

# Learning Cultures VS Blame Cultures

Why the difference matters when  
something serious happens

# The core problem

When incidents occur, organisations often default to fear, defensiveness and blame. Sometimes we don't realise that this is what our actions or words are communicating.

It's human – but it shuts down learning.

# What a blame culture looks like

- People hide mistakes
- Staff fear consequences
- Leaders get partial information
- Investigations become about fault, not clarity
- The same issues repeat

Blame cultures create  
silence, not safety.

And silence is where  
risk grows.



# What a learning culture looks like

- People speak up early
- Leaders respond with curiosity
- Systems, not individuals, are examined
- Investigations are fair and transparent
- Improvement is continuous

Leaders in learning cultures ask:  
**“What happened, and what can we learn?”**

Not:  
**“Who is at fault?”**

When people trust the organisation to respond fairly, they:

- Share information openly
- Engage in the process
- Support improvement
- Feel psychologically safe.

This leads to better outcomes and stronger systems.

# Moving from blame to learning

It starts with:

- Clear processes
- Transparent communication
- Independent, fair investigations
- Consistent leadership behaviours
- A commitment to psychological safety

Small shifts create big cultural change.

If you're strengthening your organisation's learning culture, my website explores how Applied Candour supports incident reporting and investigation, and good governance.

[Applied Candour - Trusted consulting in investigations, complaints, safeguarding, and whistleblowing](#)

View the e-brochure: [Applied Candour: Sway E-brochure](#)