

# GAP

## Guidance, Advice and Practice



## Paper 13 Child Safeguarding and Supervision



THE NATIONAL BOARD FOR  
**SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN**  
IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN IRELAND



The National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (NBSCCCI) was established to provide advice, services and assistance in furtherance of the development of the safeguarding of children within the Roman Catholic Church on the island of Ireland. The NBSCCCI also monitors compliance with legislation, policy and best practice and reports on these activities annually, as comprehensively set out in the Memorandum of Association of the Company, Coimirce.

Article 4 (iii) of the Memorandum and Articles of Association of the Company requires the NBSCCCI to: report and provide, upon request from the Constituents or any Constituent, support, advisory and training services to such Constituents or Constituent on policies and practices relating to safeguarding of children.

The NBSCCCI already provides comprehensive Guidance to support the implementation of 'A Safe and Welcoming Church: Safeguarding Children Policy for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2024'. These series of Guidance, Advice and Practice (GAP) papers further complement the detailed Guidance on topics of current interest to constituents.

A major part of quality assurance which is the responsibility of the Church authority is becoming aware of new challenges or gaps to safeguarding as they emerge. This series of papers aims to provide the reader with information on guidance, advice and practice, which will assist in developing best practice in safeguarding children, identifying where there are risks and how to minimize these risks. To do this, these papers draw on the experiences of the NBSCCCI, research and information already available to the reader from other sources.

The GAP papers are not intended to be read as definitive positions on the chosen topic. The NBSCCCI does not claim to have inserted all available research and knowledge; nor do we claim to be masters of best practice, offering indisputable views. Each of these papers will focus on a particular gap in terms of safeguarding children, and each paper will provide guidance, advice and practice to help overcome these gaps, building the reader's knowledge on the subject and in supporting informed practice, which will be underpinned by the safeguarding standards, Leadership Governance and Accountability, Nurturing a Culture of Safeguarding and Responding Pastorally according to Civil and Canon Law.

Specifically, this paper has been written to gather research and information to guide the Church on building improving or reviewing its current systems of supervision for those involved in safeguarding.

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## I. Terminology

Set out below are terms used throughout this document, accompanied by an explanation to aid the reader.

**Supervisor:** A qualified or experienced person who provides oversight, guidance, and support to another practitioner or learner.

**Supervisee:** The person receiving supervision to develop skills, reflect on practice, and ensure safe and ethical work.

**Peer Supervisor:** A colleague who participates in mutual supervision with others at a similar professional level.

**Mentor:** An experienced individual who offers guidance, encouragement, and advice for personal or professional development (often less formal than supervision).

**Coach:** A person who supports someone to achieve goals through questioning, feedback, and performance development.

**Facilitator:** Someone who guides discussion or learning in a group without necessarily evaluating performance.

**Clinical Supervision:** Structured support for professionals (e.g., counsellors or social workers) focusing on client work, ethical practice, and professional development.

**Managerial Supervision:** Supervision focused on organisational responsibilities, workload management, and performance monitoring.

**Educational Supervision:** Supervision that supports learning, skill development, and professional training.

**Reflective Supervision:** A process where practitioners reflect on experiences, feelings, and decisions to improve professional practice.

**Peer Supervision:** Supervision between colleagues of equal status who support and learn from each other.

**Group Supervision:** A supervision session involving several supervisees learning from shared discussion and feedback.

**External Supervision:** Supervision provided by someone outside the organisation to ensure objectivity and confidentiality.

**Internal Supervision:** Supervision conducted within the same organisation or team.

**Live Supervision:** Supervision that occurs while the practitioner is working with a client (e.g., observation or real-time feedback).

**Case Review:** Discussion of a client case to explore interventions, challenges, and outcomes.

**Case Presentation:** A structured description of a client situation shared with a supervisor or group for feedback.

**Reflective Practice:** A deliberate process of thinking about professional experiences to improve future actions.

**Critical Reflection:** Deep analysis of actions, decisions, and assumptions within professional practice.

**Debriefing:** A discussion after a significant event or session to process experiences and learning.

**Feedback:** Constructive information provided to support improvement in practice.

**Goal Setting:** Establishing specific objectives for professional development.

**Action Planning:** Creating a plan outlining steps to achieve supervision goals

**Professional Boundaries:** Limits that define appropriate relationships between professionals and clients.

**Ethical Practice:** Working according to professional codes, standards, and moral principles.

**Transference:** When a client projects feelings about another person onto the practitioner.

**Countertransference:** When the practitioner reacts emotionally to a client based on personal experiences.

**Competency Framework:** A structured outline of skills, knowledge, and behaviours required for professional practice.

**Reflective Journal:** Personal written reflections used to support learning and supervision discussions.

**Emotional Resilience:** The ability to manage stress and emotional demands in professional practice.

**Professional Identity:** How a practitioner understands their professional role, values, and responsibilities.

**Peer Support:** Mutual support among colleagues or volunteers.

**Buddy System:** Pairing individuals for informal guidance and support.

**Learning Circle:** A small group that meets to share experiences and learn collaboratively.

## 2. Introduction

Safeguarding has become one of the most pressing and transformative responsibilities facing the Catholic Church in the contemporary era. Following decades of profound failures to protect children and vulnerable adults, the Church has been compelled to confront the systemic, cultural, and pastoral shortcomings that allowed abuse to occur and remain unaddressed. In response, it has committed itself to developing safeguarding structures that prioritize safety, accountability, transparency, and a renewed culture of care. Within these emerging structures, supervision has gained recognition as a crucial practice—one that not only supports those engaged in ministry but also strengthens professional standards and helps ensure that safeguarding is not simply a written policy but a lived and embodied reality across the Church's life

This gap paper examines the role of supervision within the Church's safeguarding framework, exploring its purpose, its theological and pastoral foundations, and the ways in which it contributes to a safer, more reflective, and more transparent ecclesial environment. By identifying areas where supervision is underdeveloped or inconsistently applied, the paper seeks to highlight opportunities for strengthening safeguarding culture and practice.

The Church's renewed safeguarding agenda, articulated in global documents such as *Vos Estis Lux Mundi*, underscores the need for transparent oversight, accountable leadership, and consistent safeguarding responses. These universal norms emphasise that safeguarding is a shared responsibility and that ecclesial leaders must ensure robust mechanisms for monitoring, reporting, and reflective practice. Within this context, supervision emerges as an essential tool for ensuring that safeguarding responsibilities are carried out with integrity, attentiveness, and pastoral sensitivity.

At the national level, safeguarding standards—such as those issued by ourselves within the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (NBSCCCI)—reinforce the importance of accountability, reflective practice, and ongoing

support for clergy, religious, and lay ministers.

These standards call for clear lines of responsibility, regular review of safeguarding practice, and the provision of appropriate formation and support for those in ministry. Supervision directly contributes to these aims by offering structured opportunities for oversight, guidance, professional development, and reflective engagement with the complexities of ministry. As such, it plays a pivotal role in embedding safeguarding principles into everyday pastoral practice.

Pope Francis encouraged supervision-like structures, emphasizing accountability, accompaniment, and the need for support systems to help priests and pastoral workers manage their ministry. While he often uses terms like "accompaniment," "fraternal support," and "discernment," rather than "supervision," these initiatives are designed to act as a "safety network" within the Church to prevent isolation. In a 2024 address, he emphasised that pastoral care needs to go beyond "bureaucratic procedures" to a "safety network" that includes checking in on the wounds and challenges of both victims and ministers.

Supervision is emerging as a key practice that supports ministers, strengthens professional standards, and ensures safeguarding is lived out in daily pastoral life. Church documents, national standards, and Pope Francis' emphasis on accompaniment all highlight supervision as an essential "safety network" that promotes reflection, oversight, and responsible ministry.

### 3. What Supervision is and what it is not

Supervision is a structured, accountable, and reflective professional process in which a supervisor supports a practitioner to ensure safe, ethical, and competent practice. It integrates normative (accountability), formative (learning), and restorative (support) functions, and aims to enhance professional standards, safeguard those at risk, and sustain the wellbeing of the practitioner (Kadushin & Harkness, 2014; Morrison, 2005; Hawkins & Shohet, 2012).

Supervision is not and should never be seen as

- A casual activity –over a cup of coffee
- A chat
- Counselling
- An optional extra
- A response to a problem
- Appraisal
- Support for supervisor
- A telling off
- A grievance session
- A test or exam.

Good supervision should provide an opportunity to

- Reflect content and process of practice
- Monitor and ensure the quality of work
- Review and plan work
- Consider any particular responsibilities and input of the supervisee
- Develop understanding and skills
- Seek and receive information, support and feedback
- Voice and examine concerns
- Explore and express issues brought up by the work
- Consider the impact of the work on the supervisee
- Be proactive
- Be challenged constructively
- Identify skills and strengths of the worker
- Identify areas requiring further development
- Agree targets for further development and identify training needs
- Monitor and evaluate ongoing development.

Effective support in supervision is about:

- Honest feedback from which learning and self awareness can and does take place
- Providing a supportive environment where mistakes are acknowledged and owned in order to improve practice.
- Opportunity to reflect on what has happened in order to do it even better next time
- Affirmation for work done and for the effort required to do it
- Having a place where the stresses and demands of the work can be openly explored and reflected on so as not to become a block or lead to sickness or burnout.

Learning through supervision should be about self-awareness, insight and understanding as well as acquiring knowledge and developing skills. Learning through supervision is about becoming more self aware and insightful regarding what you do and how you do it.

Truly effective supervision needs to:

- Be part of the culture of the organisation
- Be understood as a process not an event
- Be fully supported by senior management
- Facilitate the development of professionally accountable practitioners
- Empower the supervisee and ultimately the client
- Be practice focused
- Facilitate professional objectivity
- Contribute to high standards of effective, safe care
- Encourage reflective practice
- Contribute to organisational learning.

The Concept of Supervision in Safeguarding requires a structured process through which leaders support, guide, and monitor individuals involved in safeguarding roles. It involves regular meetings, reflection on practice, and review of safeguarding responsibilities. Safeguarding guidelines emphasise that regular supervision of staff and volunteers allows leaders to assess progress, address concerns, and ensure that safeguarding procedures are followed effectively. Supervision therefore serves both developmental and protective functions.

## 4. Types of Supervision

Within safeguarding contexts, supervision can take several forms.

### 1. Managerial Supervision

Managerial supervision focuses on accountability, compliance, and performance. Leaders ensure that safeguarding policies are followed and that staff or volunteers fulfil their responsibilities.

- Ensures staff follow safeguarding policies, procedures, and codes of conduct
- Reviews casework, decision-making, and documentation
- Confirms that referrals, risk assessments, and safety plans are completed correctly
- Monitors performance, workload, and adherence to statutory timescales
- Provides clarity on roles, responsibilities, and thresholds

Managerial supervision protects the organisation and the people it serves by ensuring that safeguarding practice is consistent, defensible, and aligned with legal duties. It is the mechanism through which leaders maintain oversight and governance.

### 2. Reflective Supervision

Reflective supervision encourages individuals to think critically about their interactions with children and young people. It promotes ethical decision-making and helps identify potential risks.

- Encourages critical thinking about cases, patterns, and emerging risks
  - Helps staff recognise bias, drift, or emotional blind spots
  - Supports ethical decision-making
  - Explores the impact of relationships, power, and dynamics with children, adults, or families
  - Promotes curiosity, analysis, and learning
- Safeguarding is rarely straightforward. Reflective supervision helps practitioners slow down, think deeply, and make better, more child- or adult-centred decisions. It strengthens professional judgement and reduces the risk of errors caused by assumptions or emotional overload.

### 3. Supportive Supervision

Supportive supervision recognises that safeguarding work can be emotionally demanding. It provides opportunities for individuals to discuss challenges and receive guidance.

- Provides emotional containment and a safe space to talk
- Helps staff process difficult cases, disclosures, or organisational pressures
- Identifies stress, burnout, or vicarious trauma early
- Builds resilience and confidence
- Reinforces professional identity and wellbeing

Safeguarding cannot be done well by people who are overwhelmed, isolated, or unsupported. Supportive supervision protects staff wellbeing, which in turn protects the quality and safety of practice.

A supervision session may shift fluidly between these modes—for example:

- Reviewing a case file (managerial)
- Exploring why a practitioner felt uncertain (reflective)
- Supporting them through the emotional impact (supportive)

This integrated approach is what makes supervision such a powerful safeguarding tool.

## 5. Theological, Safeguarding and Supervision.

Supervision in safeguarding is not only a professional or organisational practice—it is deeply rooted in the Church's theological identity, its understanding of ministry, and its moral responsibility toward the vulnerable. The following foundations show how supervision emerges naturally from Catholic theology.

Supervision becomes a concrete expression of the Church's commitment to uphold human dignity.

- It ensures that ministers act in ways that protect and honour the vulnerable.
- It reinforces that safeguarding is not optional—it is a theological imperative rooted in the Church's anthropology.

The Church understands itself as the Body of Christ, called to be a sign of God's love and protection in the world.

- Implications for supervision:
- Ministry is never a private activity; it is exercised within and for the community.
- Supervision supports communal accountability and prevents isolation in ministry.
- It reflects the Church's call to be a safe, nurturing, and trustworthy community

Biblical and theological traditions describe ministry as shepherding—guiding, protecting, and caring for the flock. John 10:11–16 (Christ the Good Shepherd)

How this shapes supervision:

- Supervision helps ministers reflect on their pastoral practice, ensuring it remains safe, compassionate, and ethical.
- It supports ministers in recognising their limits, vulnerabilities, and areas for growth.
- It echoes Jesus' model of the Good Shepherd, who protects the vulnerable and acts with vigilance.

Supervision is not an imported professional tool awkwardly grafted onto Church life. It is deeply consonant with the essential meaning of the Church

- its pastoral mission
- its moral tradition
- its commitment to the vulnerable
- its understanding of ministry

- its call to communal accountability
- in this sense, supervision is a theologically grounded practice that strengthens the Church's identity and supports its safeguarding mission.

## 6. The Role of Leadership in Safeguarding Supervision.

Leadership is central to safeguarding within the Catholic Church. Bishops, parish priests, safeguarding officers, and ministry leaders all have responsibilities for ensuring that safeguarding practices are implemented effectively.

Supervision is one of the most powerful tools leaders have to ensure safeguarding is safe, reflective, and effective

Supervision helps leaders maintain high-quality safeguarding practice by ensuring that staff:

- Reflect on concerns and decisions
- Avoid drift, bias, and desensitisation
- Keep the child or adult at the centre

Children First: National Guidance (2017) emphasises that organisations must have structures that support staff in recognising and responding to harm, including ongoing support and oversight for those with safeguarding responsibilities.

Safeguarding decisions are complex.

Supervision provides a structured space to:

- Analyse risk
- Test assumptions
- Ensure decisions align with national guidance and organisational policy

Tusla's Child Safeguarding: A Guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice (2024) highlights the need for clear governance, oversight, and support structures to ensure safe decision-making in child protection contexts.

Safeguarding work is emotionally demanding.

Leaders advocate for supervision because it:

- Provides emotional containment
- Reduces stress and isolation
- Helps staff process difficult cases
- Improves retention and resilience

The Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland (SBNI) Learning & Development Framework (2026–2030) highlights the need for staff to be supported, trained, and equipped to manage safeguarding responsibilities safely—supervision is central to this support.

Supervision is a cultural driver.

Leaders use it to:

- Embed safeguarding values
- Promote reflective practice
- Ensure consistent standards across teams
- Demonstrate organisational commitment to safety

HIQA's Safeguarding Statements (Child and Adult) require organisations to have robust systems that ensure safe practice, including oversight and review mechanisms—supervision is a key part of this.

Supervision helps organisations meet statutory duties under:

- Children First Act 2015
- Children First: National Guidance (2017)
- Tusla Child Safeguarding requirements
- HIQA National Standards (children's services, disability, older persons, healthcare)

These frameworks expect organisations to have clear governance, oversight, and support structures, which supervision directly provides.

Leaders in Northern Ireland value supervision because it strengthens safeguarding decisions, supports staff wellbeing, and ensures organisations meet statutory duties. NI policy frameworks—especially Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland and SBNI guidance—explicitly highlight supervision as essential for safe, accountable practice.

Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland (Department of Health, 2017; updated 2024) emphasises that safeguarding requires clear governance, oversight, and partnership working to ensure children are protected effectively. Supervision is a key mechanism for this oversight.

Supervision is not just a support tool—it is a core leadership function in safeguarding systems across our country and our Church.

## 7. Nurturing a Culture of Safeguarding

Supervision contributes significantly to creating a safeguarding culture within the Church.

A safeguarding culture is characterised by:

- Openness and transparency
- Shared responsibility
- Awareness of risks
- Commitment to child protection

Supervision supports this culture by encouraging communication and accountability among Church personnel.

Supervision of Activities with Children in parish activities involving children—such as youth groups, sacramental preparation programmes, and pilgrimages—appropriate supervision arrangements are essential. Safeguarding guidance emphasises that activities should always be supervised adequately and that children should never be left unattended.

Adult-to-child ratios are often recommended to ensure safe environments.

These ratios are designed to reduce risk and ensure children remain visible and protected during activities.

### Supervision of Volunteers

Much of the Church's ministry with children relies on volunteers. This makes supervision particularly important.

Volunteer supervision should include:

- Regular meetings
- Annual reviews
- Training opportunities
- Feedback and support

Through supervision, leaders can identify potential safeguarding issues before they escalate.

### Safeguarding Offices

Most dioceses and many religious bodies in Ireland have safeguarding offices/personnel responsible for implementing national safeguarding policies. These offices provide:

- Training
- Policy guidance
- Advice on safeguarding concerns
- Support for parishes/congregations

They also monitor safeguarding compliance across diocesan and religious ministries.

Religious congregations and parishes often appoint safeguarding representatives who assist in implementing safeguarding policies locally.

Their responsibilities may include:

- Promoting safeguarding awareness
- Supporting parish leaders
- Monitoring activities involving children

Acting as a point of contact for safeguarding concerns

Supervision structures ensure that these representatives receive guidance and support in fulfilling their roles.

## 8. Challenges in Safeguarding Supervision

Despite significant progress, several challenges remain in implementing effective supervision within the Church.

- **Volunteer-Based Structures:** many ministries rely heavily on volunteers, which can make consistent supervision difficult. Volunteers may have limited time or experience in safeguarding practice.
- **Clerical Culture:** historically, hierarchical structures within the Church sometimes discouraged questioning authority. Effective safeguarding supervision requires openness and accountability across all levels of leadership.
- **Resource Limitations:** some religious bodies may face limited resources for safeguarding training and supervision, particularly in rural areas with smaller communities.

## 9. The Importance of Reflective Practice

Reflective practice is an essential component of supervision.

Through reflection, leaders and volunteers can examine their interactions with children and identify potential safeguarding risks.

Reflective practice is not an optional extra in safeguarding—it is a core professional discipline that strengthens judgement, reduces risk, and supports ethical, child-centred decision-making.

In safeguarding, where situations are complex and emotionally charged, reflective practice becomes one of the most powerful tools practitioners and leaders have.

Safeguarding decisions are rarely clear-cut.

Reflective practice helps practitioners:

- Slow down and think critically rather than reactively
- Examine the reasoning behind their decisions
- Recognise gaps in information or flawed assumptions
- Consider alternative explanations or hypotheses
- Maintain a child- or adult-centred focus

This leads to more defensible, balanced, and evidence-informed decisions.

Everyone is vulnerable to bias—confirmation bias, optimism bias, familiarity bias, and more. Reflective practice:

- Brings unconscious bias into conscious awareness
- Helps practitioners notice when they are becoming desensitised
- Prevents “case drift” where concerns slowly escalate unnoticed
- Encourages curiosity rather than compliance

In safeguarding, curiosity is a protective factor; assumptions are a risk factor.

Reflective practice builds the practitioner’s internal “professional compass”. Over time, it:

- Deepens insight
- Sharpens risk assessment skills
- Enhances ethical reasoning
- Supports practitioners to hold uncertainty without becoming paralysed

This is especially important in complex cases where there is no single “right answer”.

Reflective practice helps practitioners understand:

- How their own emotions, values, and experiences shape interactions
- How power dynamics influence engagement
- How to communicate more effectively and empathetically

This leads to better rapport, clearer boundaries, and more meaningful engagement.

Safeguarding work exposes staff to trauma, distress, and moral pressure. Reflective practice:

- Provides a safe space to process emotional impact
- Helps practitioners recognise when they are overwhelmed
- Reduces the risk of vicarious trauma and compassion fatigue
- Encourages self-awareness and self-care

A reflective workforce is a healthier, more resilient workforce

When reflective practice is embedded across a team or organisation, it:

- Promotes openness rather than blame
- Encourages learning from mistakes, near misses, and successes
- Builds a culture of curiosity, accountability, and continuous improvement
- Enhances multi-agency collaboration

Reflective organisations are safer organisations.

Reflective practice is explicitly or implicitly supported in:

- Children First: National Guidance (Ireland) – emphasises ongoing support, oversight, and professional judgement
- Tusla’s Child Safeguarding Practice Framework – highlights reflective, child-centred decision-making
- HIQA National Standards – require staff to be supported, supervised, and reflective
- Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland – stresses the importance of professional curiosity and critical thinking
- SBNI Learning & Development Framework – promotes reflective, trauma-informed practice

Reflective practice is not just good practice—it is expected practice

## 10. Supervision to protect against burn out and the impact of Trauma

Safeguarding work exposes staff and volunteers to distress, uncertainty, moral pressure, and sometimes traumatic material. Without structured support, this emotional load accumulates and can lead to burnout, compassion fatigue, or vicarious trauma. Supervision is one of the most effective organisational tools to prevent this. Below is a clear, expanded explanation of why supervision protects staff and strengthens safeguarding practice.

**Supervision Interrupts the Burnout Cycle**  
Burnout in safeguarding often develops gradually. Staff become overwhelmed by:

- High emotional demands
- Repeated exposure to distressing stories
- Responsibility for risk and safety
- Pressure to “get it right” every time

Supervision acts as a protective pause, giving practitioners space to:

- Step back from the intensity of their workload
- Prioritise and organise tasks
- Identify early signs of exhaustion
- Rebalance unrealistic expectations
- Receive validation and reassurance

This prevents the slow slide into burnout that often goes unnoticed until it becomes severe.

**Supervision Provides Emotional Containment**  
Safeguarding work can evoke strong emotions—fear, sadness, anger, frustration, guilt. If these emotions are not processed, they can accumulate and become overwhelming.

Supervision provides a safe, bounded space where staff can:

- Talk openly about the emotional impact of their work
- Explore feelings without judgement
- Make sense of difficult experiences
- Reduce the psychological burden of “carrying it alone”

This containment is essential for emotional stability and long-term resilience.

**Supervision Helps Staff Manage Trauma and Vicarious Trauma.**

Repeated exposure to traumatic stories or images can affect staff even when they are not directly involved. This is known as vicarious trauma.

Supervision helps by:

- Normalising emotional responses to trauma
- Helping staff recognise when trauma is affecting their thinking or wellbeing
- Supporting grounding, reflection, and meaning-making
- Encouraging healthy coping strategies
- Ensuring staff do not internalise the trauma they encounter

This protects both the practitioner and the quality of their safeguarding decisions.

**Supervision Strengthens Professional Boundaries**

Burnout and trauma often erode boundaries. Staff may:

- Over-identify with a child or adult
- Take on too much responsibility
- Struggle to “switch off”
- Feel personally responsible for outcomes

Supervision helps practitioners re-establish healthy boundaries by:

- Reframing responsibility
- Clarifying what is within their control
- Reinforcing role clarity
- Encouraging balanced, ethical engagement

Healthy boundaries protect staff and improve safeguarding outcomes.

**Supervision Reduces Isolation**

Safeguarding roles—especially DSLs, DLPs, clergy, and lone workers—can be isolating. Isolation increases vulnerability to burnout and trauma.

Supervision provides:

- Connection
- Validation
- A sense of shared responsibility
- Access to another perspective
- A reminder that they are not alone in the work

This relational support is a major protective factor.

**Supervision Builds Resilience and Long-Term Capacity**

Resilience is not an individual trait—it is an organisational outcome.

## 12. Conclusion

Supervision is not simply a procedural requirement—it is a critical safeguard for the people who safeguard others. By providing structured space for reflection, emotional processing, and professional accountability, supervision acts as a buffer against burnout and the cumulative impact of trauma. It protects practitioners from becoming overwhelmed, isolated, or desensitised, and it ensures that their judgement remains clear, ethical, and child- or adult-centred.

When leaders prioritise high-quality supervision, they are investing directly in the stability, resilience, and competence of their workforce. This, in turn, strengthens the entire safeguarding system. A supported practitioner is a safer practitioner; a reflective organisation is a safer organisation. Ultimately, supervision is one of the most powerful tools leaders have to sustain wellbeing,

Supervision is a cornerstone of effective child safeguarding within the Catholic Church in Ireland. It provides the structured oversight through which policies are not only implemented but actively lived out in parishes, ministries, and religious communities. Through regular, purposeful supervision, Church leaders can ensure that safeguarding responsibilities are understood, carried out, and continually strengthened. It also guarantees that volunteers and staff receive the guidance, clarity, and support they need to safeguard children with confidence and compassion.

As safeguarding expectations evolve and the Church continues its commitment to transparency, accountability, and healing, supervision remains indispensable. It embeds reflective practice, reinforces safe standards, and nurtures a culture where the protection of children is central to every aspect of Church life. In this way, supervision is not simply an administrative process—it is a vital expression of the Church's mission to create environments where children are respected, valued, and safe.

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Published 2026

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