideas like a plane flying through clouds and the body's nerve system. When we returned, they'd mapped out the entire solar system! They loved the positive imagery, like the stars, which reinforces that seeking help for mental health is a good thing.



Our approach - values & guiding principles

Our values, created together with staff, young people, and partners, are at the heart of everything we do and guide the decisions we make. They give us a strong cultural and ethical foundation, helping us bring this strategy to life, stay consistent in how we work, and make sure we're all aligned with our vision and mission.



Kindness - we treat everyone with love and kindness through the connections we make.



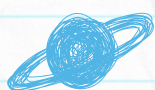
Empathy - we are empathetic in our approach, ensuring that everyone feels visible, valued and heard.



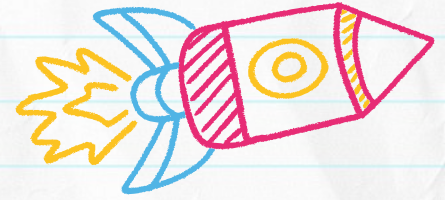
Inclusivity - we lead from a place of inclusivity; where people feel welcomed, accepted, and face no barriers to support or development.



Collaborative - we work best when we work together, with our young people, our colleagues, our partners, and within our communities.



Learning - we are curious and committed to continuous learning and development which we believe is crucial for the evolving nature of mental health



Strategic themes

Our strategic themes focus on making a real, positive difference to the mental health of young people in Edinburgh. We're committed to delivering services that not only support young people now but set them up for a brighter future. At the heart of everything we do is listening to young people – we believe in their ability to drive change, so we make sure their voices are heard and that they shape the decisions we make. We're also dedicated to continuous learning and growth, ensuring we're always adapting to meet the evolving needs of young people and the wider voluntary sector.

Make a positive impact on the mental health of young people in Edinburgh

We know our approach works and we will continue to provide impactful and innovative mental health services which support young people to feel better now and in the future.

Listen and respond to young people's needs

Listening to young people is what defines us, we believe in their capacity to make change. We are committed to responding to what they need, providing spaces for their voices to be heard, and ensuring youth representation in our decision making

Continuous learning and development to support organisational growth and innovation within the voluntary sector.

We recognise ongoing learning and development as crucial to supporting the mental health needs of young people. Investing in our people is a strategic priority towards long term growth and security within an ever-changing sector.

Objectives

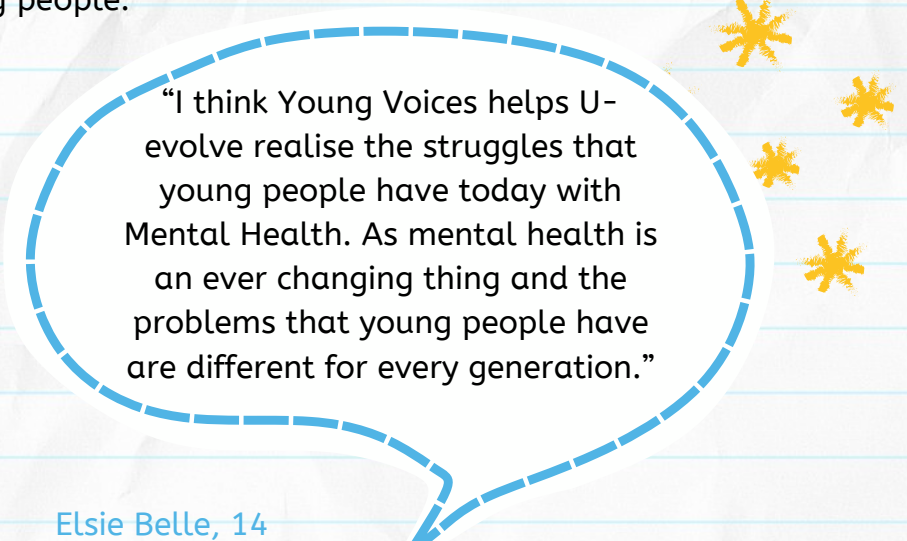
1. Deliver a programme of impactful and creative support which allows young people to feel better and improve their mental health.
2. Provide inclusive and accessible services breaking down the barriers young people face to accessing support.
3. Listen to and respond to our young people as a priority in all our work.
4. Support the learning, development and wellbeing of U-evolve staff and lead the way for staff development within the voluntary sector.
5. Achieving more financial stability for the organisation through varied and new income streams.

What's next?

Our vision is bold, and we know there's hard work ahead, but we're driven by passion and a real belief that we can make a difference to young people's mental health. We can't do it alone, though – over the next three years, we'll continue to work closely with young people, letting them lead the way in making things better for them. Our focus on relationships in our community will see us continue to team up with partners who share our values.

As we grow, we're excited to bring in new talent to expand what we do. With an increased focus on learning and development, we'll be ready to meet changing needs. We're thrilled to start the new year as a trauma-skilled organisation, with plans to become trauma-enhanced in the next two years. We look forward to working alongside our colleagues across the city, having a bigger voice in how we better support trauma for young people.

Young people will stay involved in bringing this strategy to life, starting with co-hosting and presenting at our Impact Showcase and Strategy Launch event. We're really excited to have young volunteers joining us to share what this strategy means to them and how it will make a difference.



“I think Young Voices helps U-evolve realise the struggles that young people have today with Mental Health. As mental health is an ever changing thing and the problems that young people have are different for every generation.”

Elsie Belle, 14
Young Voices Volunteer

A note from our Board

“I'm truly excited about launching and moving forward with this new strategy, particularly as the need for U-evolve's work has never been greater. It's invigorating to see how the contributions of young people are driving us forward, bringing fresh perspectives and innovative ideas. Their input is not only valued but is essential to our progress. Together, we are creating the space to respond to today's challenges with energy and creativity, and I couldn't be more optimistic about what lies ahead.”

Scott McClure
Interim Chair

Keep up to date with how we're getting on by signing up to our newsletter and following us on socials



CREATING YOUR SPACE

tips from us

We said at the start that this strategy was all about creating space, that goes for each of us individually too! Here are our top tips for creating space for yourself. Our vision for positive mental health starts here.



Set clear boundaries

Saying “no” isn’t always easy, but learning to do so when you need to helps protect your time and energy by setting healthy limits with work, relationships, and obligations.



Listen to your body

Set aside a few minutes each day to check in with yourself and how you are feeling. If things are feeling tricky, ground yourself in the present moment by paying attention to your senses and what is around you.



Unplug from online

We all know that taking a step away from the constant buzz of being online is important, but it’s also hard to do. Set a time when you take a break from social media and digital devices so that you can regularly reconnect with yourself. Use the time you gain to read, create, connect in person, or get outdoors.



Make time for what you love

Even small pockets of time spent doing something you love can be revitalising. Even though it can be hard to do, try and set aside some time to spend doing the things that make you happy.



Create your own safe space

Our physical space is so important to how we feel. Creating somewhere for you, keeping it clean and tidy, and letting go of things within the space that no longer serve you can be very soothing and gives you somewhere to head when you need a minute.



Find time for nature

We might not have the ideal climate for spending lots of time outdoors, but there’s lots to be said for a walk that blows away the cobwebs! It is undeniable that being out in nature is good for you, mind and body. Try and make some time to go for a walk, sit in the park, or have your morning coffee on your front step.

CREATING OUR SPACE

How the U-evolve team practice creating space

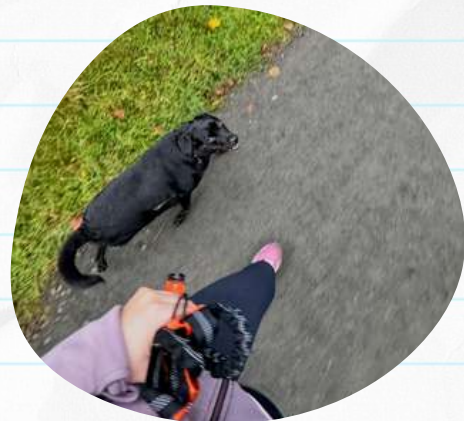


Gardening for Emily

You can often find Emily, our Fundraising & Comms Lead, out in the garden trying to create a beautiful outdoor space and enjoy it before Edinburgh's slug population does!

Walking Maggie for Alice

Our Counsellor Alice and her trusty sidekick Maggie the lab love an adventure, big or small. Spending time outdoors regularly means that you notice all the little changes happening around you and helps you stay grounded and present.



Reading for Ana

U-evolve's Mental Health Coach Ana uses reading to switch off and take time to rest physically and emotionally. Getting cosy with a good book and a blanket on the couch lets you unplug from the world and get lost in a different one.

Hockey for Kya

Making time for what you love is exactly what Kya, our Finance & Admin Assistant, does every weekend morning on the hockey pitch - come rain or shine!





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Norton Park Business Centre, 57 Albion Road, Edinburgh
U-evolve is a charity registered in Scotland: SC045864