

STANDARD 5

TRAINING AND SUPPORT FOR KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE GUIDANCE FOR INDICATOR 5.6

5.6A Guidance on Support and Supervision

Everyone who becomes involved in dealing with child abuse – from whatever angle – requires support. This is most obvious for the person who has been abused, but those whose task it is to assist complainants and their families, or to assist respondents and their families, or to act as parish safeguarding representatives or trainers, or in any other child safeguarding capacity, need to be supported. Some of these people also need to be supervised.

What does support mean?

The term 'support' includes a number of different activities, which allow a person:

- To give encouragement to someone or something because you want them or it to succeed;
- To help someone emotionally or in a practical way.

It can be provided in face-to-face meetings, or by phone calls, emails, etc. It is supportive to let someone know that they are being thought about positively, and that they can seek assistance if they need to.

Who needs support?

A structure of appropriate support should be made available to all of those affected by child safeguarding in the Church, including:

- The complainant and their family (Standard 3);
- The respondent and their family (Standard 4);
- Lay faithful who have been affected by an allegation of abuse (Standard 4 Guidance 4.2D);
- Priests/religious who are not the respondent, but who have been affected by an allegation of abuse against a colleague (Standard 4 Guidance 4.2D);
- Safeguarding personnel;
- The Church authority.

The nature of the support provided will depend on the need expressed and/or identified. It may vary from outreach, where the initiative is taken to contact and stay in touch, to the provision of information, making counselling available or providing and facilitating a support group.

One way of offering support to priests/religious and safeguarding personnel is through line management accountability

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What is line management accountability?

In the Church context, this can be described as:

- A process designed for you to work with your line manager to ensure and develop the efficacy of working situations;
- An arrangement to discuss your work regularly with this person, formally and informally.

Meetings with a line manager provide the opportunity to consider the individual's actions, behaviours and feelings about their work, together with the line manager's reactions, comments and challenges. The goal is to ensure that the recipient of the ministry provided by the Church body is well served.

Another means of providing support to an individual priest, religious or safeguarding personnel is through supervision.

What is supervision?

It is important that relevant members of Church personnel who have responsibility for safeguarding children are given the opportunity to attend regular supervision sessions with an appropriate person. It is the responsibility of the Church authority to ensure that an appropriate supervision structure is in place.

According to Hawkins and Shohet (2000), supervision can have three interrelated functions:

1. The educative function, which is concerned with developing the skills, understanding and abilities of the supervisee;
2. The supportive function, which is concerned with allowing the supervisee to understand the emotional impact of the work on his/her well-being;
3. The managerial function, which provides accountability and 'quality control' in work with people.

Supervision can have a number of positive impacts, including:

- Job satisfaction, commitment to the organisation and retention;
- It appears to help reduce staff turnover and is significantly linked to employees' perceptions of the support they receive from the organisation;
- Good supervision is correlated with perceived worker effectiveness and may increase critical thinking;
- It works best when it pays attention to task assistance, social and emotional support, and when it ensures that workers have a positive relationship with supervisors.

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What does supervision entail?

1. Initially, a person is chosen who:

- You believe you can relate to;
- You believe you can trust;
- Has the right skills for what you need.

This can be a mentor or an external qualified supervisor. If you are already receiving good line management, then supervision with a different person can prioritise the other two areas of education and support.

2. A contract or written agreement is produced, which covers:

- Costs;
- Frequency of supervision;
- An agreed meeting place;
- A shared understanding of confidentiality.

3. At the supervision session:

- The supervisee identifies relevant issues that emerged in their work, especially issues that were difficult to deal with;
- The supervisor encourages the supervisee to look at other possible ways of responding to the work issues that they have identified, by reflecting on questions like:
 - What was happening to the supervisee as they worked?
 - What was the relationship like between the supervisee and the people they worked with?
- Learning objectives are set to assist the supervisee on their work.

4. Periodic review:

- Set milestones are agreed at the first session and include a time frame in which the supervision process will be evaluated.

Record-keeping

It is important that the supervisor and supervisee maintain an agreed record of supervision, in line with guidelines on the storage and protection of data. At a minimum, a record should be kept of the dates and times that supervision was carried out.