

Clinical Governance Standards: Scope

Introduction

Healthcare Improvement Scotland is the national health and social care improvement organisation for Scotland and is part of NHS Scotland. It provides the expertise and resources to co-produce standards which are developed, informed and shaped by people who commission, deliver and use health and/or social care services. It uses well established and robust methodology to underpin standards development.

Standards are informed by:

- people with lived experience and their representatives/care partners
- formally collected person-reported outcomes
- current national policy and legislation
- evidence relating to effective clinical practice, feasibility and service provision.

Background

NHS Scotland has a statutory duty to ensure and improve the quality of care that it delivers. Clinical governance is an integral and essential part of the NHS governance framework. It was first defined in 1998 as ‘a system through which NHS organisations are accountable for continuously improving the quality of their services and safeguarding high standards of care by creating an environment in which excellence in clinical care will flourish’.

Clinical and care governance is the process by which accountability for the quality of health and social care is monitored and assured. The Clinical Standards Board for Scotland was established in 1999 to embed clinical governance in NHS Scotland. Its role was to develop a national system of quality assurance and accreditation of clinical services through national clinical standards. Generic standards for good clinical care, based on clinical governance, were published in 2002. In 2005, NHS Quality Improvement Scotland, which replaced the Board, revised the standards and published Clinical Governance & Risk management: Achieving safe, effective, patient-focused care and services. The aim of the national standards was to ensure that NHS boards have clinical governance and risk management arrangements in place to support the delivery of safe, effective, person-centred care and services.

In May 2010, the Scottish Government published the Healthcare Quality Strategy for NHS Scotland. The strategy set out three quality ambitions related to safe, effective and person-centred care to support NHS Scotland to deliver the best quality healthcare to the people of Scotland. To underpin the implementation for this strategy, Healthcare Improvement Scotland published one overarching clinical governance standard: 'the healthcare organisation provides person-centred, safe and effective care for every patient, every time'.

The Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act 2014 requires NHS boards and local authorities to integrate adult health and social care services. In 2015, the Scottish Government published a revised framework for clinical and care governance. In 2018 the Scottish Government recognised the need to ensure that the governance arrangements in NHS Scotland were fit for purpose and keeping pace with the changing policy and financial environment. The first edition of the Blueprint for Good Governance was published in January 2019.

Details of all current governance requirements for NHS boards, including clinical governance and risk management, is provided in the revised Blueprint for Good Governance (2022).

Purpose and use of the standards

Healthcare Improvement Scotland has responsibility for setting quality standards for clinical governance. The implementation of standards provides assurance that organisations are providing high quality and safe healthcare in line with best practice, national policy and legislation. Standards can support internal and external quality assurance.

NHS boards and individual providers are responsible for demonstrating that they are meeting the standards. The standards can be used to provide assurance to their local communities and governance bodies that the healthcare they are providing is safe, effective and person-centred.

HIS may use these standards in a range of assurance and inspection activities. They may be used to review the quality and registration, where appropriate, of health and social care services. The Healthcare Improvement Scotland Quality Management System (QMS) Framework supports health and social care organisations to apply a consistent and coordinated approach to the management of the quality of health and care services. By using standards as part of a quality management system, organisations can work in partnership to develop learning, plan improvement and understand their whole system. Central to this is the relationship between people, their care partners and organisations.

Scope of the clinical governance standards

Title

Clinical governance standards

Area covered by the standards

The standards will apply to all clinical services planned, commissioned or delivered within the health and social care system in Scotland.

Clinical is defined as any healthcare intervention or service requiring assessment, planning, provision, evaluation or oversight by a registered healthcare professional.

Providers responsible for meeting the standards

- healthcare services planned, delivered or commissioned by NHS Scotland
- healthcare services planned, delivered or commissioned by Health and Social Care Partnerships
- primary care providers
- special NHS boards including Healthcare Improvement Scotland
- independent healthcare providers including third sector providers
- independent social care providers who deliver or provide clinical services.

Setting

The standards will apply in all settings where people (adults and children) receive clinical care services in Scotland.

Domains in scope for standards development

Staffing and staff management

The values, behaviours, purpose, goals and priorities of an organisation, the ways of working between and within teams, and the accountability and transparency of senior managers and executive leaders.

Clinical audit and quality improvement

The functions, roles, responsibilities and structures in place to monitor, evaluate, assess and improve quality and safety of clinical care.

Clinical effectiveness

The provision of evidence-clinical care that meets the needs of individuals, ensures research is translated into practice, and uses defined outcomes to measure benefits and costs.

Risk management and safety

The processes and policies in place to respond to risks and concerns relating to the safety of care, including significant case reviews, adverse events, near misses, safety concerns, safeguarding, complaints and whistleblowing.

Education and training

The support, competencies, workforce mix, diversification of the workforce and supervision required for healthcare professionals and other staff members to deliver safe, effective and person-centred care.

Service user and patient involvement

The process by which people and communities are empowered and supported to make choices about their health and care, feedback on their experiences, and influence positive change to services.

Data and information

The legal and appropriate sharing, collection, use and storage of information about individuals and services to improve care and protect confidentiality. It includes the use of digital technology to support and improve care.

Terminology

The standards will use terminology in line with the Healthcare Improvement Scotland Standards **normative definitions**.