



Intellectual Disability & Co-occurring Conditions

Children and young people with intellectual disability (ID) are significantly more likely to experience mental health and neurodevelopmental conditions, yet their needs are often complex, under-recognised, and poorly met.

*Around **40%** of children and adolescents with intellectual disability experience mental health problems.*

Neurodevelopmental conditions such as autism and ADHD commonly co-occur, adding to clinical complexity.

The Clinical Challenge

Assessment and treatment in ID require going beyond standard approaches:

Diagnostic complexity

Symptoms may present differently or be masked by cognitive and communication differences

Diagnostic overshadowing

Mental health difficulties are often misattributed to the intellectual disability itself

High co-occurrence

Multiple conditions and behavioural difficulties often overlap, complicating assessment and care

Persistent impairment

Even with intervention, many young people continue to experience significant functional difficulties



What Effective Practice Requires

A comprehensive approach integrates multiple levels:

Biopsychosocial assessment

Understanding the interaction between health, development, environment, and relationships

Careful diagnostic formulation

Moving beyond labels to understand underlying mechanisms and needs

Adapted psychological interventions

Modifying evidence-based therapies to match cognitive and communication profiles

Thoughtful pharmacological management

Balancing benefits, side effects, and minimum effective dosing strategies

Multidisciplinary collaboration

Coordinating care across CAMHS, education, and specialist services

Learn more about this topic in our short course: [“Assessment and Management of Intellectual Disability and Co-occurring Conditions”](#)