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Portsmouth Diocese – Policy for ‘PTO Plus’

Purpose

This policy should be read alongside national [Permission to Officiate Policy 2025 | The Church of England](#) and diocesan [Ministry in Retirement - Diocese of Portsmouth](#) policy and guidance on Permission to Officiate (PTO): It provides a framework for a specific form of PTO ministry linked to a defined deanery role. It therefore differs from the standard model of PTO ministry, which will continue to apply to most clergy who hold PTO.

Background

Canon C8 of the Canons of the Church of England provides that a minister duly ordained as a priest or deacon may only officiate in any place after receiving authority to do so from the bishop of the diocese. PTO enables clergy who do not hold an office or a general licence to officiate when invited.

Under Common Tenure, clergy are required to retire from beneficed or licensed ministry at age 70, unless (in exceptional circumstances) a Bishop’s Direction permits ministry beyond age 70.

Many clergy are content to retire at this age and move to PTO. However, some wish to continue to minister in a defined role. At the same time, as deanery plans develop and the deanery’s mission to resource parish ministry is strengthened, there may be occasions when a specific deanery role is identified to support an area of ministry or parish life.

The role

This policy supports the recruitment of a PTO holder into a deanery role, so that the needs of the deanery and its parishes can be served through the vocation of the individual. In the Diocese, a member of the clergy appointed in this way will be described as holding ‘PTO Plus’. This is an informal, non-stipendiary, Diocese of Portsmouth term and has no legal implications.

Discernment

The starting point for creating a PTO Plus role is the mission and ministry needs of the deanery, as discerned by the deanery and its leadership, in dialogue with the archdeacon in each case. A role should not be created simply to provide PTO Plus for an individual if there is no identified missional need.

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Commissioning, supervision and accountability

Local commissioning by the Area Dean for the PTO plus role would be appropriate.

A PTO Plus holder exercises ministry under the authority of the Bishop and within the scope of their PTO.

The PTO will be based in a benefice, under the supervision of the incumbent.

For the purposes of the deanery role, supervision at deanery level will be appropriate – ordinarily, by the Area Dean or Assistant Area Dean. The deanery supervisor should ensure that the role remains aligned with deanery priorities and that appropriate support is in place, including an annual review.

All authorised ministers require the permission of the local incumbent to minister in any place (Canon C8.4).

Arrangements should be reviewed at least annually to confirm that the missional need remains, that safeguarding requirements are being met, and that the role continues to be appropriate in scope and workload. Where necessary, the deanery aspect of the role may be amended or brought to an end by agreement with the archdeacon. Termination of the deanery role has no effect on the holding of PTO.

Attendance at Deanery Synod and Chapter meetings

PTO does not carry a right to attend meetings of the Deanery Synod. It will however be appropriate for a PTO Plus holder to attend these meetings. This can be achieved in one of two ways:

- Co-option to the Deanery Synod. This would enable the PTO Plus holder to be a voting member of the Deanery Synod.
- Invitation (which could be a standing invitation). This would not enable the PTO Plus holder to be a voting member.

Likewise, it will be appropriate for a PTO Plus holder to attend meetings of the Deanery Chapter, to discuss their deanery ministry.

Role description, safeguarding, and administration

A role description should be agreed before the appointment is confirmed, and a template for this is provided in the Appendix below. The role description should set out the purpose of the role, expected activities, the ministry context (deanery/parishes), the anticipated time commitment, and reporting/supervision arrangements.

The PTO Plus holder must comply with all diocesan safeguarding policy and practice relevant to the holding of PTO, including any required safer recruitment processes, DBS checks (as applicable), safeguarding training, and ongoing compliance requirements.

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It is expected that holders of PTO Plus will undertake full Safeguarding Leadership training (and not 'Local Leadership' as usually recommended for holders of PTO), as well as Domestic Abuse safeguarding training. Once a specific role-description for the post-holder is agreed, this should be sent to the Diocesan Safeguarding Administrator, for the relevant safeguarding training to be confirmed.

PTO Plus does not create an ecclesiastical office, licence, or contract of employment. Any local arrangements relating to expenses or other practical matters should be agreed in advance and recorded in writing in line with national and diocesan guidance.

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Appendix PTO Plus Role Description – Template

The Diocese of Portsmouth is committed to promoting a safe environment and culture for children, young people and vulnerable adults.

The individual appointed to this role will be expected to work within the relevant safeguarding policies and to undertake all required safeguarding training. Once this form is completed, please send it to our safeguarding administrator: safeguarding.admin@portsmouth.anglican.org so that the relevant safeguarding training can be confirmed.

Name of Deanery	
Role title	
Main purpose of the role	
What you will be doing	
When and where you will be doing it	
Relationship with Deanery Synod (co-opted / invited)	
Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) Requirements	Enhanced with barred list check
Safeguarding training requirements	Leadership Domestic Abuse
Whom you will be responsible to	
Who will review this ministry, and how often	
Support and training you will be given	

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