

Insync Boards framework series

# From clinical risk to quality and safe care

Applying the **CLEAR** framework to  
strengthen clinical governance committee  
oversight on behalf of the board.

Clinical governance now sits firmly at board level. It affects quality of care, patient safety, regulatory exposure, organisational reputation and community trust.

Boards are not expected to oversee clinical practice in detail. They rely on clinical governance committees to provide disciplined oversight, clear insight and assurance that care is safe, effective and continuously improving.

For many organisations, the clinical governance committee is the primary mechanism through which the board gains confidence in quality and safety. The CLEAR framework provides a structured approach to assessing and strengthening the effectiveness of clinical governance committees in supporting board oversight.

## When boards begin to question their clinical governance

Clinical governance reviews are rarely triggered by failure alone. More often, they begin with uncertainty. Directors may receive detailed quality and safety reporting, yet still lack clarity about the organisation's true performance. Metrics are presented and dashboards reviewed, but the discussion does not always provide clear insight into emerging risks or patient outcomes.

Service delivery may expand, complexity may increase, or regulatory expectations may evolve, while committee structures and oversight practices remain largely unchanged. A serious incident, near miss or external review may prompt reflection – not simply on clinical processes, but on whether the committee and board had clear visibility of deteriorating performance or systemic risk.

Quality and safety may be referenced in strategy and risk appetite, yet their influence on decisions, prioritisation and resource allocation is not always evident.

Committees may be active and management diligent, yet boards can remain unsure whether clinical governance oversight is proportionate to the organisation's scale, complexity and risk profile. These conditions do not necessarily indicate weakness. They often reflect growth, service expansion and rising expectations.

But they do raise important questions:

Is quality and safety being governed effectively through our committee structures?

Does the clinical governance committee provide the board with clear insight and assurance?

Are we confident in our visibility, oversight and continuous improvement of care?

## Clinical governance as a core governance discipline

Clinical governance is not simply a clinical or operational issue. It is a core governance discipline. Boards are responsible for governing the quality and safety of care.

Clinical governance committees play a critical role in enabling this by:

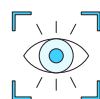
- providing structured oversight of quality and safety
- ensuring risks are clearly identified, escalated and understood
- supporting informed challenge and discussion
- strengthening accountability across governance layers

Clinical governance is not about clinical detail. It is about structured oversight and confident stewardship.

When clinical governance committees operate effectively, boards benefit from:



**Clearer visibility of care quality and safety**



**Greater confidence in reporting and oversight**



**Stronger integration into strategy and decision-making**



**Improved assurance and continuous improvement**

# Introducing the CLEAR framework

A CLEAR Clinical Governance Committee Review is built on a structured, governance-focused model that defines what effective oversight looks like in supporting the board's responsibility for quality and safety.

The framework examines five interrelated domains of clinical governance committee effectiveness:



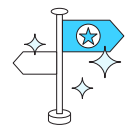
## Clarity of roles and accountability

How clearly clinical governance responsibilities are defined across the committee, board and executive, with well-understood lines of accountability for quality and safety.



## Leadership and culture

How the committee oversees and shapes a culture of safety, openness and continuous improvement, including how issues are escalated, discussed and addressed.



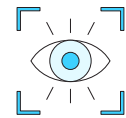
## Evaluation and insight

How effectively the committee uses meaningful, forward-looking indicators to assess quality of care, identify trends and monitor clinical performance over time.



## Assurance and oversight

How the committee gains confidence that clinical risks are identified, managed and monitored through structured reporting, escalation processes and independent assurance.



## Risk and improvement integration

How clinical risk is integrated into enterprise risk management, and how improvement initiatives are prioritised, resourced and aligned with strategic objectives.



Together, these domains provide a disciplined structure for assessing whether clinical governance committee oversight is clear, aligned and proportionate to organisational risk and service complexity.

## What a clinical governance review is – and is not

A CLEAR review provides an independent, structured assessment of how effectively the clinical governance committee supports the board in governing quality and safety.

It evaluates whether:



**Accountability is clear and consistently applied**



**Clear, proportionate committee role, mandate and reporting**



**Quality and safety embedded and escalated appropriately**



**Reporting enables forward-looking insight and challenge**



**Assurance provides confidence in risk and care quality**

It does not assess clinical practice in detail and is not a compliance or accreditation audit.

Instead, it focuses on how effectively the committee supports the board's oversight, strengthens clarity and enables better governance judgement.

Rather than producing extensive action lists, the review focuses on a small number of practical insights that strengthen effectiveness.

## Key questions for boards and committees

Boards and committees do not need to be clinical experts, but they do need confidence that quality and safety are being governed effectively.

Directors may wish to consider:

**Do we clearly understand our most material quality and safety risks?**

**Does the clinical governance committee provide clear and actionable insight?**

**Is quality and safety embedded in strategy and risk discussions?**

**Are governance roles and accountabilities clearly defined?**

**Are incidents, risks and improvement actions well understood and followed through?**

If these questions prompt uncertainty or differing perspectives, a structured review can provide clarity.

## How we work

Our approach is structured, proportionate and tailored to the organisation's scale, service complexity and clinical risk profile. A review typically includes a confidential clinical governance committee assessment, supported where appropriate by board and executive perspectives.

We undertake independent analysis and synthesise findings into clear, practical insight focused on a small number of high-impact recommendations. We are experienced governance advisers with the judgement and credibility to operate at board and committee level and handle sensitive matters with discretion.

Our particular strength lies in distilling diverse perspectives into clear insight – highlighting where oversight, alignment and accountability can be strengthened to deliver meaningful improvement.

## Part of a broader governance architecture

Clinical governance does not sit in isolation. Board effectiveness is strengthened when oversight disciplines are aligned across the board, its committees, the CEO and the executive team.

Insync Boards supports organisations through a structured governance architecture built on proprietary, evidence-based frameworks.

These include:

- WhatWhoHowDo** - Board effectiveness
- DRIVE** - Director effectiveness
- SCOPE** - CEO performance
- SOLID** - Executive effectiveness (individual contribution)
- ALIGN** - Executive forum effectiveness
- THRIVE** - Risk governance maturity
- SECURE** - Board cyber governance
- CLEAR** - Clinical governance committee effectiveness

Together, these frameworks provide disciplined insight across every layer of governance – strengthening how organisations oversee quality, safety and performance.

## Strengthening clinical governance with confidence

Strong organisations do not wait for incidents to test their governance. They periodically assess whether clinical governance committee effectiveness remains aligned with strategy, organisational complexity and service delivery risk.

A structured review provides boards with clarity on how effectively their clinical governance committee is supporting oversight, visibility of potential blind spots and confidence that governance arrangements remain fit for purpose.

If your board would value a disciplined, independent perspective on its clinical governance committee effectiveness, we would welcome a confidential discussion.

## Independent clinical governance reviews and advisory



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