

# Coaching competence framework

User guide

**Coaching competence framework**

## User guide

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## Executive summary

This document provides information and guidance for users of BACP's Coaching competence framework.


An increasing number of qualified therapists are working as coaches, or showing an interest in coaching. The number of online subscriptions for BACP's *Coaching Today* journal increased by over 500 per cent between 2020 and 2022, and since 2016 BACP has recognised coaching in the *Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions*. Following these developments, this user guide and the accompanying competences represent the first significant step in the development of professional standards for coaching practitioners within BACP.

Section One provides the background to, and rationale for, this competence development project. It explains the range of professionals and stakeholders for whom the competences have been designed, before giving an overview of the methodologies used, the stages of the process and the people involved. Definitions are provided and terminology is explained.

Section Two features guidance on how to interpret and apply the competence framework. It offers detailed comments on specific competences.

Section Three summarises the progress of the coaching competences project to date, outlines the possibilities for future developments, and acknowledges those whose contributions have enabled the progress made in establishing a home and identity for coaching within BACP.

The summary and acknowledgements are followed by appendices that contain supplementary information.



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# Overview of the Coaching competence framework

This guide describes the competences found in each of the two domains, in each of the two domains within the framework. The first being for qualified therapists who wish to develop the scope of their practice to include coaching. It identifies the core coaching competences that qualified therapists can use in addition to their therapeutic competences to practice ethically and effectively as a coach.

This first domain is called the 'Core coaching competences', and it includes four areas of competence:

1. Establishing and maintaining the partnership
2. Managing the process and the relationship
3. Facilitating awareness of self, others and situation
4. Facilitating the identification and pursuit of desired outcomes.

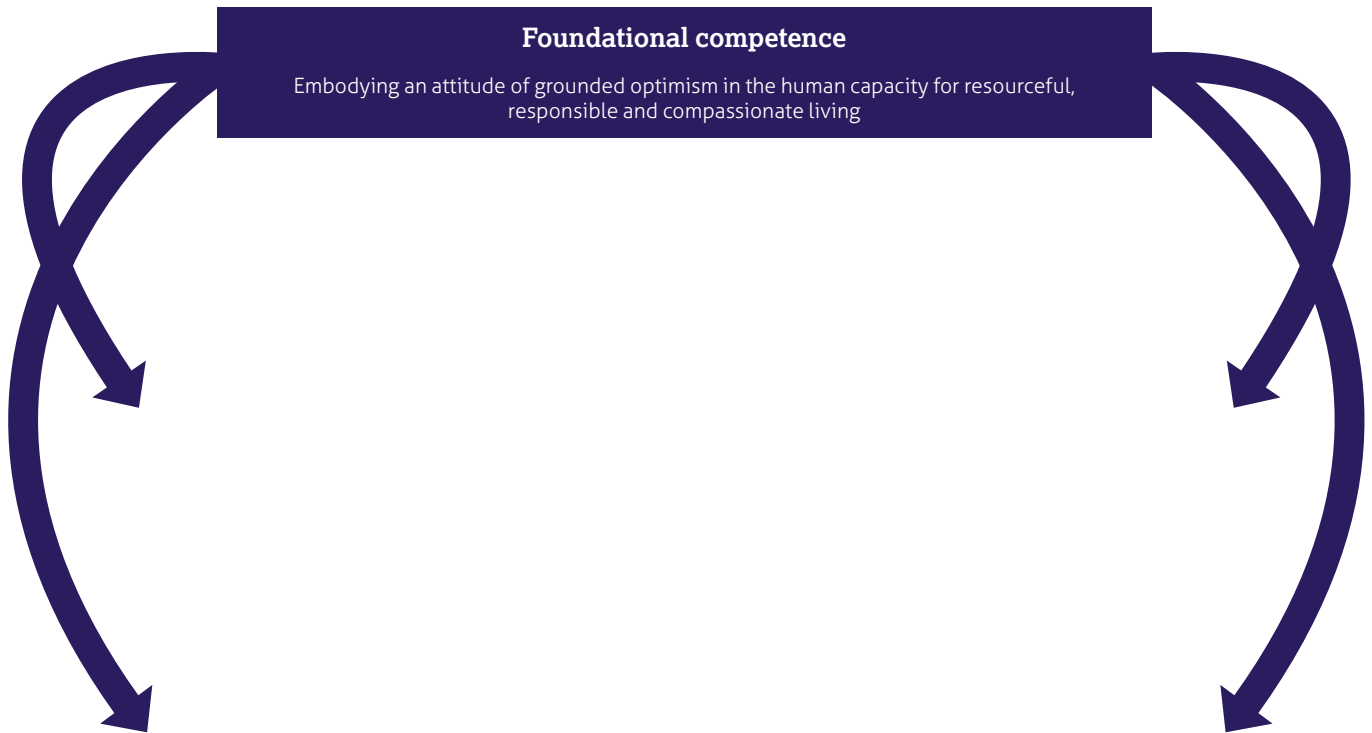
The second domain is for those qualified as both therapists and coaches who wish to integrate therapy and coaching in a single form of practice. This second domain is called the 'Competences for integrating therapy and coaching', and includes four areas of competence:

1. Theoretical foundations
2. Assessment and contracting
3. Managing the process and relationship
4. Personal attitude and qualities.

This map of the *Coaching competence framework* shows how the competences fit together and inter-relate.

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## Coaching competence framework



# Section One



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## Background and rationale

The *Coaching competence framework* that this user guide relates to is the latest in a series of such frameworks developed by BACP. It has been produced as part of BACP's broader strategic aim of creating a suite of evidence-based competence frameworks that can inform the development of professional and ethical standards and guidelines for BACP members and more widely across the profession. Previous projects have included competences for:

- Supervision
- Online and phone therapy
- Counselling children and young people (4-18 years)
- Counselling in further and higher education
- Workplace counselling, and
- Counselling skills (as distinguished from counselling proper).

In combination, these frameworks will establish more clearly defined areas of practice and will inform curricula for the training of practitioners. It is hoped that they will thus clarify and enhance professional and ethical standards in the range of disciplines and contexts where BACP members practise.

Competence frameworks help practitioners, supervisors and trainers to identify the components of effective and ethical practice. In this way, they provide a common professional vocabulary for the complex and varied processes involved in working with clients. They also offer clarity to commissioners, employers and other stakeholders. The last 15 years have seen the increasing use of competence frameworks in the psychological therapies, since the appearance of the first competences for cognitive behaviour therapy following the establishment of the Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) programme in 2007.

One noteworthy development in the psychological therapies during this period has been the increasing use of coaching skills and theories by therapists working in a range of modalities. Some have developed a separate coaching practice to run alongside their existing therapeutic one. Some have found ways to integrate elements of coaching into their therapeutic work. Conversely, some have decided to practise as coaches in ways that draw upon their therapeutic knowledge, skills and experience. Finally, some have sought a more comprehensive integration to create a single practice known variously as Coach-Therapy, Integrative Coach-Therapy or Therapeutic Coaching.

The *Coaching competence framework* published alongside this guide is intended to meet the needs of each of these groups of practitioners, of those who train and supervise them, and of the broader community of stakeholders. As will be explained subsequently in more detail, the first domain describes those generic competences that are not present in the 'Therapist A' column of the SCoPEd framework that a therapist will need to develop in order to add coaching to their existing portfolio. The second domain describes the competences used when integrating therapy and coaching in one of the ways outlined in the previous paragraph.

Please note, although at the time of writing, the BACP Board of Governors have not made a decision about whether the SCoPEd framework will be adopted by BACP, the January 2022 iteration of the SCoPEd column A competences provided a useful resource. They enabled the project team to identify the counselling competences that are typically taught on most core practitioner training courses.

To summarise, in creating this competence framework, BACP is seeking to:

- Respond to grassroots innovations by recognising and supporting practitioners who use both therapeutic and coaching approaches
- Provide leadership in the development and promotion of standards for effective, ethical practice
- Meet the needs of prospective clients who might benefit from working with a dual-trained therapist-coach
- Respond to therapists who want to add the role of coach to their practice, as either a distinct coaching practice and/or by integrating therapy and coaching
- Advance a strategy for an emerging area of practice, including the development of a curriculum for coach-therapists
- Better meet the needs of current and prospective members, and secure a lasting presence within BACP for therapists who coach
- Acknowledge the value and specialism of coaching.

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## Who are the competences for?

The *Coaching competence framework* is primarily intended for use by practitioners, supervisors and trainers:

- Practitioners who are already working as coaches and/or integrating therapy and coaching can map their current practice against the competence framework in order to identify gaps in, or limitations to, their competence, and identify areas for further development or training
- Practitioners who are new to coaching or to integrating therapy and coaching can use the competence framework to understand their training needs
- Supervisors can use the competence framework to support supervisees' current work, and to explore with supervisees those areas where there might be a need or opportunity for further development
- Trainers can use the competence framework as a guide, or as the basis for training and/or assessment in specific areas of practice, or, if they so choose, as a means of structuring and populating entire curricula
- The competence framework can also be used by those concerned with developing and upholding professional and ethical standards, by individual or organisational clients, to inform person specifications and job descriptions in recruitment processes or by commissioners of services, and by researchers.

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## Methodology for the development of the competences

The process of developing competences involves locating the best available evidence and identifying common aspects of effective practice from the sources identified as providing relevant information. For some of the long-established psychological therapies, this is likely to involve looking at evidence from a selection of randomised controlled trials (RCTs) and other outcome research that is identified by means of a systematic literature review. In other areas, there is little or no RCT or other outcome research to draw on, and other sources of research, knowledge and evidence need to be explored. These can include qualitative studies, research dissertations and existing competence frameworks, and 'grey literature' such as textbooks and theoretical articles, as well as practice-based evidence from experts in the field.

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### Methodology 1: Core coaching competences

In the case of the 'Core coaching competences for therapists', there is a developing body of research that looks at coaching outcomes. However, this is of variable quality. The relative newness of coaching as an academic discipline means that there is less clarity and rigour in methodological matters; there is also much more variation in the meanings given to key terms, including coaching itself. Distinctions between different forms of coaching such as executive coaching, life coaching and business coaching, also tend to lack clarity. There is a small but growing literature of well executed qualitative studies, both in the professional journals and in unpublished postgraduate theses. The theoretical literature is also developing in sophistication following a period when much of coach training and practice was based on relatively simplistic models.

When deciding upon the best methodology for developing the 'Core coaching competences', there were two additional factors to consider in addition to the issues outlined previously. Firstly, there are three existing competence frameworks produced by the leading professional coaching bodies in the UK: the Association for Coaching (AC), the International Coach Federation (ICF) and the European Mentoring and Coaching Council (EMCC). Secondly, the objective, as explained previously, was not to produce an entire set of coaching competences but to identify those core competences that qualified therapists will use in addition to their generic therapeutic competences, when practising ethically and effectively as coaches.

Given the situation described in the previous two paragraphs, it was deemed unnecessary to develop a completely new set of coaching competences based on an extensive review of all of the literature. Instead, a two-stage methodology was adopted. Firstly, a review and synthesis were undertaken of the competence frameworks of the three professional coaching bodies referred to previously. This process resulted in the creation of a generic set of coaching competences based on existing professional knowledge and experience. Secondly, these competences were mapped against the competences detailed in Column A of the SCoPEd framework (BACP, 2022). This in turn made it possible to identify those competences that are general features of good practice in coaching that do not feature at an equivalent level in the SCoPEd framework, and therefore, in core counselling/psychotherapy training. These competences were then organised into the four areas of competence that are explained more fully subsequently.

In addition to the generic competences that are not present in the January 2022 iteration of SCoPEd, the Core competences feature a small number of competences that are based on the professional experience of the project team and the Expert Reference Group (ERG), and on their knowledge of relevant literature.

The Expert Reference Group (ERG) and project team considered carefully the theoretical evidence in the literature search to ensure that the competences reflected current practice and developments in the field.

They then considered which aspects of coaching theory and practice in the existing coaching bodies competence frameworks needed further expansion to provide a coaching framework for qualified therapists. They identified three areas: understanding and working with strengths and values; understanding and applying one or more theories of motivation; and understanding the theoretical and practical complexity of goal-setting. These are explicitly addressed in competences 3.5, 4.2 and 4.1 respectively, though they also inform the phrasing of some other competences.

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## Methodology 2: Competences for integrating therapy and coaching

The process for developing these competences began with a literature search. A review of the literature revealed that there was very scant published research that related explicitly or implicitly to competences for integrating therapy and coaching. The search located some small-scale qualitative research reports of varying quality that examine the issue of the boundary between therapy and coaching from a range of perspectives. These studies give some indication of coaches' attitudes towards working with potential therapy material, and of the judgments that need to be made as to the acceptable limits of coaching practice. A recurring theme is that the boundary between coaching and therapy is drawn at different points and navigated in different ways, depending in part on the practitioner's modality and their level of training and experience, and that it is common practice to negotiate the boundary with the client's active involvement.

The published research evidences broad agreement that:

- Coaching is more results-orientated than therapy
- Therapy is primarily concerned with the alleviation of psychological suffering
- Coaches generally work with clients who are not experiencing significant psychological distress or dysfunction
- Coaches tend to involve their clients as active collaborators in the coaching process, in a way that only applies to some therapeutic modalities
- Coaches should undertake some form of psychological training in order to work confidently and ethically with clients' emotions.

All these points are supported by the grey literature of theoretical texts and unpublished postgraduate studies. However, the review of the available literature yielded minimal discussion of, or evidence for, specific competences for the process of integrating therapy and coaching.

Following the established protocols for the development of competences, it was therefore decided to canvass the views of practitioners in the field. This was done by conducting a survey of members of BACP's Coaching Division who are combining therapy and coaching. Respondents were asked by means of an online questionnaire to describe the knowledge, skills and personal qualities that they thought were necessary to effectively combine therapy and coaching. Respondents were also asked for their thoughts on the potential benefits, drawbacks and challenges of working in this way.

The response rate was higher than is usual for such surveys, so it yielded sufficient material for a thematic analysis that identified key themes in the answers to each question. This thematic analysis in turn provided the basis for the competences for integrating therapy and coaching.

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## **The role of the Expert Reference Group (ERG)**

The ERG has brought the practice-based knowledge, experience and wisdom of the professional community to bear on the development of the competence framework. ERG members were selected for their expertise in a given area of competence, and have engaged with each stage of the competence development project following the initial literature searches discussed previously. Specifically, the ERG has performed the following tasks:

- Made recommendations of sources of literature for the project team to consult in addition to those already identified in the literature search
- Drawn on professional knowledge, experience and expertise in helping the project team to formulate competences
- Discussed and endorsed the domains and areas into which the competence framework is organised
- Proposed additions and amendments to, and deletions from, the draft competences
- Supported the consultation process by making recommendations regarding the membership of the Peer Review Panel
- Agreed the successive versions of the framework and ratified the final version.

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# Definitions and terminology

## Competence

In plain language, competence means 'the ability to do something well,' or 'a skill that you need in a particular job or for a particular task' ([Oxford Learner's Dictionary](#)). This user guide adopts the statement on the [BACP web pages on competences](#) that 'competence frameworks set out the knowledge, skills and abilities required to deliver specific therapeutic modalities, or to work effectively with particular client groups or certain therapeutic contexts'. 'Abilities' in this context refers to personal attitude and qualities as well as technical proficiency.

## Metacompetence

Put simply, the word 'metacompetence' conveys the idea of competence in the use, and integration of, all the competences defined in each specific area. Whilst it is helpful for a number of reasons to break a complex activity like therapy or coaching down into its constituent parts (i.e. competences), this should not be taken to imply that professional practice involves the rote implementation of knowledge and skills. Effective therapeutic and coaching practice require an ability to exercise judgement in responding to the client and the circumstances, deciding when and when not to pursue a particular strategy or adopt a particular tactic. The notion of metacompetences captures this higher-order level of competence.

## Foundational competence

A foundational competence is not concerned with the use of specific knowledge or skills, but with the basic attitude, or way of being of the practitioner. This is clarified further on page 25.

## Coaching

Coaching is a largely present- and future-orientated conversation that has as its basic aim the fuller realisation of personal and organisational potential. Though it can sometimes involve elements of remedial work, coaching focuses predominantly on identifying and building on existing attributes, strengths and resources. The role of the coach is to facilitate a process whereby a client can develop a detailed awareness of their current situation, consider the changes they wish to implement and/or the objectives they wish to pursue, and make plans for their realisation. The subject-matter of coaching can range from a more or less narrow focus on addressing specific aspects of skills, performance or behaviour to a broader engagement with issues of selfhood, identity and purpose in life, with various points in between.



Coaches can encounter and work with clients who are experiencing various forms of everyday distress, but the basic purpose of coaching is not to alleviate suffering or heal emotional wounds. Coaches tend to work with clients that have enough psychological resilience to engage proactively with what can sometimes be a challenging process of developing awareness and making changes. Coaching is therefore not generally suitable for clients who are having difficulties with day-to-day motivation and functioning, or who are experiencing, and seeking relief from, persistent and significant distress.

### **Therapy**

The term 'therapy' has been used throughout this guide and the accompanying competences as an umbrella term for counselling and psychotherapy. This is both for reasons of clarity and economy, and because there is no agreement as to the nature or extent of the differences between counselling and psychotherapy, or indeed as to whether any meaningful differences exist.

The January 2022 iteration of the SCoPEd framework describes therapy as 'a specialised way of listening, responding and building relationships, based on therapeutic theory and expertise that is used to help clients or patients enhance their wellbeing'. Therapists working in some modalities do at times work with the kinds of issues that feature in coaching practice. However, the types of client issues that feature on the BACP's Find a Therapist web pages indicate that the primary motivation for clients seeking therapy, and the primary knowledge and skills base of BACP therapists, is the alleviation of distress and the amelioration of difficulties in living. Confirmation of this can be found in the curricula of therapist training programmes and the academic literature. It is to be expected, given that the root meaning of therapy is 'healing.'

### **Integration**

In the world of therapy, integration is the name given to a way of working in which a practitioner makes use of more than one modality, with the aim of meeting each client's needs more completely than the practitioner believes a single modality can. Integration can take a range of forms, with a common one amongst BACP members being known as assimilative integration. This describes an approach in which the practitioner has a grounding in one primary modality, such as person-centred, psychodynamic or cognitive-behavioural, and selectively draws on (i.e. assimilates) concepts and techniques from one or more other modalities.

In the context of the competences in the second domain of the Coaching competence framework, and the field of practice to which they apply, integration describes a way of working that involves the intentional use of both therapeutic and coaching theories and techniques.

**Partnership**

This term is used in the first area of the 'Core coaching competences' to convey the sense of what is sometimes referred to in the therapeutic literature as the 'working alliance'. The partnership is the aspect of the coaching process and relationship that involves careful, ongoing communication in order to ensure a shared understanding of the purposes, aims and foci of the work and how these are to be addressed. There is naturally more concentrated attention paid to the partnership at the outset. However, at certain points in the coaching process it can be necessary to take a step back from the matter at hand, and to pay renewed attention to the partnership.

# Section Two

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# About the competence framework

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## Domain One: Core coaching competences

As explained in Section One above, the core coaching competences that feature in Domain One are based for the main part on a synthesis of those competences found in the European mentoring and coaching council (EMCC) International Coaching Federation (ICF) and Association for Coaching (AC) frameworks that are not clearly present in Column A of the January 2022 iteration of the SCoPEd framework. This first iteration of the Coaching competences framework does not include specific competences for group or team coaching; the focus is exclusively on one-to-one work. Nevertheless, many of the competences will be applicable to work with groups or teams. In addition to the synthesis of the three main coaching bodies' competence frameworks, the Core coaching competences feature some competences that are based on the professional experience of the project team and the ERG, and on their knowledge of relevant literature. These include, for example, those competences in areas three and four that are concerned with working with strengths and values, having a working understanding of one or more theories of motivation, and understanding the theoretical and practical complexity of goal-setting. The inclusion of these competences is designed to ensure that the Core coaching competences involve an equivalent level of theoretical and practical sophistication to that found in the 'Therapist A' column of SCoPEd.

The Core coaching competences also feature more references to knowledge and understanding than is found in the frameworks of the coaching bodies. This choice of language reflects the view of the project team and ERG that competences are more meaningful when they are not framed in exclusively behavioural language. We have therefore tried throughout to use language that captures at least some of the intentionality that informs specific actions.

A further example of this approach is in area three, which features the repeated use of the phrase 'Ability to listen for...'. Coaching is sometimes presented as being largely technique-driven, and the project team have chosen this phrasing in order to emphasise that 'technique' is a helpful servant but a poor master and that, just as much as in the psychological therapies, the effective use of techniques in coaching follows organically from skilled and sensitive listening.

The competence domain for Core coaching is divided into four areas:

1. Establishing and maintaining the partnership;
2. Managing the process and the relationship;
3. Facilitating awareness of self, others and situation;
4. Facilitating the pursuit of desired outcomes.

Each area of this domain has a metacompetence that captures the substance of its constituent competences.

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## **Domain Two: Competences for integrating therapy and coaching**

These competences relate specifically to the knowledge, skills, qualities and awareness needed to integrate therapeutic and coaching approaches in a single form of practice. It is assumed that any practitioner applying the competences detailed here is already proficient in therapy and coaching to a level indicated by column A in the January 2022 iteration of the SCoPEd framework and the coaching competences discussed previously (Association for Coaching (AC), the International Coach Federation (ICF) and the European Mentoring and Coaching Council (EMCC)).

The knowledge-base for integrating therapy and coaching is currently underdeveloped by comparison with the knowledge-base for each of the separate practices, particularly the psychological therapies. This is to be expected, given the way that the practice of integrating therapy and coaching has emerged relatively recently at a grass-roots level. However, it does mean that whilst the competences offer a sound guide to effective and ethical practice, the knowledge referred to subsequently should be thought of as provisional and tentative in nature. It is expected that the framework of competences presented here will be modified and extended as the knowledge base develops.

It is also the case that some aspects of knowledge are contested and are likely to remain so. The question as to the nature and extent of the differences and similarities between therapy and coaching is perhaps the most obvious example. Given the number and variety of therapeutic modalities and the different forms that coaching can take, this question is unlikely to be resolved to everyone's satisfaction. Nevertheless the available literature makes a strong case for seeing therapy and coaching as distinct if overlapping practices, and this is borne out by the responses to the survey of BACP Coaching divisional members. There is value in differentiating between the two practices, and in detailing the kinds of knowledge, skills and abilities that their integration will typically involve.

The competence domain for integrating therapy and coaching is divided into four areas:

1. Theoretical foundation;
2. Assessment and contracting;
3. Managing the process and relationship;
4. Personal attitudes and qualities.

As is the case with competences more generally, these areas will overlap in practice. However, it is helpful to separate them for the purposes of identifying the components of effective, ethical practice.

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## How to use the competence framework

The first point to make is that the competences are not to be read as a set of requirements, with a practitioner needing to master every competence before they can work with clients. Rather, they are an attempt to capture in summary form the knowledge, skills and abilities that will generally feature in effective, ethical practice. In other words, as is the case with other BACP competence frameworks, the spirit of what follows is generally descriptive rather than prescriptive. However, there are certain competences that arguably carry more weight, in the sense that it is more difficult to conceive of effective and ethical practice that does not feature their use. BACP recommends that practitioners work with their supervisors to identify those competences that are of particular importance in this respect. Two points from the 'Good Practice' section of the [Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions](#) are particularly worth bearing in mind:

- **13.** We must be competent to deliver the services being offered to at least fundamental professional standards or better;
- **45.** Whenever we communicate our qualifications, professional experience and working methods, we will do so accurately and honestly.

In the case of the Core coaching competences, it is likely that some therapists will have already developed a good level of competence in some aspects. This might be particularly true of those therapists who have been trained in a more solution-focused modality. However, even where this is the case, there will be scope for further development and for reflection on how the application of a given competence in a coaching context might differ from the way it is used in a therapeutic setting.

A second important point is that the competence framework has been carefully designed and worded so as not to privilege any particular modality or model. In making use of the framework, a practitioner will interpret and apply a given competence in a way that fits with their overall theoretical approach. To give an example, Core coaching competence 3.2 involves the 'Ability to help the client to identify and explore different ways of framing experiences'. A CBT-orientated practitioner might explore the cognitive processes that implicitly informed the experience and the client's emotional, behavioural and cognitive reactions. They might engage in Socratic dialogue and challenge in order to help their client to examine the experience from other perspectives. By contrast, a Narrative-orientated practitioner would tend to focus on the way that the experience was narratively framed, and would invite the client to explore alternatives, perhaps drawing on modality-specific techniques such as externalisation.

Practitioners who come to coaching from a therapeutic background will typically draw on their preferred therapeutic modality or modalities, and there is a growing literature that can support them in doing so. As they grow in coaching experience, most practitioners come to appreciate the value of supplementing their therapeutic modalities with theories and approaches developed specifically for a coaching context. The Core coaching competence domain has been designed to support practitioners in broadening their understanding of the coaching process and their repertoire of strategies and interventions. An obvious example of such broadening is the greater attention paid in coaching to identifying desired outcomes and making plans for realising them. This is reflected in the fourth area of the Core coaching competences.

More specifically, effective coaching work can at times involve making careful distinctions between different types of goals. There is a rich coaching literature on this topic that most therapists will not be aware of. Core coaching competence 4.1, 'Knowledge and understanding of, and ability to foster the client's awareness of, distinctions between different types of goals,' offers an opportunity for practitioners to develop in effectiveness by engaging with this aspect of the coaching process. A further example is the detailed attention this is paid in coaching theory and practice to identifying and working with clients' strengths. Core coaching competence 3.5, 'Ability to listen for, and help the client to identify and leverage, personal strengths, qualities and values,' stands as an invitation (and perhaps a challenge) to practitioners from some therapeutic backgrounds to engage with a topic that they are unlikely to be familiar with, for the greater benefit of those they work with.

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## **The role of supervision**

As is the case for those working solely as therapists, there is an expectation that BACP members working as coaches or integrating coaching and therapy will make appropriate use of supervision. 'Appropriate' in this context means not only meeting or exceeding the requisite minimum number of hours of supervision, but also seeking supervision from those with sufficient knowledge and experience of coaching and/or integrating therapy and coaching. At the time of writing (October 2022), this might present some practitioners with a challenge, insofar as there are not a large number of supervisors with dual training and experience as therapists and coaches. Practitioners might therefore find it difficult to find one person who can meet all of their supervision needs, and might therefore need to engage a second supervisor and perhaps consider joining a supervision group, in order to ensure that they can be appropriately supported in reflectively exploring all aspects of their client work.



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## Guidance on specific competences

The pages that follow provide further interpretation of, and guidance on, both domains of the competence framework. The knowledge-base for integrating therapy and coaching is less developed than that for coaching. As a result, there is less detailed guidance for specific competences in this domain than for the Core coaching competences domain. Many aspects of the guidance for the Core coaching competences – for example relating to assessment, contracting and establishing the partnership – will also apply to the competences for integrating therapy and coaching.

As mentioned previously, each area of the Core coaching competences' domain features a metacompetence that captures the substance of the area as a whole. As described earlier, metacompetences operate at a higher level of abstraction than the individual competences, and are consequently more open to interpretation, but, in essence, the metacompetence for a given area can be seen as involving the integration of that area's specific competences into a coherent whole.

There are not currently any metacompetences for the integration domain, as the responses to the survey that formed the basis for the integration competences did not provide enough evidence for metacompetences to be identified. It is hoped that as the evidence base for integrating therapy and coaching develops, it will be possible to identify metacompetences and include them in future revisions of the integration domain.

The framework as a whole features a foundational competence that seeks to convey the basic ethos of both coaching and therapy, and the basic attitude, or way of being, of the practitioner:

***Embodying an attitude of grounded optimism in the human capacity for resourceful, responsible and compassionate living***

Like the metacompetences, this is not further interpreted here; it is left to each practitioner to manifest the foundational competence in a way that is congruent with their personality, values and beliefs.

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# Guidance on the competences

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## Domain One: Core coaching competences

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### 1. Establishing and maintaining the partnership

**Metacompetence: Knowledge and understanding of, and ability to manifest, the values, standards and behaviours that characterise professional coaching activity**

#### 1.1: Knowledge and understanding of the foundational principles of coaching

The following principles are regarded as relevant here: respectfulness; open-mindedness; relational equality; emphasis on the client's resilience, agency and responsibility; belief in the client's capacity to learn and change; active promotion of the client's autonomy; a non-pathologising approach to the client's experiences and behaviours.

Many therapists will argue that they embody all of these values and attitudes in their work, and this claim will sometimes be justified. However, there will be different emphases in coaching. For example, in relation to agency and responsibility, coaches typically place a stronger emphasis on holding the client to account with regard to specific actions that they have agreed to undertake. To link agency and responsibility with relational equality, coaching typically places a stronger emphasis on involving the client as an equal partner and active collaborator in the work. To give another related example, coaches tend to assume that their clients are resilient enough to withstand both fairly robust interpersonal challenges and the psychological demands of actively engaging in behaviour change.

#### 1.2: Knowledge and understanding of the differences and similarities between coaching and related disciplines such as psychological therapy, mentoring, training and consultancy

**1.3: Ability to explain the differences between coaching and related disciplines in accessible language to prospective clients and stakeholders**

These two competences form a pair. The precise nature of the differences and similarities between therapy and coaching is disputed. Similar points about overlap and divergence could be made in relation to mentoring, training and consultancy. However, the available evidence strongly indicates that these are all distinct practices. It is a matter of basic ethics that prospective clients need to be able to make an informed choice regarding the nature of the work they are going to undertake, and that purchasers or commissioners of coaching services need to know what they are devoting resources to. Practitioners therefore need to understand, and to be able to explain in accessible language, what coaching is and is not, what the coaching process typically involves, and what kind of outcomes are to be expected.

**1.4: Ability to collaboratively assess, on an ongoing basis, the suitability of coaching for a person and their circumstances, and, where necessary, to facilitate the process of referral**

In line with the emphasis placed in coaching on collaboration and relational equality, it is important that prospective clients are actively involved in the process of assessing whether they are most likely to benefit from coaching, from another intervention, or from no intervention at all. Nevertheless, even when given careful explanations by a practitioner, people with no previous experience of coaching or therapy do not always have a clear understanding of what these involve. Nor do prospective clients always hold a realistic awareness of their needs, their capacities and the sources of the problems they are experiencing. There is therefore an important role for the practitioner's informed judgment as to what is most suitable for a given person. The ethical principles of fidelity, autonomy, beneficence and non-maleficence are all relevant to this issue, and there is no ready-made formula for their application (BACP, 2018).

**1.5: Knowledge and understanding of the variety of possible coaching contracts, and ability to use this knowledge in agreeing contracts with clients and other stakeholders**

The subject-matter of coaching can range from a more or less narrow focus on addressing specific aspects of skills, performance or behaviour to a broader engagement with issues of selfhood, identity and purpose in life, with various points in-between. The outcomes of coaching can be clearly agreed in advance, or can be allowed to emerge from the process. It is important for practitioners to be aware of the variety of forms that a coaching process can take, in order that they can agree the most appropriate contract with a given client.

**1.6: Knowledge and understanding of, and ability to address, the practical and ethical issues involved in three-, four- or multi-party contracting**

One way in which coaching can differ from therapy is that, particularly in organisational settings, the contract is likely to involve more parties than client and practitioner. Sometimes there is a three-party contract that involves a line manager; sometimes a human resources or organisational development representative has an expressed interest in the coaching work; and sometimes further parties are involved. Coaches need to be able to understand the practical and ethical issues that can arise in such circumstances, ensuring that there is a shared understanding of matters such as who decides upon the aims of the coaching, which aspects of the client's experience can legitimately be discussed (for example, work issues only or personal matters as well), and what limits the involvement of other parties might place on practitioner-client confidentiality.

**1.7: Ability to instigate periodic reviews to enable the client to reflect on the coaching process and their learning, and to ensure ongoing alignment of the coach's and client's expectations and purposes**

Although reviews are a generally recognised feature of therapeutic practice, this competence has been included because there tends to be a stronger emphasis in coaching on enabling a client to reflect not only on their learning in relation to the issues being addressed in the coaching but also on their learning about how they learn.

**1.8: Ability to maintain, and where necessary adapt, the contract throughout the duration of the coaching assignment in collaboration with the client and other stakeholders**

Effective coaching involves facilitating awareness. It is not unusual for the initial agreement about the aims and foci of the coaching to need revision as the client's awareness of their self and circumstances develop. Coaches need to understand this, to be alert to the possibility that the contract might need to be revised, and to raise the issue with the client and other stakeholders.

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## 2. Managing the process and relationship

**Metacompetence: Ability to facilitate a coaching process from inception to conclusion that is characterised by respectful, empathic and authentic relating with the client**

**2.1: Knowledge and understanding of one or more theories or models of coaching, and ability to apply it or them in facilitating individual sessions and the process as a whole**

The culture of coaching is generally more pragmatic and eclectic than that of the psychological therapies, with less emphasis placed on adopting a theoretically coherent approach. However, no less than therapists, coaches need to know what they are doing and why they are doing it. This requires a working knowledge of relevant theories and models.

**2.2: Ability to adopt a relational stance, and to model behaviours, that are congruent with the foundational principles of coaching**

In addition to the basic stance of empathy and respect for those they work with, coaches seek to offer an authentic presence, to actively convey a belief in their clients' capacity to learn and change, and to manifest a commitment to their own learning and growth.

**2.3: Ability to foster an ethos of collaboration based on the coach's and client's respective domains of expertise**

The client holds expertise in relation to their personal and professional experience; the coach holds expertise in relation to the coaching process and the ways in which it can foster learning and change. Coaching involves a collaborative relationship that leverages both domains of expertise in the service of the client's development.

**2.4: Knowledge and understanding of how issues of power and autonomy can manifest in the coaching relationship, and how to work with these**

Coaching is grounded in an ethos of relational equality and collaboration and is based on the assumption that clients are psychologically robust. However, there are inevitably power dynamics in a one-to-one relationship in which one person is expected to undergo a process of learning that might well involve the raising and verbalisation of uncomfortable awareness, whilst the other person uses their skills to enable this, without having to reciprocate. Such dynamics can be further complicated by issues of difference and diversity.

Coaching is also based on the assumption that clients make an autonomous choice to engage in the work. In one sense, this is true (unless a client has been instructed to seek coaching for remedial reasons). Autonomy is, nonetheless, always contextual rather than absolute, and coaches need to be mindful of the external and internal forces that shape each client's engagement in the coaching process.

**2.5: Ability to foster the client's capacity for self-directed learning, living and problem-solving**

Coaching involves the active promotion of the client's ability to autonomously address life's challenges and opportunities. Skilled coaches have the ability to notice whenever the content or process of the coaching conversation presents a live opportunity to further this end.

**2.6: Ability to notice, and address with the client, indications of behaviours or relationship dynamics that might work against the aim of fostering self-directed learning, living and problem-solving**

To ensure the previous competence can be achieved, coaches need to notice when the client is behaving, thinking or relating in ways that might work against the goal of more autonomous living. The coaching relationship itself can at times develop a dynamic whereby the client looks to the coach for answers or guidance. Coaches need to be alert to signs of such a dynamic, and to be mindful of their capacity to be drawn into the role of expert guide.

**2.7: Ability to solicit feedback from the client on their experiences of the coach and the coaching process, and to respond constructively and non-defensively to feedback**

One of the ways that coaches can embody coaching principles (see 2.2) is by actively seeking feedback from clients. Another is by responding in a constructive and open manner to feedback. In this way, coaches model a growth mindset and an active openness to new learning, both of which are underpinned by an attitude of self-acceptance.

**2.8: Ability to challenge the client by exploring unacknowledged, unhelpful and/or inappropriate behaviours or attitudes**

Though challenge is an accepted feature of therapy, coaching tends to give more prominence to this way of fostering awareness. The increased emphasis stems from the working assumption that the client is psychologically robust and will not experience challenge as punitive, threatening or shaming. However, like therapists, coaches should challenge respectfully and be alert to any signs that the intervention has caused confusion, discomfort or even distress.

Practitioners from some modalities might question the word 'inappropriate,' whilst others will regard it as valid in some circumstances. The competence has been worded so as to be inclusive of different philosophical stances on this issue.

**2.9: Ability to understand how risk might present in coaching relationships and how the context might inform the response**

A key difference between coaching and therapy is that coaching clients are not typically seeking help as a result of being in distress. Coaching clients are less likely than therapy clients to be at risk of suicide or self-harm or psychological deterioration. However, all of these are possible, and some coaching clients will present in ways that mask serious distress. Coaches need to be alert to signs of mental ill health, to be prepared to raise these with a client, and, where the risk cannot be contained within the bounds of a coaching contract, to address the issue of a possible referral, even if the client is reluctant to consider this. The guidance notes for competence 1.4 are relevant here.

**2.10: At the conclusion of the coaching, ability to conduct a review that helps to embed the client's learning**

When conducting the end-of-relationship review, coaches will typically invite their clients to reflect on both the content and the process of learning and change, and to consider how the awareness, knowledge and skills that they have developed can be used to address future opportunities and challenges. (Please also see the guidance notes for competence 1.7.)

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## 3. Facilitating awareness of self, others and situation

**Metacompetence: Ability to help the client to develop a broader and more detailed awareness of their self, other people and their situation**

**3.1: Ability to help the client to view their self, other people and their situation from a variety of perspectives**

The ability to foster awareness lies at the heart of coaching practice. Effective coaches enable growth in awareness not only of the client's self but also of other people and the broader circumstances. One of the key means of achieving this is to adopt a multi-perspective approach that invites clients to look through the eyes of other people (whether real or imagined), and even from the imagined perspective of objects.

**3.2: Ability to help the client to identify and explore different ways of framing experiences**

This competence is closely related to competence 3.1. Coaches from different modalities will adopt different approaches to helping clients to frame experiences differently. What these will all have in common is enabling the client to step outside of their taken-for-granted frame of reference in order to foster insight and enable creative problem-solving.

**3.3: Ability to listen for, and help the client to identify, underlying assumptions and how they shape perceptions of self, others and situations**

This competence provides a good illustration of the point made previously that coaching involves skilled and sensitive listening. Whilst it is possible simply to ask a client what assumptions they might be making about a particular issue, coaches are more likely to be successful in raising awareness if they pick up on underlying assumptions through careful, attentive listening and share their hunches with the client.

**3.4: Ability to enable a shift in the client from a deficit to a possibility mindset**

The adoption of a possibility mindset is fundamental to effective coaching. Coaches do not ignore flaws, limitations or areas that are lacking; however, too much focus on these can be demotivating, and can also foster anxiety and even obsessiveness. This is the opposite of the expansive, creative mindset that coaches seek to embody and to enable in their clients.

**3.5: Ability to listen for, and help the client to identify, personal strengths, qualities and values**

There is strong evidence to suggest that people are better motivated, and are more likely to succeed, when they are making use of their particular strengths and qualities and striving to consciously embody their personal values. There is also evidence that people tend not to do this, and to focus more on what they are not good at than on their personal strengths. (This is linked with the issue of the deficit mindset discussed previously.) Coaches can be of great service by fostering clients' awareness of personal strengths, qualities and values, and by helping clients to leverage these in addressing challenges and opportunities.



**3.6: Ability to help the client to identify and reflect on ways in which their worldview and sense of self has been shaped by experiences of similarity and difference, and by cultural, societal and/or familial narratives and attitudes**

This competence, which is related to 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3, is one of the key ways in which coaches can help their clients to explore issues of equality, diversity and inclusion. Each person's view of the world, and of their self in this world, is shaped by experiences of and narratives about the social matrix of class, gender, ethnicity, belief, sexuality, (dis)ability and age. Coaches need to be able to facilitate clients' exploration of these issues. We have included 'similarity' as well as 'difference' here to capture the way that the experience of growing up within a monoculture (whether a majority or a minority one) can limit a person's awareness of, and ability to navigate, the diversity of contemporary society.

**3.7: Ability to listen for, and help the client to identify, aspects of the micro-, meso- and macro-contexts that influence, constrain or enable ways of thinking and acting**

The terms 'micro,' 'meso' and 'macro' will have different shades of meaning for different people. They are used here to convey the need for coaches to be aware of the various aspects of a client's context, from the immediate environment through to broader societal structures and forces. Executive coaches, and some others working with clients in organisational settings, might use the term 'system' instead of 'context' in relation to the issues this competence addresses. Whatever terminology is used, the key point is that coaches need to be able to foster their clients' awareness of relevant cultural, political, economic, legal and/or technical aspects of their situation.

**3.8: Ability to listen for, and help the client to reflect on, how other people might experience the client and their situation**

Enabling clients to see themselves through others' eyes is a key aspect of the more general coaching process of fostering awareness. Coaches will sometimes use a specially designed procedure; for example, a coach working with a client in a leadership role might undertake a process of gathering 360° feedback. At other times, awareness is fostered by means of the basic coaching skills of skilled listening, reflecting and questioning.

**3.9: Ability to listen for, and help the client to identify, emotions and their impact on thought and behaviour**

There are three main reasons why emotions need to be addressed in coaching. First, emotions are a vital aspect of each person's experience of the world, and they therefore merit recognition in their own right. Second, when unacknowledged, emotions can act as a block on awareness and forwards movement. Third, when brought into awareness and harnessed, emotions can be a very powerful motivating force.

**3.10: Ability to share knowledge, information and experiences that are relevant to the client's circumstances and the aims of the coaching.**

By far the greater part of the coach's work involves facilitating awareness by means of careful listening, reflecting and questioning. However, there is a role in coaching for providing the client with relevant knowledge and information, and for disclosure of the coach's experience. Coaches should be mindful of the relationship dynamic when adopting a more educational or self-disclosing stance, and competence 2.6 is also relevant here.

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**4. Facilitating the identification and pursuit of desired outcomes**

**Metacompetence: Ability to help the client to envision, contemplate, decide on and pursue outcomes that, where possible, are congruent with their personal values**

**4.1: Knowledge and understanding of, and ability to foster the client's awareness of, distinctions between different types of goals**

This is an area where coaching has developed a detailed knowledge base. Some of the relevant distinctions here are those between distal and proximal goals; outcome and abstract goals; predetermined and emergent goals; performance and learning goals; avoidance and approach goals; competing and complementary goals; self-concordant and non self-concordant goals. Coaches need to be aware of these distinctions, and to know how to bring them to bear on the process of facilitating goal-directed activity with clients.

**4.2: Knowledge and understanding of, and ability to apply, one or more theories of motivation**

Coaches need working knowledge of at least one theory of motivation, and a general notion of self-actualisation does not provide sufficient guidance for the complexities of outcome-orientated conversations. Examples of theories of motivation that are of value in a coaching context include Self-determination theory and Intentional change theory.

**4.3: Ability to help the client to envision and articulate desired or preferred outcomes, and to situate these outcomes in the broader context of their values, needs and aspirations**

A client's success in attaining a desired or preferred outcome will depend in part on the skill and attention to detail with which the coach has enabled them to envision and articulate it, and to think carefully about how it relates to their current and future needs and hopes. For some coaches, the process of envisioning will involve enabling the client to imaginatively enter into and explore their future self and situation. The reference to values here links with competence 3.5.

**4.4: Ability to help the client to identify and assess possible courses of action through which they might pursue their desired or preferred outcomes**

**4.5: Ability to help the client to consider the consequences (both intended and unintended, and both for self and for others) of pursuing a given course of action**

These two competences form a pair, both of them being concerned with the careful, detailed, imaginative thinking-through of possibilities. When done thoroughly, they not only make successful outcomes more likely, they also further the more general aims of enabling the client's awareness of self, situation and circumstances and developing their capacity for effective problem-solving.

**4.6: Ability to help the client to create specific plans for realising their desired or preferred outcomes**

**4.7: Ability to help the client to identify and consider potential resources and obstacles (personal, interpersonal or contextual) that might help or hinder the attainment of their desired outcomes**

These two competences also form a pair, being concerned with the next stage in the process of realising plans in concrete form. However, it should be noted that this is not a strict chronological sequence but a more or less iterative process. As with the previous two competences, they also further the more general aims of fostering awareness and the capacity for effective problem-solving.

**4.8: Ability to review with the client, and challenge where necessary, their progress in pursuing agreed-upon courses of action**

Some, but not all, coaches will frame this issue in the language of accountability, with the coach's role being to hold the client to account for commitments made. (This is also something that some clients will explicitly request.) Whether or not this framing is used, coaches need to be able to have honest and frank conversations with clients on this issue. Competences 2.2, 2.4, 2.6 and 2.8 are also relevant.

**4.9: Ability to help the client to reflect on what has enabled or obstructed their pursuit of an agreed-upon course of action**

The overarching aim is to enable learning that the client can draw on in the future. Reflecting on what has enabled success is in keeping with coaching's emphasis on highlighting strengths and qualities, though it is also necessary to reflect on obstructions. There can also be learning for the coach, if it transpires that a factor in the failure to realise an agreed-upon outcome is that the outcome or the means for pursuing it is unrealistic.

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## Domain Two: Competences for integrating therapy and coaching

As has already been explained in this guide, there is less detailed guidance for specific competences in this domain, and aspects of the guidance on the Core coaching competences are also relevant. This is particularly the case in relation to assessment, contracting and establishing the working relationship.

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### 1. Theoretical foundations

Competences 1.1 to 1.6 link with competence 2.1 below.

- 1.1: Knowledge and understanding of the general differences and similarities between therapy and coaching**
- 1.2: Knowledge and understanding of the differences and similarities between therapy and coaching in the practitioner's chosen modality or modalities**

These two competences form a pair. The first is an extension of competence 1.2 in the Core coaching competence domain, though it is expected that practitioners working at this level will have a more developed understanding of the differences and similarities. The second requires still more detail, as it relates to the specifics of the practitioner's chosen approach. The differences between, for example, psychodynamic therapy and psychodynamic coaching are not the same as those between cognitive-behavioural or solution-focused therapy and their cognate forms of coaching. The differences for humanistic orientated practice will be different again.

- 1.3: Knowledge and understanding of how an approach that integrates therapy and coaching differs from therapy as a separate practice**
- 1.4: Knowledge and understanding of how an approach that integrates therapy and coaching differs from coaching as a separate practice**

These two competences also form a pair and represent a further development in detailed knowledge and understanding from the previous pair. In order to assess whether an integration of therapy and coaching is likely to be appropriate for a given client and situation, there needs to be a clear understanding of how this differs from both therapy and coaching as separate practices.

**1.5: Knowledge and understanding of the potential benefits and drawbacks, for both clients and practitioners, of integrating therapy and coaching to create a combined practice**

This competence follows on from the previous two, in being knowledge that is necessary for the purposes of assessment. The ethical principle of self-respect also requires practitioners to be aware of both the rewards and the challenges involved in integrating therapy and coaching.

**1.6: Ability to formulate a coherent rationale for integrating therapy and coaching to create a combined practice**

Intentional working is a basic requirement of professional practice. Practitioners need to have a clear understanding of why they are adopting an integrative approach, both with specific clients and more generally.

**1.7: Knowledge and understanding of the variety of ways in which therapy and coaching can be integrated to create a combined practice**

There are a number of ways in which this can be done. The most common response amongst participants in the survey of BACP Coaching divisional members related to assimilative integration, in which either therapy or coaching forms the foundation and aspects of the other practice are selectively integrated. Another form of integration involves the use of a transtheoretical model as an organising framework; another involves a model such as the Personal consultancy model (2013), which has been specifically designed as a means of integrating therapy and coaching. A further alternative is the adoption of a pluralistic stance in which the client's worldview and preferences are given particular weight in determining the strategies pursued and tasks undertaken.

**1.8: Detailed working knowledge of at least one way of integrating therapy and coaching to create a combined practice**

Though practitioners do not need fine-grained knowledge of all of the above forms of integration, they do need a detailed working knowledge of their chosen method. This involves not only theoretical understanding of the method of integration but also an awareness of how the method manifests in practice. As with competence 1.2, the form that the integration takes will depend on the modality or modalities used.

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## 2. Assessment and contracting

**2.1: Ability to explain to clients and other potential stakeholders the nature of and rationale for an integration of therapy and coaching, and how such an approach is likely to differ from both therapy and coaching as separate practices**

This competence links with competences 1.1 to 1.6 and competence 1.3 in the Core coaching competences' domain, and the guidance notes for these competences are applicable.

**2.2: Ability to collaboratively assess, on an ongoing basis, the client's needs and the suitability or otherwise of a combined therapeutic and coaching approach**

Please note: competences 2.2 to 2.6, involve combining the knowledge detailed in the first area of this domain with the skills and awareness that feature in competences 1.4 to 1.8 of the Core coaching competences' domain.

**2.3: Ability to hold and negotiate any differences between the client's, the practitioner's and other stakeholders' perceptions of the client's needs and desired outcomes**

**2.4: Ability to contract with each client for an integrated approach, including arrangements for referral should this prove necessary**

**2.5: Ability to recognise when there is a need to review the contract; ability to reaffirm or revise the contract as appropriate, in consultation with the client and other stakeholders**

**2.6: Ability to recognise the need for, and manage the process of, referral to another practitioner or service**

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## 3. Managing the process and relationship

### 3.1: Working knowledge and understanding of the interpretive nature of listening, and awareness of how the practitioner's listening and responding are informed by their particular interpretive frame(s)

Work at the level of integrating therapy and coaching requires a sophisticated understanding of helping conversations. One aspect of such understanding is the awareness that listening is always interpretive. A practitioner will notice and respond to different aspects of a client's material, according to their choice of modality, and whether they are working as a therapist or a coach. It is not possible to step entirely outside your own interpretive frame, but the quality of listening (and therefore responding) is enhanced:

- When a practitioner holds a reflective awareness of their interpretive frame and how it can influence their work, and
- When they are open to developing alternative interpretive frameworks.

In developing this awareness, practitioners are doing with themselves what developmental coaches sometimes help their clients to do.

Please also see the guidance notes on Core coaching competences 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3.

### 3.2: Ability to gauge when and how, with the client's involvement, to move between therapeutic and coaching ways of working

Practitioners from different modalities will interpret this in different ways. However, this competence is concerned with gauging when and how to move from, broadly speaking, a focus on exploring, managing and healing distress and problems in living, to a focus on actively envisioning, planning and adopting different ways of being.

It is possible to remain unhelpfully in either mode. Remaining in therapeutic mode can result in prolonged and unproductive exploration of difficulties. Remaining in coaching mode, particularly when there are emotional blocks that need to be addressed, can result in repeatedly unsuccessful attempts to move forward. Either error can leave a client feeling disheartened and disempowered.

This competence involves judgment. There are no hard-and-fast rules to follow, though the evidence suggests that experienced practitioners will always seek to involve the client in decisions about the focus of the work.



### **3.3: Ability to recognise and manage the different relational dynamics of therapy and coaching when integrating the two practices**

As with the previous competence, practitioners from different modalities will interpret this in different ways. Broadly speaking, the relational dynamics of therapy tend to carry a stronger emotional charge, with the process and relationship being more likely to evoke experiences, people and unmet needs from the client's past and current life. It is not unusual for this to happen wholly or partly out of the client's awareness. It is one reason why in therapeutic work there can be a significant mismatch between the client's and the practitioner's perceptions of the process, and why, when curated skilfully, the therapeutic relationship can itself be a powerful vehicle for healing.

Whilst such dynamics are not wholly absent from coaching, the content, process and relationship do tend to carry less emotional charge. This can enable a stronger degree of challenge and a more direct approach to giving feedback than are appropriate in some therapeutic relationships. Practitioners who are integrating or moving between therapeutic and coaching ways of working need to be able to gauge which dynamics are at play in a given passage of the work and in the relationship as a whole, and to tailor their way of relating to the client accordingly. (Please also see the guidance notes on competence 3.2.)

### **3.4: Ability to recognise and address signs of avoidance or collusion**

This competence relates to the two previous ones, particularly 3.2. Avoidance refers to a process whereby something is not being addressed that needs to be. It happens in both therapy and coaching, and, like the relationship dynamics already discussed, can often be wholly or partly out of awareness. Avoidance generally involves experiences that are perceived or intuited to be in some way threatening. Perhaps the most common examples are emotionally painful experience and tension or conflict in the helping relationship. Though avoidance is more typically instigated by a client, it can at times be the practitioner who is more or less consciously evading an issue.

Adopting a coaching focus can, for some clients, be a means of attempting to avoid painful material. Remaining in a therapeutic mode can be a means of avoiding the challenge of committing to change. Avoidance becomes collusion when there is a shared desire, and perhaps a tacit understanding, that some topics or ways of working should be side-stepped.

Practitioners need to be able to notice when avoidance or collusion might be taking place, and to bring them explicitly to the client's attention so that they can be processed and moved beyond.

### **3.5: Ability to apply the BACP's Ethical Framework or another appropriate ethical code or framework to the integration of therapy and coaching.**

BACP's Ethical Framework (2018) has explicitly recognised coaching since 2016, and is at the time of writing the only ethical framework that seeks to encompass both therapy and coaching. It is therefore recommended as the most appropriate choice for practitioners who are integrating therapy and coaching. However, practitioners can develop their ethical awareness by familiarising themselves with other ethical codes, such as the Global Code of Ethics adopted by a number of coaching bodies and the Code of Ethics of the International Coach Federation (ICF).

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## **4. Personal attitude and qualities**

### **4.1: Ability to manifest the attitudes, behaviours and qualities that enable the effective integration of therapy and coaching**

The following are particularly relevant: intellectual flexibility; open-mindedness; curiosity; creativity; willingness to learn; tolerance of uncertainty, self-doubt, ambiguity and complexity. Whilst all of these are qualities that a therapist or coach should aspire to, they are likely to be of even more value for practitioners who are integrating therapy and coaching, and who are managing the additional complexity and range of material that this work encompasses.

### **4.2: Ability to maintain an ethos of collaboration that honours each client's perspective and experiences, and seeks to harness and promote their resourcefulness**

As was explained in the guidance on the core coaching competences, coaching typically promotes an ethos of collaboration, in a way that is only true of some forms of therapy. Respondents to the survey of BACP Coaching divisional members who integrate therapy and coaching emphasised the importance of collaboration, and that actively affirming the client's perspective and experiences serves to foster such an ethos and to draw out the client's resourcefulness.

### **4.3: Ability to be responsive to the full range of human experience, and to commit to ongoing personal development work in order to enable and enhance such responsiveness**

#### **4.4: Ability to take a whole-person approach to personal development, grounded in the practitioner's own experiences of personal development**

These final two competences form a pair. As any number of therapeutic textbooks, articles and training programmes will evidence, the focus of therapeutic work is primarily on distress and difficulties in living. Relatedly, the personal development aspect of therapist training – whether or not this involves the trainee having personal therapy – tends to be orientated towards unhealed wounds and unresolved conflicts. Whilst there is a sound enough rationale for such a focus, it does mean that practitioners who have trained as therapists and worked for an extended period in therapeutic settings can be habitually drawn to focusing on a narrow and one-sided selection of human experiences. It can take more than a basic training as a coach to dislodge the habitual attention to what is wrong, and to widen the angle of vision.

In order to be able to resonate with, and respond to, the full range of client experiences that are encountered when integrating therapy and coaching, practitioners need to be as experientially familiar with the contours of what could be termed 'positive' experiences – excitement, joy, success, fulfilment, mastery of self and environment – as with the material that tends to predominate in therapy. Practitioners also need to have an experiential, as well as a theoretical awareness, that there is often more growth to be fostered by nurturing strengths, qualities and values than by working to address limitations. These two competences highlight the need for practitioners to actively seek forms of personal development that involve those aspects of experience with which they have not yet developed a deep, lived familiarity.

# Section Three

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## Conclusion and future developments

This *User Guide* and the accompanying *Coaching competence framework* provide a thorough, evidence- and knowledge-based foundation for two domains of practice: coaching undertaken by qualified therapists, and the integration of therapy and coaching. Practitioners and others who make thoughtful use of the user guide and competences can be confident that they are upholding professional and ethical standards. At the same time, as has already been mentioned, these two domains, and particularly the domain of integrating therapy and coaching, are still in the relatively early stages of their development as professional and intellectual disciplines. It is therefore important to remember that the user guide and framework represent the current state of professional awareness at the time of publication, and that subsequent developments in our knowledge and understanding of the two domains are likely to lead to subsequent revisions to the competences. What might such developments look like? In brief, it is hoped that the coming years will witness further research into both processes and outcomes. In the case of coaching, the last two decades have seen important steps in the development of more methodologically rigorous research, as is evidenced by the emergence of both academic journals and the publication of academic textbooks. In the case of integrating therapy and coaching, there is a pressing need for research that enables a fuller understanding of the kinds of clients for whom, and issues for which, this form of practice is likely to be valuable. There is also a need for fine-grained qualitative research that can enhance our understanding of the complex processes of judgment and decision-making that this particular form of integrative practice requires. The competence framework can be periodically amended and further elaborated to take account of findings from these kinds of research as they emerge.

The development of these competences has been a lengthy process, subject to pauses and interruptions and one that has involved contributions from a number of people, particularly the executive of BACP's Coaching division and BACP's Professional Standards team. There is therefore a sense in which the publication of the competences and user guide marks both an end and a beginning: the first substantial yield from seeds planted a number of years ago, one that promises in time to be followed by further harvests.

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## Appendix A: ERG membership

**Caroline Jesper**

BACP Head of Professional Standards, BACP Accredited Counsellor, Supervisor and Trainer

**David Britten**

BACP-Accredited Counsellor/Psychotherapist, Therapeutic Coach, Coach-Supervisor, Trainer and Consultant, Former Senior Lecturer, Subject Director and Programme Lead in Counselling, Coaching and Mentoring at York St John University. Founder of Coaching for Social Impact special interest group

**Nicola Forshaw**

BACP Professional Standards Development Facilitator, BACP Accredited Counsellor, Supervisor and Coach

**Traci Postings**

BACP Professional Standards Development Facilitator, BACP Accredited Counsellor, Supervisor, Trainer

**Sandra McKeever**

BACP Professional Standards Development Facilitator, Senior Accredited Counsellor, Psychotherapist, Supervisor and Trainer

**Susan Critchley**

BACP Professional Standards Development Facilitator, BACP Accredited Counsellor, Supervisor and Trainer

**Eve Orton**

BACP Operations Manager, Clerk to the ERG

**Chloe Hearne**

BACP Professional Standards Project Administrator, Clerk to the ERG

**Chris Lecatsas-Lyus**

Executive Coach, Psychotherapist, Career Counsellor

**Frances Masters**

BACP accredited counsellor and Founding Principal of the Integrated Coaching Academy

**Carolyn Mumby**

Counsellor, Leadership Coach, Supervisor and Facilitator and Author, Previous chair of BACP Coaching Division. Founder and Chair of Coaching for Social Impact special interest group

**Dr Valerie Watson**

Vice Chair of BACP Coaching Division, BACP Snr Accredited Counsellor, UKCP registered Psychotherapist; Independent Psychotherapist, Coach, Supervisor, Consultant and Trainer



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