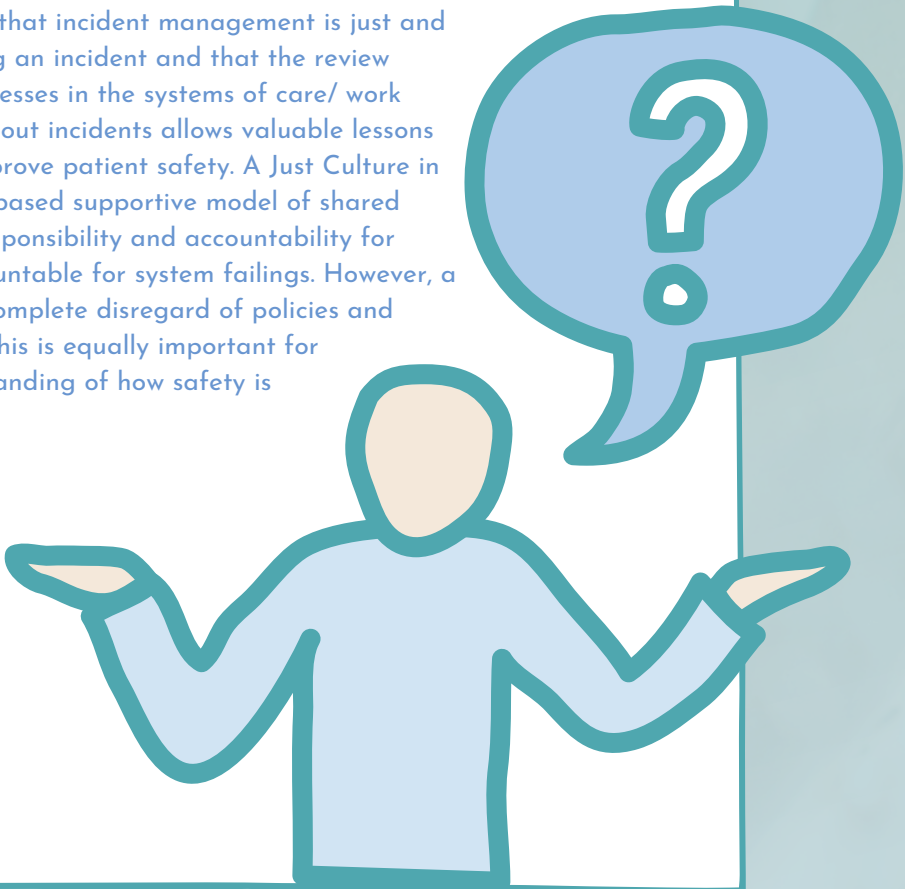# JUST CULTURE

What is Just Culture?

One of the six principles of the HSE Incident Management Framework is that incident management is just and fair. A just and fair approach ensures that staff are confident in reporting an incident and that the review process will not seek to assign blame but rather to understand any weaknesses in the systems of care/ work that contributed to the incident occurring. Supporting staff to be open about incidents allows valuable lessons to be learnt from such events and helps prevent them in the future to improve patient safety. A Just Culture in an organisation emphasises this underlying principle. It applies a values based supportive model of shared accountability and proposes that an organisation accepts appropriate responsibility and accountability for system learning and that individual practitioners should not be held accountable for system failings. However, a Just Culture also holds staff to account for acts of deliberate harm and complete disregard of policies and procedures without due consideration of the potential harm to patients. This is equally important for patient safety. A just culture approach is key in gaining a shared understanding of how safety is achieved within any complex organisation.

Commitment two of the HSE's Patient Safety Strategy sets the ambition for a compassionate, just, fair and open culture and states that "staff must be actively encouraged to speak up for safety, feel psychologically safe, be involved in decisions which affect the safe delivery of care and be provided with the skills, support and time to engage in patient safety improvement initiatives". Click to learn more about the HSE Patient Safety Strategy, 2019- 2024

CLICK

Click to learn more about the HSE
Patient Safety Strategy, 2019- 2024.

Where does Just Culture Apply?

Though many services espouse that they have a just culture, it is when incidents occur that this is tested. Avoiding an early rush to judgment is key. The response can be one of enquiry to better understand what happened, why it happened and what needs to change to reduce the risk of it happening again.

The HSE Incident Management Framework includes a 'Just Culture Guide' (in Section 4). This can be used to support conversations about whether a staff member involved in a patient safety incident requires specific individual support to work safely.

Steps to facilitate a culture of safety in healthcare organisations

- Move away from looking at errors as individual failures to realising they are caused by system failures.
- Move from a punitive environment to a just culture.
- Move from secrecy to transparency.
- Care must be patient centered.
- Move our models of care from reliance on independent, individual performance to interdependent, collaborative, interprofessional teamwork.
- Accountability must be universal and reciprocal, not top-down.

Leape L, et al., Transforming healthcare: a safety imperative. Qual Saf Health Care. 2009 Dec;18(6):424-8

Why does Just Culture Matter?

Creating a just culture matters because it creates an environment where staff feel psychologically safe to report incidents, including near misses.

Just culture balances the need for an open and honest reporting environment, accountability with a quality learning environment and culture.

Just Culture doesn't apply only to matters concerning patient safety. Creating a safe environment for reporting is an important objective in other areas of work including HR and health and safety

Learn more about creating a Just Culture in the
HSE Incident Management Framework.

CLICK

- Just Culture
- Safety Culture
- Reporting Culture
- Learning Culture

Visit our website **HERE** to learn more or contact Lorraine Schwanberg, Assistant National Director, Incident Management at Lorraine.Schwanberg@hse.ie
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