

knowledge about learning organisations

Organisational culture (c)

Learning organisations have strong cultures that promote openness, creativity, and experimentation among members. They encourage members to acquire, process and share information, nurture innovation and provide the freedom to try new things, to risk failure and to learn from mistakes.

An open learning environment – questions

- What is the attitude towards risk-taking? How is it managed and supported?
- Are mistakes seen as an opportunity for learning, not blame?
- Does the complaints system lead to practice change? How could you demonstrate this?
- Is there any sharing and celebrating of good practice?
- Are new ideas and methods encouraged?

Illustrative examples

- The management of risk is a controversial subject in the present climate. One of the primary tasks of those working in the social care field is to protect vulnerable people, especially children, and this has to be constantly balanced against taking some risks in innovative service provision.
- One local authority has set up a scheme whereby people with Alzheimer's disease are living in a supported but not supervised environment, which allows them some independence and autonomy. The risk factors are set out carefully and discussed with carers and relatives who can choose whether to accept it or not. Risk assessment and management are crucial to the success of the venture.
- One large national voluntary organisation is establishing a method of communicating and celebrating good practice throughout the whole agency.
- Several test sites commented on the difficulty of trying new things in the climate of performance management. They wished to emphasise the importance of information overload and the negative effect on learning.

Useful reference

- Ramon, S. (2000) 'Participative mental health research: users and professional researchers working together', *Mental Health and Learning Difficulties Care*, vol 3, no 7.

Use the information and questions on the cards to think about a place of work as a learning organisation.