Search engines 'could help young people find best mental health resources'

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Search engines and content providers could have a role to play in helping

young people find the most reliable mental health resources online, research at the University of Strathclyde has found.

Thousands of websites and apps relating to [mental health](#) are available but the study discovered that much of the most useful material was difficult to track down in a [search](#).

The presentation explored a finding, published in the *British Journal of Psychiatry* in 2013, that young people have the worst access of any group to [mental health services](#).

The study was carried out by Dr Diane Pennington, of Strathclyde's Department of Computer and Information Sciences.

Dr Pennington said: "There's often an assumption that because someone is young, they will know how to use technology. They do know but it can be on quite a surface level and they need to be able to decide what services are reliable.

"Searches for mental health support may not lead to a health service site and they could find something which does not support them in a positive way. This could happen if they did a search which reflected the way they were feeling, or if they used a clinical term such as 'depressed'.

"Many [young people](#) will not read a page if it predominantly features text, although work has been done on some sites and apps to make them easier to find and more engaging. This could involve more illustrations or non-medical suggestions such as watching an uplifting film or going for a walk. They'll seek professional assistance if it's needed but might also want to know what they can do right now to feel better.

"People also often don't look at search results after the first page but sometimes that's where the best results are. Search engines and [content](#)

[providers](#) could help in this by thinking about how they could make the most helpful material as visible as possible."

Dr Pennington presented her findings at the recent BCS Health Informatics Scotland conference, held at the University of Strathclyde's Technology and Innovation Centre.

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