



UK & INTERNATIONAL
HEALTH COACHING ASSOCIATION



Neighbourhood Health Needs a
Credentialed & Professionally
Accountable Workforce. UKIHCA-
RHCs Are Ready to Deliver It.

A UKIHCA Strategic Perspective

SP01 - September 2026

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UKIHCA Independence

UKIHCA is an independent, non-profit professional body operating in the third sector. Free from commercial influence, control or ties that could compromise our independence, we exist to advance the health and wellbeing coaching profession, protect the public and uphold high standards of ethical, evidence-informed practice.

Executive Summary

The NHS's shift towards neighbourhood health requires a workforce capable of delivering proactive, preventative and personalised care closer to where people live. The Neighbourhood Health Framework explicitly anticipates new roles within multidisciplinary teams to support this ambition. UKIHCA-Registered Health Coaches (UKIHCA-RHCs) are already equipped to fulfil this role.

Five things commissioners and workforce leaders should know

- 1. A workforce already exists.** UKIHCA-RHCs are a credentialled workforce trained to support people to make sustainable changes in their health and wellbeing. They are non-clinical practitioners designed to work alongside, rather than replace, clinical professionals within multidisciplinary teams.
- 2. The profession has defined standards.** UKIHCA operates defined Professional Standards for Education and Training, with Approved Education & Training Providers assessed against those standards. UKIHCA-RHC requirements are aligned with the NHS Workforce Development Framework for Health and Wellbeing Coaches and the Personalised Care Institute's Core Curriculum.
- 3. Professional accountability is built in.** UKIHCA has established a Scope of Practice, Code of Professional Conduct, complaints and fitness-to-practise policies, and continuing professional development requirements. This provides employers and commissioners with clear boundaries, accountability and assurance around professional practice.
- 4. Health coaching supports the priorities of neighbourhood health.** There is an established evidence base for health coaching in long-term condition management, including improvements in weight management, physical activity and physical and mental health outcomes. Health coaches can also strengthen supported self-management, shared decision making and social prescribing within integrated care.
- 5. The profession is continuing to mature.** UKIHCA is committed to working towards accreditation by the Professional Standards Authority (PSA), further strengthening independent assurance of its professional standards and governance.

The opportunity

Neighbourhood health does not need to wait for a new health coaching workforce to be created. The professional infrastructure already exists.

UKIHCA-RHCs bring defined education and training standards, a clear scope of practice, professional accountability and continuing competence to the neighbourhood health model. They offer a ready, credentialled workforce that can contribute to personalised, preventative and integrated care.

The opportunity now is to ensure that health coaching is appropriately recognised within neighbourhood workforce planning, commissioning and multidisciplinary team design, enabling UKIHCA-RHCs to contribute fully to the delivery of the NHS's neighbourhood health ambitions.

Neighbourhood health

From 21 to 24 September, the [Personalised Care Institute](#)'s Personalised Care Week 2026 turns a national spotlight on neighbourhood health, workforce development, long-term condition management and integrated working. Each theme names a challenge the NHS has committed to solving. Each also

names a capability that credentialled health coaching already delivers and has been quietly building the evidence and workforce infrastructure for over the past decade.

The Neighbourhood Health Framework, published jointly by DHSC and NHS England in March 2026, sets out a decisive shift: multidisciplinary teams organised around local populations, delivering care that is more accessible, integrated and preventative closer to where people live (ADPH London, 2026; NHS Confederation, 2026).

Crucially, the framework anticipates that the neighbourhood workforce will evolve, with new roles emerging specifically to support proactive, preventative, personalised care (NHS Confederation, 2026).

UKIHCA-Registered Health Coaches (UKIHCA-RHCs) are precisely this kind of role: non-clinical, embedded in multidisciplinary teams, and trained to work with the person in front of them rather than the presenting condition alone.

UKIHCA itself operates as an **independent, non-profit professional body in the third sector**, rather than as part of the NHS or local government machinery that has historically 'owned' neighbourhood-level care. Far from being a constraint, this positions UKIHCA squarely within the Framework's own design: neighbourhood health is explicitly built as a partnership between integrated care boards, local authorities and voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) organisations (NHS Confederation, 2026), and a credentialled, third-sector professional body is exactly the kind of infrastructure that partnership model depends on.

Workforce development: a workforce that is ready now

Personalised care policy repeatedly names the workforce gap as the constraint on delivery. UKIHCA-RHCs close that gap because the profession's infrastructure already meets the standard NHS workforce policy is asking for.

UKIHCA operates as both a membership association and a professional register. Full Membership is open to health coaches who meet the Association's published **Professional Standards for Education and Training in Whole Health & Wellbeing Coaching**, indicating competence to practise, while the UKIHCA-RHC designation is reserved for Full Members who meet defined additional requirements. This separation is substantive because registration signals a higher level of professional accountability and assurance, distinguishing those who have met the Association's additional requirements for registration from those who meet the threshold for membership.

UKIHCA maintains defined Professional Standards for Education and Training, against which its network of **Approved Education & Training Providers** (ETPs) is assessed and approved so a UKIHCA-RHC's qualification has been benchmarked, not simply certificated. UKIHCA's Professional Standards were developed with reference to NHS England frameworks, among others (UKIHCA, 2024). NHS England's workforce development framework for health and wellbeing coaches is itself aligned to the Personalised Care Institute's Core Curriculum for Personalised Care (NHS England, 2023). This lineage means UKIHCA-RHC training is not disconnected from NHS workforce thinking on health and wellbeing coaching competency.

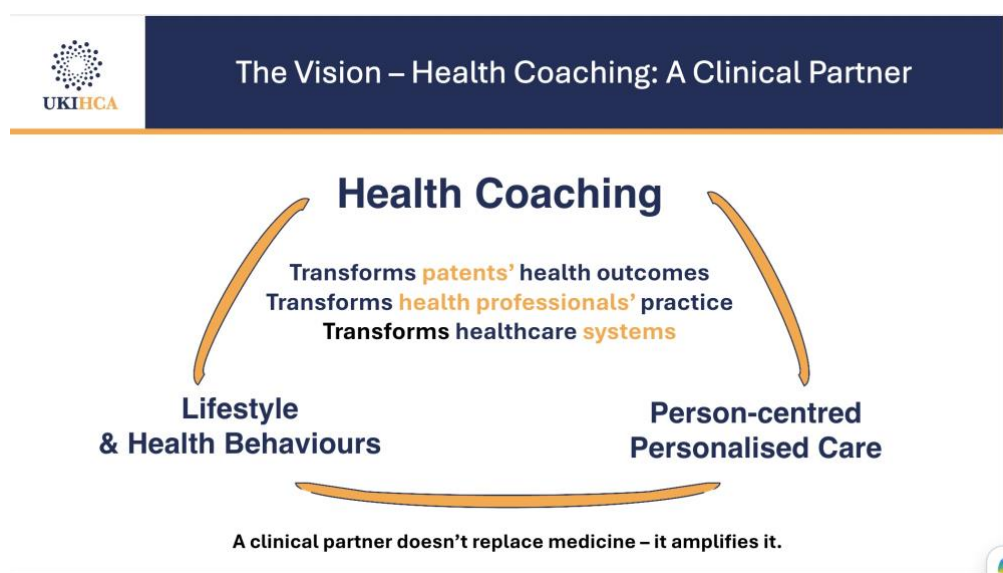
As a result, a UKIHCA-RHC credential carries a credible line of continuity with the frameworks that shape NHS thinking on health and wellbeing coach competency and provides a clear point of alignment between professional preparation and the competencies expected of health and wellbeing coaches in NHS roles.

A published Scope of Practice sets clear boundaries on what health coaches do and do not do, giving employers and commissioners the same clarity NHS England's own workforce framework asks for. **A UKIHCA Health Coaching Code of Professional Conduct** sets out clear standards of

professional practice, with a complaints and fitness-to-practise process behind it — the accountability mechanisms that distinguish a regulated profession from an informal one. Mandatory CPD requirements and [Work Based Pathways](#) ensure Full Members' skills are maintained and evidenced over time, addressing the exact retention and supervision concerns NHS England identified in its 2021 survey of health and wellbeing coaches (NHS England, 2023).

UKIHCA has set out this professionalisation case formally in its position paper, [Professional Health and Wellbeing Coaching: Professional Identity as the Foundation of Professional Maturity](#) (UKIHCA, 2026) and has committed to working towards accreditation of its professional register by the Professional Standards Authority (PSA), aligning its policies and governance to meet PSA requirements. This is a deliberate move up the regulatory ladder: from a voluntary professional register to one independently assessed against the same standards applied to other accredited registers across health and care.

Put together, this is a profession built to the same architecture as established allied health professions: defined training standards, a public scope of practice, an accountability framework, and continuing competence requirements sitting behind a named register — with formal PSA accreditation as a commitment. For neighbourhood teams and commissioners assembling a personalised care workforce under the new Framework, that architecture is what makes a UKIHCA-RHC a safe, credentialled hire rather than a role still being defined in practice.



UKIHCA's vision: health coaching as a clinical partner, transforming patient outcomes, professional practice and healthcare systems.

Long-term condition management

The evidence base for health coaching's role in long-term condition management is well established. Kivelä et al.'s (2014) foundational systematic review of thirteen controlled studies found that health coaching produced measurable improvements in weight management, physical activity, and physical and mental health status among adults with chronic disease — findings that continue to inform practice internationally over a decade on. More recently, Maidment et al.'s (2024) UK-based rapid review of self-management interventions for workers with long-term conditions reinforced the value of structured, facilitated support in sustaining behaviour change over time. An important finding since roughly 30% of the population are living with one or more long-term conditions and are the direct focus of personalised care and support planning under NHS England's Comprehensive Model of Personalised Care (NHS England, 2019) — the model UKIHCA-RHCs are trained to deliver against.



Integrated working

Supported self-management, shared decision making and social prescribing are only as strong as the workforce delivering them; that workforce only functions well when its roles are clearly defined and its practitioners properly accountable to a professional register. As a Coalition for Personalised Care Partner Organisation, UKIHCA sits inside this system by design, not by adjacency: contributing to the professionalisation of health coaching as one of the standard components of personalised, integrated care.

Personalised Care Week is a moment to make a straightforward case: the policy ambition for neighbourhood health, a mature personalised care workforce, better long-term condition outcomes and integrated teams already have a credentialed profession — a register UKIHCA-Registered Health Coaches meeting defined standards ready to deliver it.

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Artificial Intelligence Assistance Statement

AI tools were used to support drafting, structuring, iterative development and editorial refinement under human direction. All content was critically reviewed, revised, and approved by the authors, who retain full responsibility for the final output.

For UKIHCA's full *AI – Publications/Communications Assistance Policy*, please visit [HERE](#).

About UKIHCA



The banner features the UK & International Health Coaching Association logo on the left, which consists of a circular cluster of dots. To the right of the logo are two icons: a pair of binoculars and a target with an arrow in the center. Further right, the text 'Our Vision' is followed by the statement: 'Our vision is to see a self-empowered population, managing their health and wellbeing to thrive in life'. Below this, 'Our Mission' is followed by: 'Our mission is to see a Registered Health Coach in every public & private healthcare setting, in education, workplaces, physical activity settings and in communities'.

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Our Vision
Our **vision** is to see a self-empowered population, managing their health and wellbeing to thrive in life

Our Mission
Our **mission** is to see a Registered Health Coach in every public & private healthcare setting, in education, workplaces, physical activity settings and in communities

Contact UKIHCA

Please reach out to info@ukihca.com and one of our Team will be happy to help.