



UK & INTERNATIONAL
HEALTH COACHING ASSOCIATION

Whole Health & Wellbeing Coaching:

**A Systems-Level Whole-Person Health
Capability Enabled by UKIHCA-
Registered Health Coaches**

A Position Paper

Introduction

Across the UK and internationally, societies face a convergence of health, social and economic challenges:

- Rising long-term conditions and multimorbidity
- Overstretched health and care systems
- Workforce burnout, sickness absence, and economic inactivity
- Widening health inequalities
- Declining mental wellbeing, resilience, and self-management capacity
- Fragmentation across healthcare, communities, workplaces, and education systems

These challenges cannot be addressed by clinical treatment alone, by information or health education campaigns or by one-off behaviour-change campaigns. They are complex, system-level problems rooted in human behaviour, psychosocial dynamics, and interactions across health, work, education and community.

This paper positions whole health & wellbeing coaching a strategic, cross-sector and systems-level health and wellbeing capability, enabled by UKIHCA-Registered Health Coaches and critical to addressing health and wellbeing and social and economic challenges of our time.

Whole Health & Wellbeing Coaching

Whole Health & Wellbeing Coaching, delivered by [UK & International Health Coaching Association-Registered Health Coaches](#) (UKIHCA-RHCs), provides an evidence-informed system-level capability to address these challenges.

It empowers people to navigate complexity, sustain change, and improve health and wellbeing across all areas of life – bridging healthcare, workplaces, communities, and education.

UKIHCA-RHCs’ training and credentials equip them to meet UKIHCA Professional Standards for Education & Training, adhere to a robust Scope of Practice, and maintain professional supervision and CPD. This ensures they operate safely, competently, and ethically across multiple sectors.

Distinguishing UKIHCA-RHCs from other coaching modalities

Life, Career, Business and Executive Coaching

These coaching modalities are valuable in their own right, but they are **not** designed for system-level health or public service contexts.

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

UKIHCA-RHCs are specifically trained for whole-health and wellbeing and lifestyle complexity. They support **capacity, resilience, and sustainable self-management**, rather than just performance or personal achievement, ensuring coaching contributes safely and meaningfully to system-level health and wellbeing outcomes.

UKIHCA-RHCs complete:

- a [UKIHCA-Approved, structured, evidence-informed training pathway](#) that meets UKIHCA's world-class [Education and Training Standards](#)
- follow a robust [scope of practice](#)
- and maintain [UKIHCA-Approved Health Coaching CPD](#), Coaching Practice and [Health Coaching Supervision](#) requirements

Their commitment to continuing professional development equips them to work safely and effectively across multiple domains.

UKIHCA-Approved training courses and pathways (*add links*) ensure that UKIHCA-RHC's training includes:

- understanding and supporting proactive health creation and primary prevention, long-term conditions, mental health, stress, fatigue, pain, and lifestyle risk
- integrating identity, lifestyle support, health behaviours, and social context into health coaching practice
- operating across multi-sector systems including healthcare, community, workplace, and education
- applying health behaviour change science, public health principles, and risk management in real-world contexts
- maintaining professional boundaries, safeguarding competence and referral awareness

Sector-agnostic 'generic' coaching credentials

Generic coaching credentials - such as those awarded by the **International Coaching Federation (ICF)**, **European Mentoring & Coaching Council (EMCC)** and **Association for Coaching (AfC) credentials** - are **sector-agnostic** and certify coaching skill and personal/professional identity. They primarily assess coaching hours, reflective practice and observed conversations.

While generic credentials are valuable for life, career, business and executive coaching, they **do not require**:

- health literacy
- a health and wellbeing knowledge base
- competence in lifestyle and health behaviour change science
- health coaching practice in the context of whole health and wellbeing
- understanding of supporting proactive health creation, primary prevention and self-management of long-term conditions

- awareness of public health priorities or health inequalities
- ability to work alongside clinical and public health services

A strategic distinction - UKIHCA-RHC credentials

The UKIHCA-RHC credential certifies fitness to practise whole health and wellbeing coaching **at scale**, delivering public safety and value, system readiness and consistent standards, working within health coaching scope of practice.

This distinction is critical for commissioners, employers, and policymakers seeking a safe, scalable, affordable and effective approach to health and wellbeing challenges.

Distinguishing UKIHCA-RHCs from other non-clinical roles

Role	Core skillset	Key contribution	Context
UKIHCA-RHC	Evidence-based coaching (motivational interviewing, goal-setting, behaviour change theory)	Structured lifestyle and health behaviour change, habit formation, self-management support	Primary care, community, workplace, digital health
Social Prescribing Link Worker (SPLW)	Assessment of social needs, service navigation	Connects people to community/voluntary support, reduces GP workload	NHS/PCN-based
Community Health & Wellbeing Worker (CHWW)	Community engagement, trust-building	Focuses on commercial outcomes rather than health, wellbeing or lifestyle complexity	Community-based
Other roles (health trainers, care navigators)	Practical guidance / lifestyle advice	Varies in training and standardisation	Mixed

How UKIHCA-RHCs support

UKIHCA-RHCs:

- complement, *not replace*, clinicians, SPLWs, or CHWWs.
- provide measurable outcomes: reduced GP workload, improved wellbeing, sustainable lifestyle and health behaviour change.
- turn knowledge and advice into sustained action.
- build resilience, capacity, and self-management for complex lives.
- operate safely in multi-sector systems, supporting public value at scale

The importance of holding professional body credentials

UKIHCA was the first (and remains) the leading, professional body for health coaching in the world - holding the first [Register for Professional Health Coaches](#).

When health coaching is embedded within a public health infrastructure and a population-level whole person health and wellbeing capability, credentials are no longer about personal prestige or siloed skills. They are about:

- Public safety and trust
- Professional standards
- Health and wellbeing outcomes
- Workforce legitimacy
- System-wide trust
- Cross-sector interoperability
- Consistency at scale

As the professional body for health coaching, UKIHCA ensures that UKIHCA Registered Health Coaches are validated to:

- Work safely with complex health and wellbeing needs, helping reduce lifestyle-related risk, long-term conditions, and mental health challenges
- Apply evidence-based lifestyle and health behaviour change science in real-world, multi-sector contexts
- Operate effectively within multidisciplinary systems, including healthcare, public health, community, and workplace settings
- Maintain professional boundaries, understand referral pathways, and demonstrate safeguarding competence

Whole health and wellbeing coaching is not a peripheral adjunct; it is a strategic, cross-sector capability that strengthens systems at every level.

UKIHCA Registered Health Coaches are central to building this capability, providing the professional expertise needed to address the complex health, social, and economic challenges of our time.

Embedding whole-person coaching across organisations and communities is essential for sustainable wellbeing, resilient populations, and a future-ready health landscape.

<https://www.ukihca.com/blog/your-personal-ally-in-health-how-ukihca-registered-health-coaches-support-you-differently>

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