October 2026
For counsellor-coaches and other coaching professionals

Coaching Today

Not just a ‘confidence’ issue

‘Rather than focus on what women should get rid of, how might we help expand the lens?’

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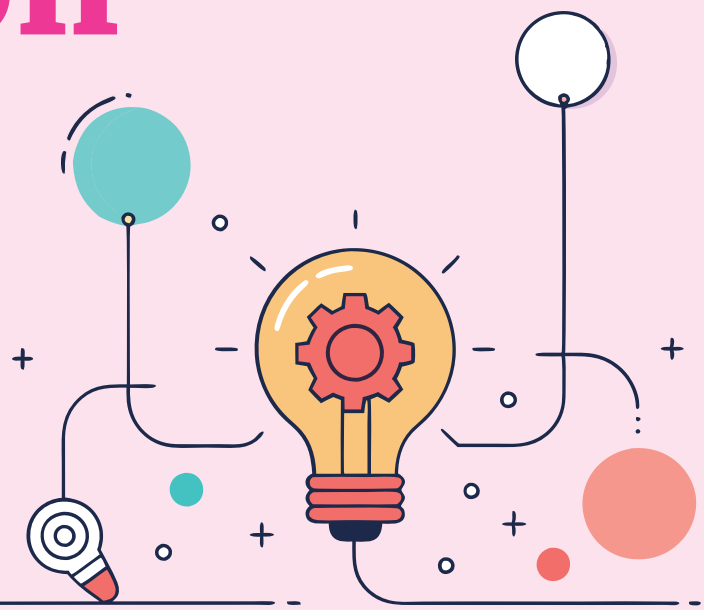
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Supervision digest

Ioannes Alexiades explores a specialist area of supervisory practice and proposes an integrated framework for interprofessional supervision





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If you would like to join the Supervision SIG, please contact Ioannes at **info@mindhauscounselling.com**

The Supervision Special Interest Group (SIG) was launched by BACP's Coaching division Executive in 2020.

The Supervision SIG aims to promote the role of supervision by:

- Increasing visibility for dual coach-therapist practitioner supervisors within BACP
- Supporting the development of a list of dual practitioner supervisors in BACP online directories to ensure that our members have access to appropriately experienced supervisors who integrate therapy and coaching
- Promoting the role of supervision and creating a network of dual practising supervisors within BACP
- Hosting regular meetings as a means of demonstrating best practice in supervision and raising awareness of the challenges faced by dual practising supervisors.

The Supervision SIG meets every two months, and our membership comprises experienced dual practitioners who seek to expand our understanding of supervision theory and practice. We also regularly invite accomplished authors and practitioners as guest speakers to join us and share the latest developments in the field.

Interprofessional supervision is a specialist form of cross-disciplinary supervisory practice. Although references to interprofessional supervision can be found in literature that predates her work, Allyson Davys played an important role in explicitly conceptualising, defining and empirically examining interprofessional supervision within the field of health and social care. Davys acknowledged that previous literature has used several related terms to describe this form of supervision including multidisciplinary, multi-professional and cross-disciplinary.[1]

In her 2017 study,[1] Davys discovered that this type of supervision went beyond the apprenticeship model prevalent in social work, where knowledge was transmitted hierarchically downwards and conducted within the confines of the same profession. As such, it represents a departure from traditional forms of supervision in the helping professions, as the parties involved do not share the same professional training or practice. However, interprofessional supervision should not be understood simply as supervision that crosses professional boundaries. Rather, it is a distinct form of supervision that demands specialist knowledge and skills and identifiable competences to be fit for practice.

In this column, I examine both the opportunities and the challenges of interprofessional supervision for dual coach-therapy practice as I believe that this form of supervision should be recognised as a specialist area of practice. I understand that BACP is

currently considering the creation of additional specialist competences for supervising dual practice. As such, I propose the introduction of an integrated competence framework as an aid for use when supervising across various helping professions and until such time as BACP is able to provide additional guidance in this area.

Supervisory competence cannot be assumed to transfer automatically across professional disciplines. While it could be argued that experienced supervisors possess highly developed relational, reflective and facilitative skills, these alone may be insufficient when supervising practitioners from other professions. Expertise in supervising counsellors or psychotherapists, for example, does not necessarily equip a supervisor with the skills and competences to supervise practitioners from other helping professions without a sound understanding of their respective professional and contextual demands. Effective supervision also requires familiarity with profession-specific content, ethical frameworks, standards of practice, models of professional accountability and meeting regulatory requirements, where applicable. Without this knowledge, supervisors may inadvertently overlook risks, misunderstand professional obligations or provide guidance that falls outside their area of competence.

The benefits of interprofessional supervision

Interprofessional supervision offers several potential benefits. Working across professional disciplines creates opportunities for learning, knowledge sharing and collaborative working. More specifically, working alongside professionals from different disciplines encourages greater appreciation of the expertise of others while facilitating reflection of our own professional identity, values, competence and approach to practice. It can also support continuing professional development and contribute to the enrichment of organisational culture.[1]

The challenges of interprofessional supervision

Despite these advantages, interprofessional supervision presents several challenges. Davys, who investigated its impact in social work and beyond, suggests that the lack of awareness of other ways of practising may potentially undermine professional identity.[1] The inability to understand the roles and responsibilities of other professionals may discourage collaboration and raise the risk of undervaluing another practitioner's professional expertise or integrity. Differences in language, including profession-specific terminology, may also lead to misunderstandings. Professional boundaries may be affected, as crossing over from one way of working to another may be constrained by hierarchies, particularly the case with those who are resistant to change. Equally, supervisors must be familiar with different codes of ethics and other profession-specific considerations to be effective. These differences present further challenges for practitioners who supervise across professional boundaries and contexts.

Supervision across the helping professions

Irrespective of benefits and challenges, supervision serves similar functions across the helping professions. These include professional development, practitioner wellbeing, accountability and the maintenance of professional standards. Alongside these functions, BACP's new *Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions 2026* refers to collaborative process and ethical decision-making as fundamental aspects of ethical practice in supervision.[2] However, the emphasis differs depending on the context in which supervision is provided. More specifically, counselling and psychotherapy prioritise reflective practice, ethics and the therapeutic relationship, whereas coaching supervision places greater emphasis on reflective learning, performance management (if conducted in organisational settings), and professional development. Equally, social work integrates organisational accountability with practitioner support, while nursing focuses on clinical competence and patient safety. These differing priorities reinforce the argument that supervisors working across professional boundaries require more than generic supervisory skills; they require an informed understanding of each profession's distinct focus and purpose.

Interprofessional supervision has the potential to foster collaborative learning, strengthen professional identity… and ultimately enhance quality of practice

Those considering offering interprofessional supervision will need to think about the specific requirements of the work and the types of support needed, and whether they are able to provide this. In many cases, practitioners may be required to receive supervision from a qualified supervisor in their field. This is particularly the case in protected professions such as psychology, where all psychologists are required to have supervision by suitably qualified practitioners.[3] Midwifery is another example, whereby up until 2017, the supervision of midwives required a unique system of statutory supervision[4]. Although this is no longer the case, the previous system regulated and oversaw the practice of midwifery for the protection of practitioner and public alike. Equally, some professionals require profession-specific support from others in the same line of work, as is the case with social workers. More recently, professional bodies such as BACP and the European Mentoring and Coaching Council (EMCC) have strengthened their expectations regarding supervision. The new BACP *Ethical Framework* specifically refers to having a qualified supervisor whose competence aligns with the BACP competence framework.[2] Similarly, EMCC emphasises the requirement that supervisors should be appropriately trained to provide coaching supervision and familiar with its global *Code of Ethics*.[5,6]

The advent of Hawkins and Shohet's seven-eyed model in 1989 proposed a flexible process that could be applied across professional boundaries.[7] This model adopts a systemic approach by considering the multiple perspectives that help shape the supervisory relationship. However, supervising in more than one profession these days requires a thorough understanding of the practical requirements as set out by the respective professional bodies and accrediting associations. Supervisors undertaking this role may need to have substantial experience in the provision of supervision across professions. In addition, supervisors will need to be familiar with the ethical framework of more than one professional body and have robust contracts in place explicitly for all disciplines involved and be able to determine the support required at any given point in the work.

Interprofessional supervision for dual practice

As more of us move into dual practice, particularly coaching and counselling/psychotherapy, supervision across professions will become increasingly sought after to accommodate this requirement. In practical terms, an interprofessional supervisor can often satisfy both professional requirements if the client work overlaps, provided they have the appropriate qualifications, competence and experience to clearly cover both areas of practice. Alternatively, practitioners may choose two separate

supervisors, one for coaching and one for counselling, where the work requires different expertise, where accreditation requirements vary or practices are distinct. Finally, depending on the focus of the work, some may prefer to use a primary supervisor, and only access supervision from another profession as required.

A key consideration in the provision of interprofessional supervision is the contracting phase. The creation of a robust supervision contract at the outset can help clarify expectations, roles and responsibilities while addressing the complexities that arise when supervision spans more than one professional discipline. For example, consideration should be given to which ethical framework and other profession-specific considerations take precedence when working across professions or practice settings, and how issues such as record keeping, confidentiality and information sharing will be handled across different contexts. Equally important is ensuring that both supervisor and supervisee recognise the limits of the supervisor's competence and identify those aspects of practice that may require additional profession-specific expertise or referral. This should be ascertained and made explicit at the outset of the work and throughout the duration of the contract.

Careful contracting at the start of the work and the prospect of recontracting at a later stage if required helps to safeguard client welfare, supports ethical decision-making and establishes a transparent framework for accountable supervision. Effective management of the contracting process allows supervisors to become aware of the complexities and demands of the work and enables them to reflect on practice, maintain ethical standards and respond appropriately to emerging challenges and dilemmas as they arise. The significance of these considerations is highlighted in the new BACP *Ethical Framework*, particularly under core responsibility 1: Build appropriate relationships.[2]

As practitioners increasingly develop careers that encompass counselling, psychotherapy, coaching and potentially other helping professions, interprofessional supervision is likely to become an increasingly important feature of contemporary supervisory practice. While these disciplines may share core principles of reflective practice, ethical decision-making and professional development, effective interprofessional supervision requires more than simply integrating different professional perspectives. Supervisors must possess a thorough understanding of the distinct professional standards, ethical frameworks and contextual demands associated with each discipline. Clear contracting, well-defined boundaries, ethical reflexivity and an awareness of the limits of your expertise are essential to ensure that supervisees receive the appropriate support required.

When these conditions are met, interprofessional supervision has the potential to foster collaborative learning, strengthen professional identity, enrich reflective practice and ultimately enhance the quality of practice and outcomes for both practitioners and those they serve. Given the complexity of working across professional boundaries, supervisors practising in this fashion require ongoing supervision from experienced supervisors across all disciplines to reflect on ethical dilemmas, monitor the limits of their competence and review contracting decisions.[2] In this sense, interprofessional supervision therefore becomes an essential safeguard rather than an optional aspect of professional development. To date, no professional bodies relating to counselling, psychotherapy, coaching or other helping professions have provisions in place for accommodating interprofessional supervision to take place. This risk was highlighted in a relevant study of cross-professional supervision, which found that the current profession-specific approach taken by professional bodies and their respective accreditation standards may have a detrimental impact by limiting the practice and effectiveness of this form of supervision.[8]

An integrated competence framework for interprofessional supervision

Overall, I suggest that effective interprofessional supervision when working at the intersection of counselling, psychotherapy and coaching or across other helping professions, rests on four interconnected domains:

Domain	Purpose
Profession-specific knowledge	Understanding the ethical frameworks, professional standards, language and contextual demands of each profession
Specialist-supervisory competence	Integrating supervisory skills with profession-specific knowledge while recognising the limits of competence
Effective contracting and re-contracting	Establishing and reviewing roles and responsibilities, boundaries, accountability and referral arrangements across professional contexts
Supervision and reflexive practice	Ensuring supervisors receive ongoing supervision across all disciplines they work in and adhering to professional/ accrediting body requirements that they subscribe to.

These domains provide a foundation for supervisors working across professional boundaries by adhering to professional standards, supporting informed decision-making, maintaining appropriate limits of competence and safeguarding client wellbeing.

Recognising interprofessional supervision as a specialist area of supervisory practice has important implications for supervisor training, accreditation, continuing professional development and regulation. As increasing numbers of practitioners work across professional boundaries, developing specialist supervisory competences will be essential. This is not solely for the purposes of supporting practitioner development but also to safeguard ethical practice, maintain public confidence in the helping professions and ensure the highest standards of client care are applied throughout. The time has come for interprofessional supervision to be taken seriously by professional bodies across the helping professions. To achieve this aim, further collaboration by professional bodies across disciplines is key. ■

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