



UK & INTERNATIONAL
HEALTH COACHING ASSOCIATION



Take the Lead on Your Health

A Guide

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A Guide from the UK & International Health Coaching Association

Your health is yours to steer. With healthcare constantly changing, knowing where to find trusted guidance is more important than ever.

Everywhere you look - social media, books, websites - there's advice. Health coaching is one option, but you might be wondering:

- What *is* a health coach?
- What do they actually do?
- Does it really work?
- Who can I trust?

Professional health and wellbeing coaching offers a safe, evidence-based, non-clinical approach to help you make lasting lifestyle and health behaviour changes - whether you're aiming to prevent illness or manage long-term conditions.

This guide will help you:

- Understand what health coaching really is
- See how it fits into the wider health and wellbeing landscape
- Know why professional standards matter
- Find a qualified health coach you can trust

Take control. Make informed choices. Lead your health journey with confidence.

Your access to healthcare - the limiting reality

Across the UK and internationally, access to timely healthcare is becoming more challenging. Rising demand, system overwhelm, and the growing burden of long-term conditions mean that many people wait longer for appointments, have less time with their healthcare providers, and often feel unsure where to turn for support between visits.

At the same time, we are being encouraged to take more responsibility for managing our own health.

Lifestyle-related conditions are accounting for a significant proportion of healthcare need, yet traditional medical systems are not designed to provide preventive or ongoing lifestyle and health behaviour change support. This creates a gap between what people need and what the system can sustainably deliver.

This is where a trained, credentialed health coach comes in to help bridge the gap between medical care and making lifestyle and health behaviour changes stick in real life.

By providing time, partnership and personalised guidance, a skilled and credentialed health coach supports you to identify what is important to you and build the knowledge, confidence, skills and lifestyle habits needed to take proactive ownership of your health.

To take the lead on your health.

What is a Health Coach?



A skilled, credentialed health coach works in partnership with you to help you understand what's important to you, identify your health goals, explore your motivations, overcome barriers and challenges, and build sustainable lifestyle and health behaviour changes. Health coaches **do not diagnose, treat, or prescribe**. Instead, they focus on empowerment, lifestyle and health behaviour change, and on supporting you to take informed, confident steps towards better wellbeing.

Where clinical professionals often focus on “*what is the matter with you,*” health coaches focus on “*what matters to you.*” Their work complements clinical healthcare services by supporting motivation, accountability, and progress over time.

What is Whole Health and Wellbeing Coaching?

At UKIHCA, we define ‘whole health and wellbeing coaching’ as a **whole-person approach**. We recognise that health is shaped by far more than symptoms or diagnoses - encompassing lifestyle, environment, social connections, emotional resilience, and your personal values and sense of meaning and purpose.

Whole health and wellbeing coaching helps you to understand your health in the context of *your* own life, identify what matters most to you, and make changes that support all aspects of your wellbeing.

There is no ‘one-size-fits-all’ solution: instead, UKIHCA health coaches collaborate with you to build awareness, knowledge, skills, habits, and confidence that last well beyond the coaching sessions.

Qualified vs Unqualified ‘Health Coaches’

As the demand for health guidance grows, so too does the number of people claiming to be a ‘health coach’.

Globally, ‘*health coach*’ is not a statutorily regulated title - meaning anyone can adopt the title regardless of their training or competence.

An unqualified coach may lack the training, skills and insurance needed to support clients safely and effectively. Without proper oversight or accountability, the quality of service can vary significantly.

For your safety and trust, it is vital to work with a health coach who is appropriately trained, supervised, insured, and committed to maintaining the highest standard of professionalism.

A qualified, credentialed health coach will have completed a formally recognised programme covering a core curriculum, including whole person health and wellbeing, lifestyle drivers of health, health behaviour change science, safe scope of practice, and ethical boundaries.

What is a UKIHCA Registered Health Coach?

UKIHCA has established the **first and only unified register for health coaches globally**.

A UKIHCA Registered Health Coach (UKIHCA-RHC) has demonstrated that he or she meets rigorous criteria, including:



- Attaining world-class [professional standards for whole-health and wellbeing coaching education and training](#)
- Completing UKIHCA-Approved, minimum 600-hour high-quality training
- Working within a clear [scope of practice](#)
- Maintaining an annual [continuing professional development](#) requirement
- Receiving mandatory, regular [professional supervision](#)
- Adhering to a strict [Code of Conduct](#) and ethical framework

Unregistered health coaches, while qualified, may not meet these rigorous requirements.

A UKIHCA Registration provides **public assurance** that your health coach has been independently assessed, is safe, competent, committed to professional development, and fully insured.

How does a credentialed health coach differ from other coaching roles?

Whole Health Coaching vs Life, Career, Business and Executive Coaching

While all forms of coaching share core skills such as active listening, goal setting, and facilitation of self - discovery, whole health and wellbeing coaching is distinct in its focus, qualifications and context.

UKIHCA-RHCs are trained specifically in evidence-based health behaviour change, lifestyle interventions, and the science of wellbeing, often completing a minimum 600-hour accredited programme* with ongoing professional supervision.

In contrast, life, business, or executive coaches typically focus on personal or professional goals such as career progression, productivity, or leadership, and are unlikely to have formal training in health sciences, health behaviour change, or the management of long-term health conditions. While executive and life coaching can support wellbeing indirectly, whole health coaching is structured, non-clinical, and directly targeted at improving physical, mental, and emotional health outcomes.

Coaching Type	Focus	Limitations
Life Coaching	Personal goals, motivation, fulfilment	Not designed for clinical populations, long-term conditions, or safeguarding contexts
Career Coaching	Employability, transitions, skills	Does not address health-related drivers of work capability, absence, or burnout

Business Coaching	Business growth, decision-making, productivity and operational performance	Focuses on commercial outcomes rather than health, wellbeing or lifestyle complexity
Executive Coaching	High-performing individuals, organisational impact	Assumes stability, resources, and privilege; not designed for population health or inequality
UKIHCA-RHC	Health behaviour change, lifestyle support, whole health & wellbeing complexity	Evidence-based, sector-ready, system-level, works safely across healthcare, communities, workplaces, and education

* [***A UKIHCA-Approved Education & Training programme***](#) for health coaches must include **at least 600 hours** of combined compulsory study and training and this must include a **minimum of 50 hours of actual coaching practice**.

This focus makes a UKIHCA-RHC uniquely complementary not only within healthcare and community support services, but also across workplaces, sports, leisure and physical activity settings, and all levels of education.

Within the wider healthcare ecosystem, qualified and credentialed health coaches occupy a distinctive and increasingly important role in supporting health and wellbeing. They often work alongside - but they do not replace - therapists, personal trainers, nutritionists, counsellors, clinicians, and Community Health and Wellbeing Workers (CHWWs), but their focus, methods, and purpose are unique.

Key distinctions include:

- **Focus on health behaviour and lifestyle change:** Health coaches support sustainable changes to habits, routines, and mindsets that improve wellbeing. They do **not diagnose, treat, or provide medical advice**
- **Self - empowerment through collaborative coaching:** Health coaches use a structured, evidence - based approach to support meaningful, lasting change. Central to this is **collaborative coaching**, where you – client or patient - define your health goals and priorities. Techniques such as **motivational interviewing, goal - setting frameworks, and reflective questioning** help you to:
 - Clarify what matters most to you in your health and wellbeing
 - Identify practical, emotional, or social barriers to progress
 - Explore personalised strategies that fit your lifestyle, values, and context
 - Build your confidence, skills, and habits that support lasting change

Rather than giving advice, health coaches **facilitate self-discovery**, empowering you to take ownership of your health journey and develop the personal agency to sustain improvements way beyond the coaching partnership.

- **Working within professional boundaries:** UKIHCA-RHCs recognise when you need specialist, clinical, or community support and guide you appropriately, ensuring safety and continuity of your care.
- **Complementary, *not* substitutive:** Health coaching enhances existing services - such as physiotherapy, dietetics, mental health care, medical treatment, and are complementary to other important non-clinical roles like Community Health and Wellbeing Workers (CHWWs) and Social Prescribing Link Workers (SPLWs) - by helping you translate guidance into practical, achievable steps.

CHWWs and SPLWs provide practical, localised support, signposting, and guidance, often addressing social isolation and the social determinants of health. While these roles focus on access and practical support, UKIHCA- RHCs focus on structured, evidence-based whole-person lifestyle and health behaviour *change*: person empowerment, goal-setting, and building long-term self-efficacy - skills that go beyond connection and signposting.

Understanding these differences ensures you access the **right support, from the right professional, at the right time**, maximising your health and wellbeing outcomes.

More about UKIHCA: our Vision and Mission

We exist to **promote high standards, protect the public, and advance the professionalisation of health coaching worldwide.**

Our Vision: We want to see a self-empowered population, managing their health and wellbeing to thrive in life

Our Mission: To see a health coach in every public and private healthcare setting, communities, in workplaces in leisure and in physical activity settings

By setting and upholding professional standards, we support coaches, organisations, policymakers, and the public to understand **what high -quality health coaching looks like and why it matters.**



The UKIHCA Guide to Health Coaching



[Download the Guide](#)

This guide helps you understand health coaching as a structured, non-clinical process and make informed decisions about engaging with a qualified, insured coach.

The guide covers:

- A clear definition of health coaching
- The coaching process, including client - led goal setting, behaviour change support, and collaborative dialogue
- The role of UKIHCA-RHCs, including professional standards, qualifications, and boundaries
- Scope and limitations: what coaches can and cannot do, and when to seek clinical or specialist care
- How to choose support: guidance on selecting a trusted coach based on qualifications, insurance, and scope of practice

It **does not offer medical or therapeutic advice**; we encourage you to consult your healthcare practitioner on clinical matters or medication concerns.

UKIHCA Directory – your go-to source for a Registered Health Coach

To help you identify practitioners you can trust, UKIHCA maintains a [Directory of Registered Health Coaches](#). This publicly accessible resource allows you to search for qualified, registered health coaching professionals who meet our standards.

Whether you are seeking support for lifestyle change, long-term condition management, stress reduction, or general wellbeing, the Directory offers a reliable way to find a professional who is **trained, accountable, and committed to your safety and success.**

Find Your Healthy

<https://www.ukihca.com/fyh>

Everyone's version of "healthy" is unique. It may mean having more energy, managing stress, improving sleep, preparing for life transitions, or feeling more in control of long - term health challenges.



A **UKIHCA-RHC** can help you explore what truly matters to you and build practical, sustainable steps toward the life you want.

Taking the lead on your health is not about doing everything alone. It is about **choosing the right support, at the right time, from the right professional.** With a qualified, registered coach, you can move from intention to action and create meaningful, lasting change.

Take the Lead on Your Health – It's Yours to Steer!

Start today, with the right foundations and support:

- **Decide what matters:** Identify your health goals and priorities
- **Explore coaching:** See how a UKIHCA-Registered Health Coach can help you build lasting habits and confidence
- **Find a qualified, trusted coach:** Use the **UKIHCA Directory** or ask your healthcare provider for a UKIHCA-RHC
- **Take action:** Start small, track progress, and make changes that stick
- **Stay empowered:** Health coaching is a **partnership** - adapt, celebrate successes, and keep moving forward

Start your journey today. Take control, make informed choices, and create the health and wellbeing you want.