Just Culture Decision Guide

A consistent, fair way to decide how to respond when someone is involved in an error or safety occurrence. People report openly only when they trust that honest mistakes will not be punished, while reckless behaviour still has consequences. Work through the questions in order and stop at the first one that applies.

Q	Question	Points to	Response
1	Was the act, and its outcome, intended?	**Deliberate harm**	Outside the safety process. Refer to management, HR and, where appropriate, the authorities.
2	Was the person impaired, for example by alcohol, drugs or a medical condition?	**Impairment**	Address through HR and occupational health. Ask whether a medical condition, rather than misconduct, explains it.
3	Did the person knowingly break a rule or procedure?	**Go to question 4**	If no, go to question 5.
4	Were the rules available, workable, understood and normally followed by others?	**If yes: reckless or knowing violation**	If no: the system set the person up to fail. Fix the procedure or the conditions. If yes and the person consciously disregarded a substantial risk, a proportionate sanction may be appropriate.
5	Substitution test: would another person with similar training and experience have done the same in the same situation?	**If yes: system-induced error**	Support the individual and fix the system: design, training, workload, equipment or procedures.
6	Did the person drift into an unsafe habit without seeing the risk?	**At-risk behaviour**	Coach the individual, remove incentives for the shortcut and make the safe way the easy way.
7	Otherwise: was this a slip, lapse or mistake?	**Honest error**	Console and support. Learn from it. No blame.

Three behaviours, three responses

Human error	At-risk behaviour	Reckless behaviour
An inadvertent slip, lapse or mistake.	A choice where the risk is not recognised or is believed justified.	Conscious disregard of a substantial and unjustifiable risk.
Console	**Coach**	**Sanction**

Judge the behaviour, not the outcome. The same honest error deserves the same response whether it caused no harm or a serious accident.

General guidance only. Adapt it to your organisation's own policies, procedures and legal or regulatory requirements before use.