Helping professionals navigate digital mental health apps:
An impact evaluation of the Flemish-Belgian platform onlinehulp-apps.be

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Introduction

- Growing demand-supply gap in mental health care
- Digital applications offer opportunities to increase reach and accessibility.
- Thousands of mental health apps available.
- Professionals and users struggle to identify appropriate evidence-based apps.
- App quality and safety often difficult to assess.



Torous et al. (2021); WHO (2022)

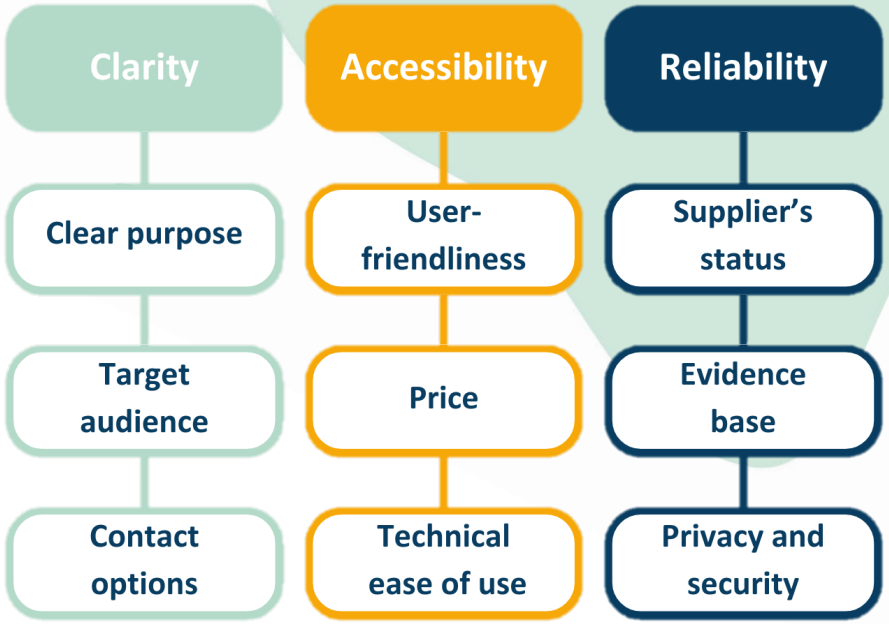
Platform

Overview of 197 relevant, screened high-quality apps in Flanders

Since January 2021 visited by 101.408 unique visitors

Apps are screened on 9 quality criteria

Similar initiatives internationally (mindapps.org – USA)



onlinehulp-apps

ALLE FILTERS TERUGZETTEN

Typ om te zoeken...

recentst toegevoegd

Toon per 12

Beschikbaar via ›

Doelgroep ›

Thema ⌄

- ✓ **Toon alles**
- lichamelijke gezondheid
- omgaan met gevoelens
- platform voor online hulp
- rechten
- seksualiteit & gender
- zelfdoding
- zorgen voor elkaar
- zwanger, opvoeden & gezin
- angst
- alcohol, drugs, gokken & gamen
- autismespectrumstoornis
- depressie
- eetstoornissen
- geld
- geweld & grensoverschrijdend gedrag
- handicap & beperking
- lotgenotencontact

197 zoekresultaten



Spark*

Spark* is een gratis app om jongeren te ondersteunen in het omgaan met zelfmoordgedachten.

Klik hier voor →



OpPepperApp

De Oppepper app helpt kinderen hun veerkracht te versterken.

Klik hier voor →



Veilig Gesprek

De app draagt bij aan het inschatten van risico's in cliëntgesprekken en geeft ook advies en informatie.

Klik hier voor →



Zelfhulp.be

Wegwijzer naar zelfhulpgroepen en lotgenotencontact

Klik hier voor →



KalenderKlok

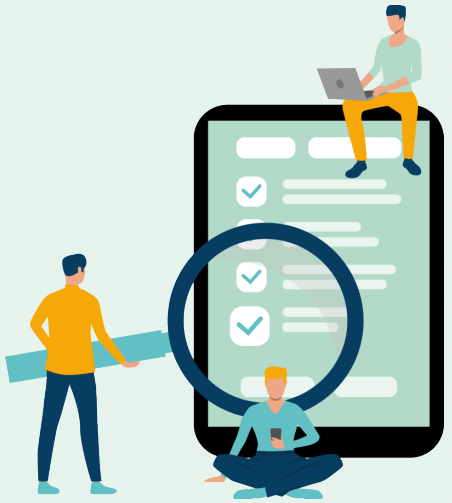
Een digitale kalenderklok die datum, tijd en dagstructuur duidelijk weergeeft en waarmee een mantelzorger of hulpverlener op afstand berichten en herinneringen kan sturen naar



Kankerspokenjagers

Kankerspokenjagers is een game voor kinderen van 6 tot 9 jaar die hen via opdrachten en uitleg helpt omgaan met emoties en vragen wanneer een ouder kanker heeft.

Five years later: Does the platform make a difference?



Evaluation to inform the consortium and support decisions regarding future funding

- reach and use
- user satisfaction
- perceived value
- future recommendations

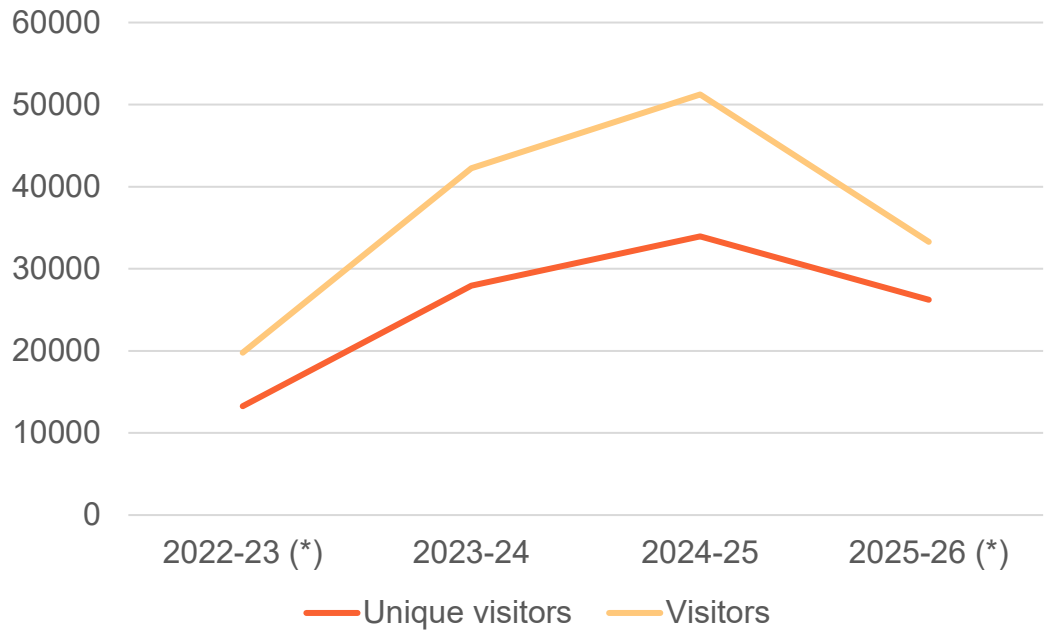
Platform analytics

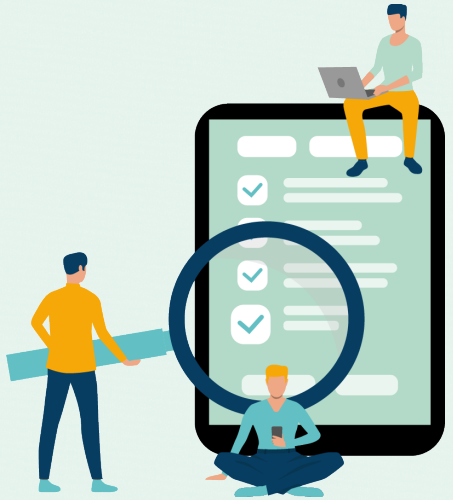
Online survey (n=117)

Interviews (n=11)

Results

The platform reaches a growing audience





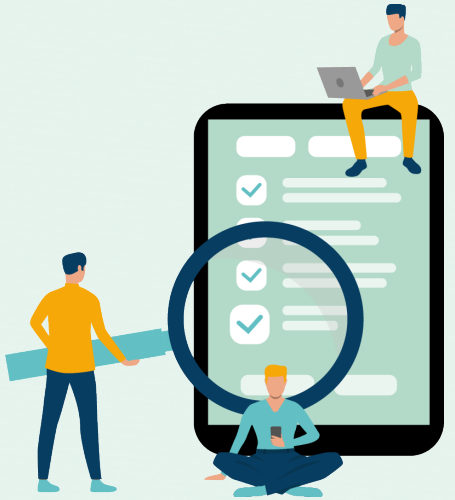
Top searches:

Autism	Stress	Depression	Anxiety	Sleep

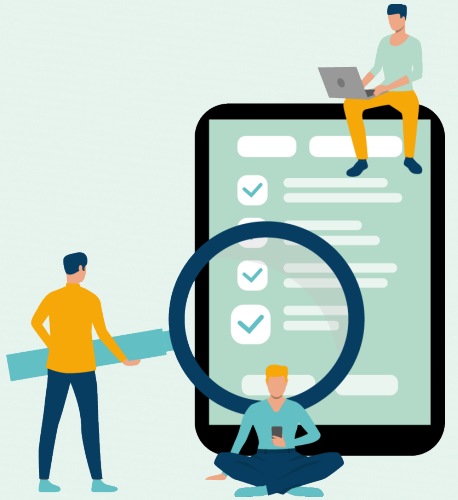
Results

Trust is the platform’s strongest asset

- Reliability **4.2/5** ⭐
- Usability **3.9/5**
- Search function **3.8/5**
- Fit with client needs **3.7/5**



Results



What do users value most?

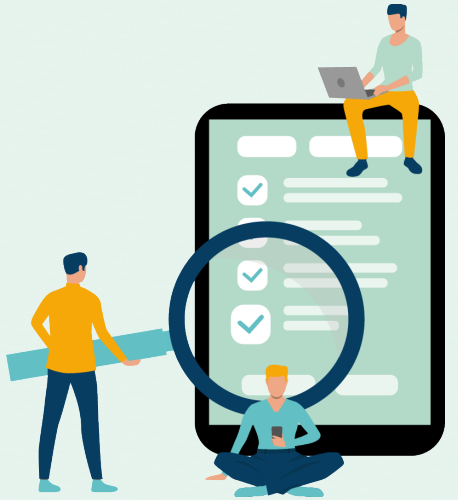
- High-quality selection of apps
- Trusted and reliable digital tools
- Time-saving for professionals

“It’s a digital library of trustworthy apps”

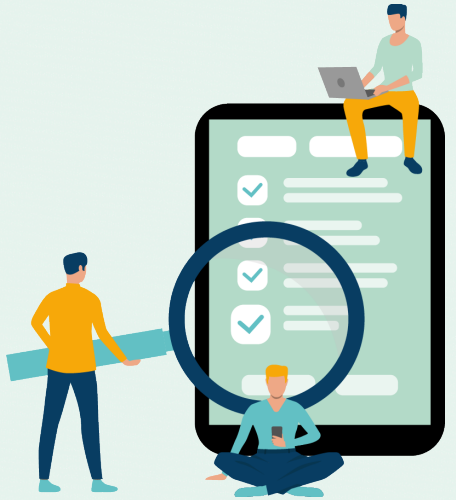
Results

Impact on professionals practice

- More informed choices **4.2/5**
- More efficiënt care **3.8/5**
- Better client-app matching **3.8/5**
- Increased digital uptake **3.8/5**



Results



Areas for further development

- Enhanced search and filtering options
- Greater visibility and awareness of the platform
- Regular updates on newly screened apps
- A broader range of tools for specific target groups

Conclusions

Onlinehulp-apps.be serves as a trusted gateway to DMH tools in Flanders

Growing reach – high levels of trust – facilitates adoption of DMH tools in practice

Findings interpreted with caution: relatively small samples

International relevance

Part of the growing international movement towards quality-assured digital health platforms

Future directions

Update screening framework in line with emerging quality standards

In a digital landscape characterised by abundance rather than scarcity, the challenge is no longer finding mental health apps, but identifying trustworthy ones



Questions?

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www.digitalmentalhealth.be



Presentations of our research group on ESRII 2026

References

World Health Organization. (2022). *World Mental Health Report: Transforming Mental Health for All*. https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240049338

Torous, J., Bucci, S., Bell, I. H., et al. (2021). The growing field of digital psychiatry: current evidence and the future of apps, social media, chatbots, and virtual reality. *World Psychiatry, 20(3)*, 318-335. https://doi.org/10.1002/wps.20883