



# Clinical Governance Framework

Cultivating a culture of continuous improvement









# Foreword

A clinical governance framework is so much more than a set of guidelines; it is inspiring, empowering and inclusive; creating an environment in which high standards of care can thrive, and be sustainable. Our framework aims to support our teams to create this environment and help them to continuously improve the care they deliver.

Our framework is influenced by human medicine but has been further advanced to acknowledge the different needs of animal healthcare specifically. This framework is built on three fundamental elements:

1. The core - our definition of “quality of care” that describes the aims for every animal and owner interaction
2. The pillars – six areas of focus that integrate to encompass how we hold ourselves accountable for all of our clinical priorities.
3. The culture – our five values that are critical to empower our teams to continuously improve

No single element can be successful without the others. A clinical governance framework helps us to understand our current working practices and identify change where needed. Defining “quality of care” is essential for us to understand what we are trying to achieve with that change. To change effectively we must cultivate the right environment that engages inclusively, challenges fairly and encourages sustainable accountability.

Our framework transforms into a planning tool that helps teams to critically appraise change, encouraging thorough consideration of all elements and actively seeking diverse perspectives on any problem.

A clinical governance framework, by its very nature, is under continuous improvement itself to ensure it is equally rewarding for staff, owners and animals alike.

**Paul Higgs**

**Chief Veterinary Officer**

# Contents

Foreword	3
Contents	4
Governance in action	5
Quality of Care – our definition	6
Developing a culture that supports clinical improvement	7
The Six Pillars contributing to ‘quality of care’	8
Clinical Effectiveness	10
Research & Development	10
Ethical Integrity and Sustainability	11
Veterinary Ethics	11
Sustainability	12
Information Sharing and Collaboration	13
Education and Training	13
Quality Improvement and Patient Safety	14
Governance Structures	14
About CVS Group	19

# Governance in action

At the local or practice level our teams can establish governance structures to suit their needs (such as Clinical Learning Reviews; previously known as “morbidity and mortality rounds”). At the company, national or divisional level we need to ensure that there are identifiable accountability structures that will enable us to deliver on our commitment to providing the best care to animals in a consistent and transparent way.

A clinical governance framework can be used effectively at all levels but only when words become action. When combined into a simple planning tool, known as the “planning wheel” the three fundamental elements of the framework can be used to gain diverse perspectives, encourage questions and make our decisions more likely to meet the needs and expectations of our teams, our animal owners and the animals themselves.



Our Chief Veterinary Officer demonstrates the approach and value of using the planning wheel in this short video. Paul will use a simulated example of a new medication coming to market and the way in which the planning wheel ensures due diligence identifies challenges or questions that improve this decision.



# Quality of Care - our definition

CVS's guiding purpose is to provide the best possible care to animals, underpinned by a key aim to recommend and provide the best clinical care every time. This is a commitment we take extremely seriously, but quality of care is complex, multifactorial and must be individualised to every situation. Any definition of animal healthcare quality must take many aspects into account, no longer can we consider the "text-book" approach to be the right one if it does not account for the full context of our patients. Our patient-centred care model consists of six components of high quality animal healthcare:



# Developing a culture that supports clinical improvement

To achieve success we must commit to a clinical improvement culture that includes the input from all team members; where people are safe to identify and discuss concerns; where ideas and learnings are shared so that change can be effective in practices across our group, and in the profession as a whole.

Achieving and sustaining this environment will be a continuous improvement process in itself; this is aspirational and our teams will need support to undertake these behaviours.

## We aspire to an environment that promotes:

- **Just Culture** - We foster a fair and impartial environment, where colleagues feel empowered to voice their concerns and learn without fear of bias or reprisal.
- **Accountability** - We encourage leaders and teams to take ownership and be honest, with clear expectations and a shared sense of purpose with every colleague understanding the significance of their contributions.
- **Systems Thinking** - We recognise that all outcomes stem from the complex interaction between behaviours and processes. By taking this understanding into our problem solving we can learn more effectively.
- **Teamwork** - We prioritise trust and cooperation; our colleagues work together to achieve collective goals and provide the best possible care for animals.
- **Inclusive Leadership** - We believe in open and inclusive discussions by actively seeking diverse perspectives, embracing challenge, and valuing contributions that enrich our decision-making processes.



# The Six Pillars contributing to ‘quality of care’

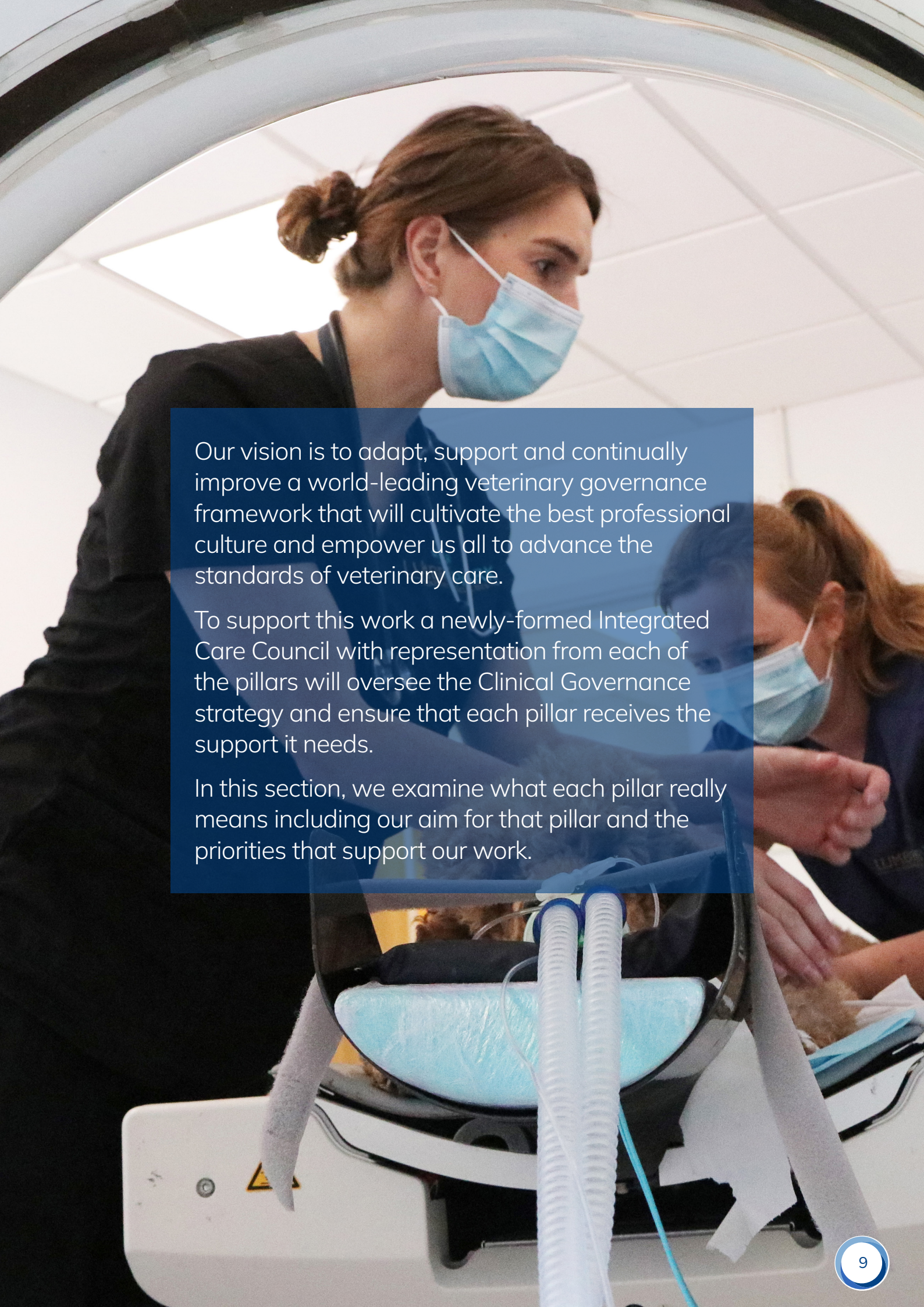
Consistent quality of care is our aim; the culture empowers our teams to improve continuously. The six pillars define the areas of focus that enable us to hold ourselves accountable for the process and decision making. The pillars identify a framework of priorities that guides each team member to continuously improve the quality of our clinical service.

Our six pillars are the building blocks to achieve clinical improvement and they complete our clinical governance framework. They are:

- Clinical Effectiveness
- Research and Development
- Ethical Integrity and Sustainability
- Information Sharing and Collaboration
- Education and Training
- Quality Improvement and Patient Safety







Our vision is to adapt, support and continually improve a world-leading veterinary governance framework that will cultivate the best professional culture and empower us all to advance the standards of veterinary care.

To support this work a newly-formed Integrated Care Council with representation from each of the pillars will oversee the Clinical Governance strategy and ensure that each pillar receives the support it needs.

In this section, we examine what each pillar really means including our aim for that pillar and the priorities that support our work.





# Clinical Effectiveness

## Aim

To ensure delivery of outstanding care by our frontline teams across all practice divisions, our laboratories and other services. Our company’s purpose is to give the best possible care to animals, and this requires consistent effort.

## Priorities

To drive focussed, collaborative and inclusive approaches to improvement we aim to:

- Establish a robust, pragmatic and achievable standard of care quality that can be strived towards in every patient and client interaction.
- Ensure inclusive, collaborative and transparent decision-making with broad and invested representation across all teams.
- Develop an environment where our teams feel safe to perform at their very best and to learn from their own and others experiences.
- Address important issues affecting our colleagues including the assessment of new products, development of guidelines, and supporting an evidence-based approach to care delivery.



# Research and Development

## Aim

To foster and sustain a research-positive culture within CVS that drives change through the generation of new knowledge. This means colleagues feel supported and empowered to participate in research within their role and that we capture, consolidate and disseminate key outputs.

## Priorities

- Welfare Centred Research – The research question is clinically important to animals, their owners, the profession or has ‘one health’ benefits and further evidence is required to answer the research question through a robust study.
- Open and accessible research - Research should be conducted with integrity and transparency. Findings should be disseminated and outputs reported.
- Ethical Research - Research should aim to maximise benefit and minimise risk and harm to those involved. Participants should be appropriately informed; lines of responsibility and accountability should be clearly defined.





# Ethical Integrity and Sustainability

This pillar has two components:

- Veterinary ethics
- Sustainability
  - One Health
  - Equity Diversity and Inclusion

## Veterinary Ethics

### Aim

To inspire the highest level of public trust in CVS' veterinary service provision through the integrity of our conduct and by prioritising the requirements of being welfare-centred and providing contextualised care.

### Priorities

To ensure we meet and sustain a moral integrity that our staff can be proud of we will:

- Understand and adapt to the changing societal needs on the veterinary sector while always prioritising animal welfare, advocacy and professional integrity.
- Empower teams with the tools and frameworks to confidently make decisions in patient and client care that continue to promote the confidence and trust of the public.
- Positively influence policies and legislation to uphold the standing and integrity of the veterinary profession.
- Exceed all standards in patient protection, regulatory compliance, honesty and governance in social and clinical research.



# Sustainability

Our sustainability programme has six important workstreams with two making important contributions to our clinical improvement.

## ***Equity Diversity and Inclusion***

### **Aim**

To develop and sustain a just culture throughout our business; where inclusion, equity and diversity of thought and opinion are considered essential elements of creating this.

### **Priorities**

To ensure that the importance of inclusion, equity and diversity of thought is understood and valued by our teams we will:

- Ensure appropriate consideration and acceptance of diverse opinions.
- Provide our teams with the tools they need to deliver inclusive, contextualised clinical care within the definition of quality animal care.
- Extend our approach to inclusivity and equity for our clients with the aim of providing the right care for the individual patient in the context of their, and their owner's, needs.

## ***One Health***

### **Aim**

To protect the environment and public health while balancing our primary responsibility for animal welfare.

### **Priorities**

To ensure that we consider the One Health implications of providing quality animal care we will:

- Balance the requirements of individual animal welfare with appropriate care for the environment, other animals and the health of people.
- Provide support that enables local change to engage with One Health initiatives so that they can be driven and achieved by all of our teams.
- Use a data driven approach where we seek to understand the problem and then respond to it - Where we can measure, that's exactly what we do.





# Information Sharing and Collaboration

## Aim

To ensure that we are effective in the way we share best practice; communicating improvements and changes that are useful or necessary for our colleagues and provide the channels for our teams to collaborate.

## Priorities

To meet our responsibilities when communicating with and between our colleagues we wish to be:

- Informing – about improvements that could support colleagues across our group.
- Educating – we will share learning, education and development and best practice. This includes sharing evidence and data that will foster a culture of continuous improvement – supporting our teams to improve the care they provide.
- Collaborating – we will ensure we have the channels that enable a diverse group of colleagues to collaborate with each other, no matter where they are.
- Celebrating – we will share our results, celebrate progress and recognise success in learning. We will also highlight where we have met or exceeded our own or third party standards or scrutiny.



# Education and Training

## Aim

To nurture experienced, diverse, and creative members of our teams to deliver high quality animal care. Delivering evidence-based and accessible education to our colleagues to match their needs, no matter their setting, context or job role.

## Priorities

To meet the training and education needs of our teams we need to:

- Understand and regularly review the educational and training needs of stakeholders.
- Develop and deliver an education provision that accounts for the needs of the patient, client, colleague and business.
- Identify all important stakeholders for education and training needs and use the best route to deliver accessible and relevant education to improve the quality of our care.
- Sustain a transparent educational governance structure that facilitates collaboration.



# Quality Improvement and Patient Safety

## Aim

To achieve consistent and effective methods of quality improvement to support the continual evolution and evaluation of the highest standards of patient care at the point of delivery.

## Priorities

To support a standardised approach to improvement that involves:

- Using feedback to guide the repeated quality improvement process. Through integrating our experience with data collection and analysis, we understand our progress and enable demonstrable improvement.
- Empowering people to make change. By giving people closest to the issues affecting quality of care the resources they need to work together to improve processes and overcome obstacles.
- Learning from everything. Striving to ensure that as many things as possible go right by continuously learning and making improvements by analysing things that go right as well as mistakes or near misses.
- Meeting or exceeding standards. By fully engaging with the RCVS Practice Standards Scheme and valuing feedback from assessors we can continue to provide the highest standard of veterinary care and prioritise improvements in our practices.

## Governance Structures

At the local or practice level our teams can establish governance structures to suit their needs (such as Clinical Learning Reviews, clinical audits and quality improvement projects). We have established a community of Clinical Improvement Advocates who receive training and support to advocate for the benefits of the framework.

At the company, national or divisional level we need to ensure that there are identifiable accountability structures that will enable us to deliver on our aims and priorities that support our clinical improvement. Our governance structure ensures we have a solid foundation on which to deliver the three fundamental elements and you can read more about our committees in the appendix.



# Appendix

## Integrated Care Council

- Is responsible for the review and oversight of the clinical governance framework at CVS.
- Provides a collaboration network to share high-level learning across the different clinical areas of the business.
- Includes representation from key opinion leaders with expertise to oversee the strategy for each pillar of governance.

We recognise that each area of the business will undertake clinical governance processes themselves; however, there is a need for an integrated group of key opinion leaders to ensure that the clinical governance framework continues to be fit for purpose. A secondary role will be to consider significant, pan-divisional clinical governance challenges.



**Integrated  
Care Council**

\*Chair: Chief  
Veterinary Officer

### **Clinical Effectiveness**

- \*Chief Veterinary Nursing Officer
- \*Equine clinical lead
- \*Farm Animal clinical lead
- \*Laboratory Division clinical lead
- \*Small Animal Veterinary Directors

### **Research and Development**

- \*Director of Clinical Research

### **Ethical Integrity and Sustainability**

- \*Chief Veterinary Officer
- \*Sustainability Lead
- \*Director of Innovation (One Health)

### **Information Sharing and Collaboration**

- \*Director of Communications

### **Education and Training**

- \*Director of Learning and Development

### **Quality Improvement and Patient Safety**

- \*Director of Quality Improvement



## Clinical Advisory Committees

The main clinical challenges facing our teams will vary depending on ways of working, species under their care and the responsibilities they carry. It is clear that there is a need for inclusion and representation of many stakeholders in wider clinical strategy decisions; each clinical division will be represented by a clinical advisory committee to help ensure delivery of continuous clinical improvement. All committees will also have access to expertise to support clinical research, quality improvement, procurement, communications, PR and ethics. They are:

- Clinical support advisory committee.
- Equine clinical advisory committee.
- Australia clinical advisory committee.
- Farm animal clinical advisory committee.
  - Discipline specific sub-committees e.g. poultry, dairy health, small ruminants.
- Laboratory clinical advisory committee.
- Nurse advisory committee.
- Small animal clinical advisory committee.
  - Clinical discipline specific working groups to discuss and advise on topics that require expertise. Working groups will receive representation from specialist, advanced practitioner, primary care, newly qualified vets as well as RVNs.



## Learning, Education and Development Group

Oversight of the clinical education programme for all major areas of CVS

- Address needs identified in Clinical Advisory Committees by advising on or providing necessary educational resources.
- Develop and evolve learning solutions that can ensure that our education and training provision meets the priorities of the clinical governance framework.
- Ensure that there is consistency in education delivery and standards through the provision of guidelines and review of resources. Should also consider the additional training needs to enable CVS to meet the aspirational elements of a continuous improvement culture with a particular focus on leadership.

The LED group will be responsible for governance of the training and education priorities and delivery. It will be essential that the LED group is integrated and collaborates with the other stakeholder groups in the business to ensure our learning priorities are met.



## Collaboration working group

- Respond to communications briefs on new developments.
- Evaluate level of importance and develop communications plan to reach different audiences.
- Execute plan through the company's communications channels.
- Develop routes for people across the business to collaborate.



## Clinical Research Ethics Committee

- All clinical research undertaken at CVS must be reviewed and approved by a committee of independent colleagues.
- The Clinical Research Ethics Committee ensures that all research complies with ethical and legislative needs.
- Study design is scrutinised to ensure that the aims and objectives of the project can be met.
- The Clinical Research Ethics Committee is comprised of research, clinical and client care expertise from across our practices.



## Sustainability Programme

- One Health Workstream within our sustainability programme balance environmental impact of our treatment with human health and animal welfare.
- Equity Diversity and Inclusion workstream is responsible for how the company nurtures an inclusive culture over time.



## Clinical Research Grants Review Panel

The Clinical Research Grants Review Panel is responsible for assessing annual applications for funds to support clinical research.

- Comprised of 10 clinical staff from across the clinical divisions and an additional two external appointments to provide ratification.
- The CRG Review Panel is responsible for ensuring that the CVS research budget is allocated fairly and transparently with priority given to projects that align with identified clinical research priorities.
- All research supported will be clinically relevant and have ethical approval.
- Research requiring a Home Office license is not supported by CVS research funds.



## About CVS Group

CVS Group is one of the leading integrated veterinary service providers in the UK, Netherlands and the Republic of Ireland.

The Group employs over 8,200 colleagues working in small animal, equine, farm and mixed practices across its three territories.

The business is focused on providing a high quality, people-led service to its customers, with outstanding and dedicated clinical and support services teams at the core of its strategy.

The Group operates an integrated model with over 500 practice sites across its three markets, including nine specialist referral centres and 34 dedicated out-of-hours sites.

The Group's diagnostic laboratories, pet crematoria and Animed Direct online pharmacy and retail business provide their services to CVS practices and third parties.



