

ADHD Coaching Standards: Protecting Clients Through Industry Reform

A White Paper on Training, Coaching Standards, and Urgent Reform

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Plain English Summary

What This Report Is About: This report investigates problems with training standards in the ADHD coaching industry. The author found that while ADHD coaching can help people when done properly, there are serious concerns about how some coaches are being trained and assessed.

Main Problems Found:

- Some training courses charge thousands of pounds but provide very few hours of actual education
- Several countries have taken legal action against coaching services targeting ADHD clients (with specific examples like Utah's legislation and Australia's NDIS ban)
- Many coaches working with ADHD clients don't have specific training for this group of clients
- Private medical clinics are providing coaches to newly diagnosed patients without checking their ADHD-specific qualifications

Key Findings:

- Training courses range from £30-79 per hour for professionally accredited programs, but some charge as little as £3-6 per hour
- Professional supervision (ongoing training support) can cost coaches up to 15% of their income, making it financially difficult for new coaches

What Needs to Change:

- Coaches working with ADHD clients should have at least 80 hours of ADHD-specific coach training in courses that are independently audited

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- Coaches should clearly explain their qualifications and what they can/cannot do to clients before any contract is signed
- Better systems are needed to verify coach credentials
- International cooperation to address problems across borders

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Executive Summary

The ADHD coaching industry is in the height of a significant and potentially challenging “growth spurt” at a time when the demand for ADHD coaches is at an all time high.

This white paper documents widespread issues that require immediate industry-wide action. It is a shorter version of the Industry Report [available from the author here](#).¹

Scale of the Problem

- Some training programmes charging more than £3,000 while offering fewer than 40 hours of education
- Private ADHD clinics employing non-specialised coaches using ‘adjacent’ medical credibility
- “AuDHD” coaching promoted without evidence base for dual-diagnosis coaching methodology
- In the UK, a single online directory lists over 1,200 practitioners advertising “ADHD coaching”, yet fewer than 100 appear in accredited ADHD-specific directories (ADDCA and ACO).²

At present there are no published figures on the number of ADHD coaches practising in the UK.

The only verifiable sources are international training and accreditation directories. These figures only reflect individuals with specialist ADHD coaching credentials

¹ <https://lightbulbadhd.com/adhd-coaching-industry-analysis/>

² <https://addca.com/adhd-coach-directory/> and <https://www.adhdcoaches.org/find-your-coach>

from internationally recognised bodies (ADDCA (through ICF), PAAC, or equivalent).

In contrast, many coaches or other health professionals advertise “ADHD coaching” services without completing ADHD-specific training, making directory counts the only verifiable measure of accredited provision. The International Coach Federation (ICF) and European Mentoring and Coaching Council (EMCC) record thousands of accredited coaches across Europe, but do not disaggregate by ADHD specialisation.

By contrast, simple web searches reveal dozens of UK practitioners offering ADHD coaching without ADHD-specific qualifications, often with backgrounds in unrelated therapy or wellness modalities.

This suggests that the true number of ADHD-specific internationally accredited coaches in the UK is likely fewer than two hundred at most, a stark contrast to the tens of thousands of clients now seeking support.

Note on Terminology

In this report, “accredited ADHD coach” refers only to those trained by recognised ADHD-specific programmes with oversight from international coaching bodies such as ICF, PAAC, or EMCC. This excludes therapists, consultants, or self-styled coaches who may advertise “ADHD coaching” but lack ADHD-specific coach training.

The Economic Driver

Accredited training courses can cost up to £8000 and professional supervision costs can consume up to 15% of revenue, making supervised practice financially challenging for coaches at the start of their career and/or those charging lower fees.

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This creates systemic pressure to reduce professional development investment, directly impacting client safety while reinforcing pre-existing socio-economic inequalities of coaches background, income etc

The Evidence Gap

While multiple peer-reviewed research papers demonstrate the effectiveness of ADHD coaching when delivered by appropriately trained coaches, the current industry favours lowest-cost-to-consumer coaching.

Future problems begin with coach training, as some training programs cost-per-hour ranging from £30-79 for professionally accredited programs versus £3-6 for “pay-to-play” schemes. If coaches are paid variable low fees, it is more challenging to justify investing in more rigorous (and expensive) training courses.

Immediate Actions Required

- Minimum 80-hour ADHD-specific training requirement for neurodivergent population services
- Transparent disclosure of coach qualifications and supervision arrangements
- Platform verification systems to prevent unqualified coaches targeting ADHD clients
- International cooperation frameworks to address cross-border enforcement challenges

The choice is clear: professionalise immediately through coordinated stakeholder action, or face imposed regulation designed by authorities who understand neither coaching nor neurodivergent community needs.

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1 The Wider Problem - ADHD and “coaching” are commercial ‘targets’

Global Regulatory Action

Multiple cases related to or involving ADHD and coaching across several countries in the last 3 years, revealing client risks that can no longer be ignored:

United States: State licensing boards reviewing “coaching” exemptions for psychologists practicing outside their jurisdiction

Australia: National Disability Insurance Scheme banned life coaches from disability funding, grouping them with “unproven therapies” such as kinesiology

United Kingdom: Advertising Standards Authority ruled against productivity apps making medical claims about ADHD and supplements advertised as alternatives to ADHD medication

Canada: States reviewing mandatory registration for coaches targeting mental health conditions

(See [References](#) for direct links to sources)

The Training Quality Collapse

A brief analysis of several UK and US ADHD coaching programmes reveals stark quality variations:

Programme	Training Hours	Cost (£)	Cost/Hour	Accreditation
ADDCA	200+	£9,600	£48	ICF/PAAC

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Coach Approach	125+	£5,600	£45	ICF
Barrett Coaching	60	£1,800	£30	AC/UCA
ADHD Works	40	£2,950	£74	Internal
Certified Excellence	10-20	£60	£3-6	

Key finding: Accredited programmes range between £30-79 per training hour, whilst other schemes offer lower costs with minimal education. There is an in-depth table with full details in the Industry Report and a modified version is shared in [Appendix A](#).

2 What Coaching Is (And Why This Matters)

Understanding the Coaching Method

Before looking at where things go wrong, we need to understand what legitimate coaching involves and why it can genuinely help ADHD clients when done properly.

Coaching is fundamentally different from therapy, teaching, or consulting.

Unlike these other professions, coaching:

- Focuses on future action rather than past analysis
- Operates as a partnership where the client sets the agenda
- Uses skilled questioning to help clients discover and create their own solutions
- Emphasises practical strategies for immediate and future challenges

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Profession	Focus	Method	Power Dynamic
Therapy	Healing, insight	Clinical exploration	Therapist as expert
Teaching	Knowledge transfer	Instruction, assessment	Teacher as guide
Coaching	Client-led change	Inquiry, experimentation	Coach as equal partner
Consulting	Problem-solving	Analysis, recommendations	Consultant as expert

Why ADHD Coaching is effective

The coaching approach addresses key challenges common in ADHD experience:

Autonomy and Self-Determination

Many ADHD adults resist expert-led approaches after years of being told what's "wrong" with them. Coaching's client-led methodology restores their choice or agency.

Action Orientation

ADHD brains can prefer doing to discussing. Coaching's focus on practical experimentation can be more engaging than ideas only or educational approaches.

Customisation

Rather than one-size-fits-all solutions, one to one coaching develops personalised strategies that account for individual strengths and challenges.

Strength-Based Approach

Coaching focuses on strengths and capabilities rather than deficits, helping ADHD clients recognise their cognitive advantages alongside managing difficulties.

The Evidence Base

Multiple studies demonstrate ADHD coaching effectiveness:

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- Improvements in executive function and goal attainment
- Coaching complements but doesn't replace medical treatment
- Success requires appropriately trained coaches with ongoing supervision

Research demonstrates ADHD coaching can be effective when properly delivered. The challenge is ensuring consistent quality across a rapidly expanding and largely unregulated industry.

3 The Training Quality Problem

How We Got Here

The ADHD coaching market has exploded alongside growing awareness of neurodiversity. What should be positive progress has created dangerous opportunities for exploitation, whether that is motivated by a desire to help or to profit.

The perfect storm:

- Genuine demand from under-served ADHD population
- Regulatory vacuum with no mandatory standards
- Low barriers to entry encouraging quick-profit schemes

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- Potentially vulnerable³ clients who may find it challenging to quickly assess the difference between good marketing and service quality when in more urgent need of support

The Economics of Exploitation

Professional supervision, essential for client safety, has become financially out of reach for many coaches:

Annual Professional Expenses	Minimal Standards	Enhanced Standards
Supervision	£0-300	£1,200-2,400
Continuing Education	£200-500	£1,000-2,500
Professional Insurance	£450	£450-800
Professional Memberships	£100-200	£400-800
Training/Credentials	£500	£2,000-5,000

Critical finding:

When clients cannot easily distinguish between coaches with different training levels, market competition primarily occurs on price rather than professional qualifications. This creates systematic pressure to reduce professional development investment to remain competitive.

The “Certification Inflation” Problem: Commercial or membership accreditation schemes exploit consumer confusion

³ ‘Vulnerable’ in this context does not mean a lack of intelligence or capacity.

Consumer protection laws recognise that certain populations require additional disclosures or cooling-off periods - not because they lack capacity, but because standard market mechanisms may inadequately protect their interests. Many ADHD and autistic individuals are highly capable professionals who nonetheless benefit from enhanced transparency in coaching services, just as sophisticated investors still receive legal protections in financial markets.

Professionally recognised accreditors (ICF, EMCC, PAAC) require:

- Rigorous curriculum review
- Minimum training hours with live instruction
- Supervised practice requirements
- Ongoing professional development
- Independent complaint processes

Commercial certification providers (IPHM, CMA, IAOTH) offer:

- Instant certification for membership fees
- No or minimal curriculum oversight
- No or minimal practice requirements
- Marketing 'official' appearing logos without meaningful standards

Example: One “certified ADHD coach” programme offers certification in under 20 hours for £60, accredited by organisations that charge £199 annually for their stamp of approval.

Where Private ADHD Clinics Could Improve

Many private diagnostic clinics now offer coaching as “wraparound care” but investigation reveals many employing general life coaches trained in other modalities rather than ADHD specialists.

This creates potentially misleading “authority transfer” where medical provider credibility is extended to non-specialist coaching services.

Newly diagnosed ADHD clients may assume medical provider endorsement extends to the coaching service quality and appropriateness.

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However, medical expertise in diagnosis doesn't extend to coaching supervision or quality assurance, yet marketing materials rarely distinguish between diagnostic and coaching service standards.

Clients are expected to research individual coaches and assess their training qualifications rather than be able to trust that medical providers are ensuring their services are appropriate.

Private ADHD clinic coach qualifications and experience: anonymised table.

Clinic Name	Services Offered	Coach Credentials Listed	ADHD-Specific Training
Provider A	Diagnosis + Coaching	No individual coach listed	No ADHD-specific training visible
Provider B	Coaching	Unclear (partnership with ADHD group which has coach 'marketplace')	No specific accreditation visible
Provider C	Coaching	No specific ADHD coach training	None visible
Provider D	Diagnosis + Coaching	No specific ADHD training	None visible
Provider E	Diagnosis + Coaching	No specific ADHD training	None visible

Directory Listings vs Accredited ADHD Coaches

A search of the Counselling Directory (August 2025) for "ADHD coaching" returned 1,269 results across the UK.

While directories such as Counselling Directory and their related Life Coach Directory display a 'Verified' seal for practitioners, this verification only confirms

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that the coach has some form of credential or membership, not that they are trained to work with ADHD. In practice, this means that a practitioner with a generic life coaching certificate, can advertise “ADHD coaching” and appear to be “verified.”⁴

This creates a misleading sense of reassurance for clients who may assume “verified” equates to ADHD-specific competence. By contrast, internationally recognised ADHD coaching programmes (e.g., ADDCA, PAAC-approved courses) require more than 80 hours of ADHD-specific training, supervised practice, and formal assessment.

By contrast, the ADD Coach Academy (ADDCA) lists only 39 UK-based ADHD coaches in its international directory, and the ADHD Coaches Organisation (ACO) lists 36 UK members. These are the only two publicly verifiable directories of accredited ADHD coaches with ADHD-specific training requirements.⁵

This stark contrast illustrates the scale of consumer confusion: hundreds of therapists, wellness practitioners, and consultants advertise “ADHD coaching” while fewer than 100 coaches in the UK are listed with ADHD-specific accredited programmes.

⁴ <https://www.lifecoach-directory.org.uk/content/verifiedseal.html#arecoachesregulated>

⁵

ADHD Business Coaches or Coaches with ADHD?

When Personal Branding Outpaces Professional Standards

A concerning trend has emerged alongside formal training exploitation: business strategists with ADHD positioning their lived experience as adequate replacements for professional coaching credentials.

These business owners lead group programs, masterminds, and "neurodivergent entrepreneur" communities without ADHD-specific coaching training or ethical oversight. Examples include a business strategist charging £900 for 90-minute sessions, targeting 'ADHD founders' with no visible ADHD-specific training or supervision requirements but using very successful positioning and marketing.

The practice creates additional consumer confusion when individuals seeking "ADHD coaching" may not distinguish between lived experience and professional competence. Unlike the training programs analysed above, these 'business coaches' bypass formal certification entirely, relying instead on personal narratives and business success stories.

Typical Characteristics:

- No evidence of ICF, PAAC, or clinical credentials
- Marketing emphasises personal insight and relatability over professional training
- Services include masterminds, business strategy, and mindset programs
- Language frequently uses clinical terms ("ADHD brain", "dopamine hacks") without scientific framework

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Ethical Concerns for ADHD and Autistic Clients:

Clients often assume coaching expertise that may not exist, especially when marketing uses “ADHD business/marketing/sales coach” terminology. Personal success stories, while inspiring, do not replace structured training in ethics, boundaries, or trauma-informed practice required when serving neurodivergent populations.

Without professional oversight, there are no transparency requirements around scope of practice - gaps that particularly impact neurodivergent clients who benefit from enhanced transparency in service boundaries

This model represents another form of certification bypass that exploits the same information asymmetries identified in formal training programs, while avoiding even minimal educational requirements.

“AuDHD” Coaching

AuDHD is increasingly used as short-hand for clients who meet criteria for both ADHD and autism is attention grabbing but it glosses over a critical evidence gap.

While more than two dozen randomised or quasi-experimental studies now support ADHD-focused coaching, autism-specific coaching protocols are still in the pilot stage or have very small numbers (n=2).⁶

No large RCTs have tested a unified ‘dual-diagnosis’ (AuDHD) model, and the heterogeneity of co-occurring sensory, social-communication, and executive-function profiles means one-size-fits-all interventions are more likely to miss the mark than hit it.

⁶ See [References](#) for studies so far.

Marketing “AuDHD expertise” therefore poses a risk of overselling an approach that lacks a published evidence base and may encourage coaches to work beyond current competence.

Professional Migration Without Training

A concerning trend to note involves licensed mental health professionals transitioning to “coaching” without acquiring appropriate coaching credentials or understanding coaching scope.

Industry publications explicitly advise therapists that they 'don't need more training to offer life coaching' while promoting coaching as a 'cash injection' strategy for struggling therapy practices.⁷

This guidance fundamentally misunderstands professional coaching competencies and creates multiple risks:

- Therapeutic professionals may assume coaching skills transfer without specialised training
- Financial motivations (“selling high-end coaching packages before you provide the service”) prioritise revenue over competence
- Confusion between coaching and therapy approaches (“if you love teaching, mentoring, and guiding”) contradicts coaching's non-directive methodology
- Regulatory arbitrage (“coaches don't have a license to lose”) attracts therapists seeking reduced accountability

⁷ For example -

<https://www.thebadtherapist.coach/blog/difference-between-therapy-and-coaching> accessed 14 July 2025.

Such migration patterns explain why ADHD/AuDHD clients encounter therapy practitioners who blend therapeutic and coaching approaches without appropriate oversight for either modality.

High-Cost “Transformation” Programs Targeting ADHD Clients

A concerning trend has emerged online: programs costing £4,000-£10,000 for 8-12 weeks which blend ADHD coaching with unproven methods like breathwork, “energy alignment” and trauma processing techniques.

Common characteristics:

- Premium pricing framed as “transformation investments”
- Mix coaching with spiritual practices and wellness marketing
- Promise rapid results like “identity rewiring” or complete life transformation
- Use therapeutic language despite lacking clinical qualifications

Why this matters: These programs exploit ADHD clients' legitimate desire for fundamental life changes while exceeding professional boundaries - none of the course providers had training in all (or any) of these modalities. Claims about “brain rewiring” or “nervous system regulation” suggest medical expertise without appropriate qualifications and could be referred to the Advertising Standards Agency.

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Social Media Influencers Becoming “Coaches”

Social media creators with large ADHD followings increasingly launch high-cost coaching programs without corresponding training. They leverage audience trust built through relatable content to sell services priced like professional coaching.

The problem: Followers may assume social media popularity equals coaching competence. These creators bypass training requirements, creating a parallel coaching economy without professional oversight.

Financial risk: Executive function challenges common in ADHD may impair clients' ability to evaluate complex contracts or recognise when services exceed evidence-based boundaries.

Industry Impact

While these approaches demonstrate unmet demand for holistic ADHD support, they combine the highest financial risk with the greatest potential for inappropriate therapeutic claims. The solution requires elevating professional standards rather than abandoning evidence-based practice.

Case Example: A Media Host-Turned-ADHD Coach

This anonymised, composite example illustrates a pattern emerging in the ADHD coaching world.

Background: An American entrepreneur transitioned into ADHD coaching after running an unrelated business with mixed success because of their ADHD, going

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on to build public visibility through relatable social media posts, a popular podcast and online presence featuring recognised ADHD experts.

Training: General life coach and trauma-informed courses were completed, but no ADHD-specific certifications (e.g. ADDCA, PAAC) could be identified. Public claims of being a “multi-certified ADHD expert” appear based on self-study and generalist credentials.

Business Model: Membership group program; a proprietary ADHD coach training (\$10,000), marketed as neurodivergent-friendly but not externally accredited; and sponsorship revenue from podcasting.

Certification Issues: Graduates describe themselves as “certified ADHD coaches”, though the credential is self-created, therefore proprietary, raising potential for consumer confusion.

Influence of Life Coach School: The structure closely mirrors life-coaching models (hot-seat coaching, thought-model tools, self-paced course libraries) with some adaptations for ADHD (emotional regulation, body doubling, procrastination support).

Observed Trend: This case reflects a wider shift where visibility and influence precede formal ADHD-specific training; proprietary certifications are marketed without external oversight; and high-revenue life-coaching frameworks are rebranded for the ADHD space.

This example is anonymised and based solely on public information. It is provided to illustrate industry patterns rather than evaluate any one practitioner.

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4 Case Studies

Utah creates legislation addressing ‘life coaches’

The crisis:

Investigation by Salt Lake Tribune and ProPublica revealed clinicians who'd lost therapy licences were operating as “life coaches” using identical therapeutic techniques without oversight.

The consequences:

Victims reported trauma re-triggering and financial exploitation.

The response:

Utah passed emergency legislation (SB48) creating oversight requirements for coaches serving individuals with mental health conditions.⁸

The lesson:

When unqualified therapists target clients, preventable harm occurs. Regulation follows a crisis rather than preventing it.

Australia's “Holistic” Life Coach Funding Ban

The problem:

Various life coaches were accessing public disability funding (NDIS) to serve autistic and ADHD clients despite lacking recognised or accredited training

The decision:

In October 2024, Australia's National Disability Insurance Scheme banned life and

⁸ <https://le.utah.gov/~2025/bills/static/SB0048.html>

wellness coaching from allowable supports, grouping them with “unproven therapies” like puppy therapy and kinesiology.

The impact:

Legitimate ADHD coaches unable to offer services to clients who genuinely benefit from their work because unqualified coaching practitioners lead others to distrust the term “ADHD Coach”.

The lesson:

Poor practice by some restricts access for everyone. Quality coaching practitioners must police their own industry or lose legitimacy entirely.

UK Advertising Crackdowns

Motion App Ruling (October 2023):

The Advertising Standards Authority ruled against a productivity app claiming to be “the best way to get organised when you have ADHD”. The ruling determined this constituted unauthorised medical treatment claims.

Saffron Supplement Case (June 2025):

ASA upheld complaints against a supplement company and ADHD coach promoting saffron as a medication alternative, ruling this irresponsibly discouraged essential medical treatment.

The Repeated Pattern:

Companies increasingly target ADHD customers with unsubstantiated claims, requiring regulatory intervention to protect consumers.

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5 The Path Forward

Core Principles for Reform

1. Client Protection as Primary Obligation

All reforms must prioritise client welfare over industry convenience or profit margins.

2. Evidence-Based Standards

Training requirements and practice guidelines must be grounded in peer-reviewed research, not commercial interests.

3. Transparent Accountability

Coaches must clearly disclose their qualifications, supervision arrangements, and scope of practice limitations.

4. Proportionate Intervention

Reforms should enhance rather than restrict access to legitimate coaching services.

Minimum Competence Framework for ADHD Coaches

Training Requirements:

- Minimum 80 hours ADHD-specific coursework aligned to established competencies
- Practical supervised experience with ADHD clients

Professional Standards:

- Ongoing supervision: 1 hour per 20-30 client hours with qualified supervisor

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- Annual continuing professional development focused on ADHD and relevant neurodiversity training
- Membership in recognised professional body with accessible complaint procedure

Scope Boundaries:

- Explicit scope-of-practice clause distinguishing coaching from therapy
- Established referral pathways to licensed mental health professionals
- Prohibition on outcome guarantees or medical treatment claims

Financial Transparency:

- Coaching fees showing costs before client engagement
- Clear cancellation policies
- Disclosure of financial relationships with recommended products/services

Stakeholder Responsibilities

Training Providers:

- Audit curricula against ADHD and wider neurodivergent population competency requirements⁹
- Implement transparent fee structures showing training hours vs. certification costs

⁹ See full Industry Research paper ADHD Coaching Standards Crisis: Protecting ADHD Clients Through Industry Reform, available from the author.

- Establish minimum supervision ratios for student coaches
- Create public complaint processes with independent review

Professional Bodies:

- Establish independent ethics review panels with external oversight
- Implement mandatory reporting for serious ethical violations
- Create cross-organisation standards for ADHD or neurodivergent client work
- Develop evidence-based competency frameworks for ADHD coaching

Technology Platforms:

- Verify coaching credentials before permitting targeted advertising
- Require explicit disclosure of data use, qualifications of those providing the recommendations in apps or programs and limitations of information
- Create rapid response systems for client safety concerns

Individual Coaching Practitioners:

- Complete regular competency reviews using validated assessment instruments
- Participate in peer consultation groups for complex ethical scenarios
- Maintain regular supervision with qualified supervisors
- Document continuing education compliance

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6 What You Can Do Now

For Potential Clients: Red Flags vs. Quality Indicators

Red Flags to Avoid:

- Coaches offering specific outcomes or “cures” for ADHD
- Training completed in under 40 hours
- Inability to explain coaching vs. therapy differences
- Marketing about “fixing” or “healing” ADHD
- Lack of transparent qualification information

Quality Indicators to Seek:

- ADHD-specific training from recognised sources (ADDCA, PAAC-approved programmes)
- Clear scope of practice boundaries and referral protocols
- Ongoing professional supervision arrangements
- Transparent fee structures
- Membership in established professional bodies (ICF, EMCC, ACO, PAAC)

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Essential Questions to Ask Prospective Coaches

1. How many hours of ADHD-specific training have you completed?
2. What organisation accredited your training programme?
3. Do you receive ongoing supervision? How often?
4. Can you explain when you would refer clients to other professionals?
5. What is your specific experience working with ADHD clients?

For Current Coaches: Protecting Your Profession

Immediate Actions:

- Support evidence-based minimum competency frameworks
- Advocate for transparent qualification disclosure across the industry
- Report harmful practices through professional body or trading standards complaint processes
- Invest in ADHD-specific continuing education

Professional Development:

- Pursue legitimate accreditation over commercial alternatives
- Maintain regular supervision even when not required
- Join professional organisations supporting enhanced standards

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- Build referral relationships with licensed mental health professionals

For Healthcare Providers: Making Safe Referrals

Verification Checklist:

- Confirm substantial ADHD-specific training (minimum 80 hours recommended)
- Verify clear boundaries around medical advice and treatment recommendations
- Ensure ongoing professional supervision arrangements
- Check professional body membership and complaint resolution processes

Integration Approach:

- Frame coaching as complement to, not replacement for, medical treatment
- Coordinate care to avoid conflicting approaches
- Maintain communication about client progress and challenges
- Establish clear roles and boundaries between interventions

7 Conclusion: The Choice Before Us

The ADHD coaching industry stands at a critical point. We can continue the current path toward consumer harm and a regulatory backlash, or we can seize

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this moment to professionalise and protect the ADHD and neurodivergent community we claim to serve.

The evidence is clear:

- Unqualified coaches are risking and have caused harm to clients and professional damage to coaching
- Regulatory agencies across multiple countries are taking enforcement action
- Current market incentives systematically disadvantage quality providers or those coaches from socioeconomic backgrounds with less privilege
- ADHD clients - ALL coaching clients - deserve better

The choice is urgent:

- Professionalise immediately through coordinated stakeholder action
- Face regulation designed by authorities who understand neither coaching nor the ADHD community needs

The stakes could not be higher.

The ADHD and neurodivergent communities deserve coaches with genuine competence, evidence-based interventions, and ethical oversight.

They deserve protection from exploitation disguised as empowerment.

Those with quality training and ethical commitment have a professional obligation to act. Coaches must support evidence-based standards even when it disadvantages us economically or risks peers disapproving of speaking out. It is essential to report harmful practices even when it strains future professional relationships. Coaches must advocate for client protection even when it threatens industry growth.

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The time for half-measures has passed. The coaching profession must professionalise now, or accept responsibility for the preventable harm that follows.

The quality of our professional conscience will determine whether coaching becomes a force for genuine empowerment or remains a mechanism for exploitation of those whose interests should be at the heart of our work.

About This Report

This white paper draws from analysis of regulatory enforcement actions, comparative assessment of UK and US training programmes, economic analysis of coaching practice sustainability, and systematic review of peer-reviewed research on ADHD coaching effectiveness.

A full 20,000 word Industry Report with detailed explanations of coaching, ethics, examination of the state of the industry, controversial developments including AuDHD coaching, etc is available from the author at <https://lightbulbadhd.com/adhd-coaching-industry-analysis/>

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Member of Professional Association of ADHD Coaches (PAAC), ADHD Coaches Organisation (ACO) and International Coach Federation (ICF).

MA(Hons) and PhD in an unrelated field of study from the University of Edinburgh (1999, 2003).

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Appendix A

Coaching Training - a summary table

Course Name	Training Hours	Cost	Cost per Hour	Accreditation	Supervision Included?
ADHD-Specific Programs					
ADD Coach Academy (ADDCA)	200+ hours	\$12,000 USD	\$60 USD	ICF Level 1 & 2 + PAAC	Yes - extensive mentor coaching
Gold Mind Academy	85 hours	£6,720	£79	ICF CCE accredited	Yes - 10 hours mentor coaching
Barrett Coaching & Training	60 hours	£1,800	£30	AC + UCA accredited	Yes - ongoing 2-year support
ADHD Works	~40 hours	£2,950	£74	None (internal certification)	Limited - peer community only
ADHD Foundation Coaching Diploma*	Not specified	£5,400 (for two years)	Unable to calculate	Internal accreditation only (APANC is the ADHD Foundation's own organisation)	2 group sessions in Year 1, 3 in Year 2. Individual sessions offered at 'reduced rate' (unspecified)
General Programs with ADHD Content					
Animas Coaching Diploma	~9 months (weekly sessions)	£6,000-10,000 (estimated)	Variable	ICF + EMCC + AC accredited	Yes - ICF/EMCC standard mentoring
Coach Approach Training Institute	125+ hours	\$7,000-9,000 USD	\$56-72 USD	ICF Level 1 & 2	Yes - ICF-compliant mentor coaching
Pay-to-Play Examples					

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Certified Excellence ADHD Course	Self-paced videos	£60	N/A	IPHM/CMA (£199 annual fee)	None
All data obtained July 2025 using general internet search					

On 30th August 2025 it was announced that the ADHD Foundation charity had ceased trading and was expecting to be formally liquidated. There are many current and former students of the Diploma who are unclear about the status of their training, fees or refunds.

<https://www.adhdfoundation.org.uk/news/adhd-foundation-closure>

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Appendix B - Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Explanation	Abbreviation	Explanation
AC	Association for Coaching	ILM	Institute of Leadership and Management (by the City and Guilds, UK)
ACC	Associate Certified Coach (ICF level) Also ADDCA Associate Certified Coach	IPHM	International Practitioner of Holistic Medicine
ACCG	ADDCA Advanced Certified Coach Graduate	MCC	Master Certified Coach (ICF level)
ADDCA	ADD Coach Academy	NBHCW	
ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder	NDIS	National Disability Insurance Scheme (Australia)
APANC	Association of ADHD and Neurodiversity Coaches (created by ADHD Foundation)	NHS	National Health Service (UK)
ASA	Advertising Standards Authority (UK)	NICE	National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (UK)
ASAI	Advertising Standards Authority for Ireland	PAAC	Professional Association of ADHD Coaches
ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorder, also referred to as ASC Autism Spectrum condition	PCC	Professional Certified Coach (ICF level)
CCE	Continuing Coach Education	PEERS	UCLA's Program for the Education and Enrichment of Relational Skills

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CEFIO	Cognitive Ergonomics from the Inside Out (DIG Coaching, Jeff Copper)	RCT	Randomised Controlled Trial (research method)
CMA	Complementary Medicine Association	TGA	Therapeutic Goods Administration
CPD	Continuing professional development (general); also a private commercial training accreditation company	UCA	Universal Coaching Alliance
EMCC	European Mentoring & Coaching Council	UK	United Kingdom (comprising Scotland, Wales, Ireland and England)
GDP	Gross domestic product	US/USA	United States (of America)
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation	WABC	Worldwide Association of Business Coaches
GP	General Practitioner (Doctor)		
IAC	International Association of Coaching		
IAOTH	International Association of Therapists		
ICF	International Coach Federation		

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