

# Adaptive behaviour in children and young people with epilepsy and mental health difficulties: potential impacts on mental health treatment

Elana Moore, Adela Curaj, Tiwa Adelekan, Dr Sophie Bennett & Professor Roz Shafran - UCL Great Ormond Street Institute of Child Health

## Introduction

- Adaptive behaviour is an individual's functional ability and level of independence
- Epilepsy is associated with higher rates mental health difficulties and impaired adaptive behaviour
- Poorer adaptive behaviour is associated with mental health difficulties
- We do not yet know how all three factors (1) epilepsy, (2) mental health difficulties and (3) adaptive behaviour interact together.



## Methodology

- Families took part in the Mental Health Intervention for Children with Epilepsy (**MICE**) unpublished and ongoing randomised control trial.
- Measures completed: Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ; Goodman et al., 1997), Development and Wellbeing Assessment (DAWBA; Goodman et al., 2000), Hague Seizure Severity Scale (HASS; Carpay et al., 1996) and Vineland Adaptive Behaviour Scale – Third Edition (Sparrow et al., 2005).

## Results

Total of **60** children and young people took part (63% male, 37% female), average age of 10.6 years (ranging from 4 to 18 years).

### Mental health

- SDQ mean score of 19 (SD 5.6) considered high. SDQ mean impact score of 4 (SD 2.6) considered very high.
- Most common DAWBA diagnoses: opposition defiant disorder (40% of sample), ADHD (40% of sample), ASD (30% of sample), generalised anxiety disorder (23.4%) and specific phobia (18.3% of sample)

### Epilepsy

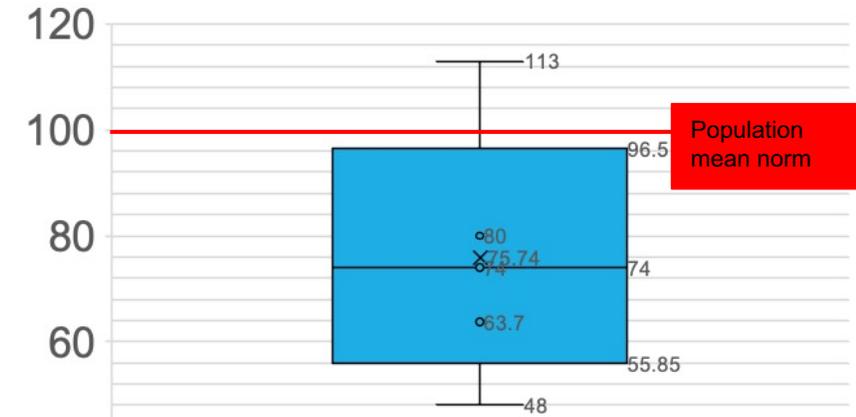
HASS mean score of 19 (SD 16.5), falling in mild to moderate range.

### Adaptive behaviour

Vineland Adaptive Behaviour Scale overall Adaptive Behaviour Composite (ABC) mean score of 74 (see box plot). The population mean norm is a score of 100.

Children and young people with epilepsy and mental health difficulties have **statistically significantly impaired compared to population norms** ( $t(59)=-14.8, p<0.05$ )

## Adaptive Behaviour Composite (ABC) score



## Conclusions

- Children and young people with mental health difficulties are experiencing impaired adaptive behaviour
- **Clinical implications:** Many mental health talking therapies (e.g. CBT) rely on effective adaptive behaviour skills. Clinicians must consider if (1) therapy is suitable and (2) if therapy can be adapted to account for impaired adaptive behaviour
- **Limitations:** We cannot establish directionality of relationship. Data was collected during COVID-19 lockdowns which may have impacted results. Future research should consider factors that predict impaired adaptive behaviour.