

Experts call for mental illness screening for children

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Leading mental health experts are calling for school children to be screened for risk of mental illnesses such as depression and have devised a test that reliably identifies those at high risk.

The test can be done on a computer and could be used to alert doctors and psychologists to intervene early, said Barbara Sahakian a professor of clinical neuropsychology at Britain's Cambridge University.

Ian Goodyer, a child and adolescent psychiatrist who worked with Sahakian on a study published on Wednesday, said screening 11- to 12-year-old children could reveal those who have "low resilience" – putting them at higher risk of developing mental illnesses such as depression.

Mental health problems are common in young people. Some 10 percent of children aged between five and 16 in Britain are assessed as having a mental disorder of some kind.

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