

Portsmouth Diocese

Self-Supporting Ministers' Handbook

This information is provided for further clarification and guidance for those who are self-supporting, as well as for (Training) Incumbents, clergy, and churchwardens/PCCs, who may have a self-supporting minister licensed to their benefice. The information, advice and guidance provided herein does not replace or supersede any existing diocesan policy (such as the Clergy Handbook, that can be accessed via the Clergy Resources pages of the Diocesan website) or practice, nor does it cover those who are ministering on a House-for-Duty basis – separate arrangements are in place for those ministers.

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Introduction

Across the Diocese of Portsmouth, the nature of ordained ministry varies hugely, not least in the extent to which that ministry is stipendiary or self-supporting, full-time or part-time. This diversity brings a great richness to the mission and ministry which the church is able to provide.

Within that overall picture, the role of Self-Supporting Ministers (SSMs) is increasingly important. SSMs hold the Bishop's Licence but are not in receipt of a stipend. They are often licensed to a parish, but some operate as sector ministers.

There is some debate as to the precise terminology that best describes their work, but generally SSMs fall into one of the following broad categories:

- Some SSMs work in either full or part-time employment, and see the focus of their ministry in the workplace;
- Some SSMs are in either full or part-time employment, but see the focus of their ministry as mainly in the parish with other responsibilities;
- Some SSMs are not in any form of employment at all, but may have other outlets for their own ministry including other parts of the diocese.

In all cases their priestly ministry extends to all areas of their lives.

Some SSMs term themselves Ministers in Secular Employment (MSEs), if they receive payment for work other than parochial ministry. It could be argued that in the strict sense of the term, a 'true' MSE is someone who is employed as an ordained minister in that particular context (e.g., a school chaplain), as opposed to being an ordained minister who happens to work within a particular setting, and whose employment does not depend upon being ordained – however, this is a matter of debate!

In reality, whatever the terminology, this is unimportant when compared to the actual ministry being undertaken by SSMs. A very real expression of this is at ordinations, where there is no distinction made between those who are stipendiary and those who are SSM.

SSM ministry can and does bring challenges:

- striking an appropriate balance between ministry in the parish and a secular job and/or other responsibilities;
- nurturing good relationships with stipendiary colleagues who might face different challenges.
- discerning what it means to be an ordained presence in a secular workplace;

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It is also worth noting that some stipendiary ministers move into SSM because of changes to domestic circumstances and callings, and vice-versa. To that end, as the SSM is called by God to ordained ministry within His Church, regardless of personal circumstances, and regardless of whether they receive a stipend – they have their own unique and distinctive ministry and calling.

Whatever the personal circumstances of SSMs, Canon C26 still requires that Morning and Evening Prayer is said, either publicly or in private, and that they celebrate, or are present thereat, at Holy Communion on all Sundays and other principal Feast Days. SSMs, again regardless of personal circumstances, should also ensure that they seek regular and structured spiritual direction/accompaniment and attend regular retreats.

The notes that follow are offered in the hope of providing further guidance, support, and clarification.

1. Discernment & Selection

During the discernment process, there is no specific or formal provision for those exploring Self-Supporting Ministry, as all exploring the call to ordained ministry follow the same pathway and process. This is because all callings to ordained ministry are as valid as each other, although at National Selection some candidates are discerned for incumbent level responsibility (usually those wishing to undertake stipendiary ministry) and others for assistant level responsibility (those generally looking to be SSMs).

This does not necessarily preclude movement between the two ‘categories’ at a future date, via advice from the Candidates Panel. However, an early conversation might be helpful and relevant for those expressly exploring SSM in discussion with the DDVO or their ADDO as part of the overall discernment process.

Additionally, a number of active and practising SSMs act as SSM Mentors. It is their role to meet on a one-to-one with those exploring SSM ministry if this is deemed to be of use.

These encounters usually number two, and consist of:

1. Observing the SSM/ministering alongside the SSM for a day or part thereof, to see what SSM ministry ‘looks like’ in practice.
2. Discussing what being an SSM ‘looks like’ for the SSM concerned, and how they have responded in their own context to that vocational call on their life.

More detailed guidance is available from the Diocesan Director of Vocations and Ordinands. SSM Mentors can be contacted via the DDVO or Lead for Revive at Peninsular House.

Please note – deciding what sponsorship, training pathways and deployment remain the prerogative of the Bishop.

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2. Training

During ordination training, those who intend to be SSM are given the opportunity to meet with the DDVO and discuss the future shape of their ministry, as well as review their training to date, with particular reference to ensuring their training needs are being met. Those who are seeking to be ordained as SSMs should contact the DDVO if they feel their training needs are not being met, with the intention to discuss any concerns and address any perceived deficits.

Near the start of the final year of training, the Bishop will consult with the DDVO and IME2 Officer, and the appropriate Archdeacon, over the identification of a title parish for the ordinand following ordination.

As SSMs do not require church housing, there is a greater degree of flexibility over where the ordinand can serve their title. However, the standard expectation is that candidates will move to a different training context at some point in their initial (pre-ordination) training or for a curacy. Ordinands can be licensed to their "sending parish" although good practice dictates that significant new experiences and learning opportunities will be afforded by a different parish. The normal expectation is that SSMs will be deployable within a reasonable area.

This does not preclude a move back to the sending parish upon successful completion of the curacy and Initial Ministerial Education stage 2, at a later date.

3. Initial Ministerial Education

a. The 'Curacy'/Training Phase

The IME2 programme has been skilfully crafted to ensure that it makes a significant contribution to the formation and development of those recently ordained, whether they are stipendiary or SSM. It is important that SSMs are fully conversant with the IME Phase Two & Training Events programme, which will be on the Diocesan website, as well as the Formation Framework for Ordained Ministry.

SSM curates must ensure that they prioritise attendance at IME sessions, wherever possible, and certainly these should always take precedence over parochial commitments, in all but the most exceptional of circumstances. Thus, for SSMs, time given to IME2 must be a part of any agreed hours, as detailed in the Statement of Particulars and the Ministry Agreement (MA) (see sections 6 and 7 below). Training Incumbents should actively seek to support the SSM with their IME2, as well as assisting with its prioritisation.

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There is no SSM specific input, as the Ordination Charge applies to all ordained ministers, regardless of whether they receive a stipend or not, although additional opportunities to meet, network, be supported are however built into a wider SSM programme.

Any SSMs who feel that their training needs are not being met through the IME2 Programme, should contact the IME2 Officer, who will be happy to discuss their concerns and address any deficits.

It may well be that some SSMs (e.g., those engaged in secular employment or with care commitments) may not be able to attend every aspect of the IME2 programme. In this case, they should contact the IME2 Officer, as bespoke arrangements can, in some circumstances, be put in place for these curates.

During the IME2 phase, 1:1 diocesan financed coaching sessions are also offered. These are provided by a qualified coach and give an opportunity for the SSM to explore any challenges of the role or the transition to priest or deacon with someone who is outside their context.

Finally, during the IME2 phase, and even beyond, it may also be helpful to the SSM to be offered the option of an 'SSM Mentor'. This will be an experienced SSM who can act as a 'sounding board' and provide further input and guidance around SSM issues, not least as Training Incumbents are almost always stipendiary.

b. As the 'Curacy'/Training Phase Ends

When an SSM title curate is in their last year of training they should ask to have a conversation with their Archdeacon about their future ministry. As SSMs are not in receipt of a stipend, it is acceptable for them to remain in the parish, as opposed to moving on elsewhere. If they are to be licensed to a parish (as opposed to moving to PtO) then a role description and person specification need to be produced and an application and interview process undertaken, even if the curate is remaining in the same parish or benefice. It may well be that they, along with their Incumbent, wish their 'title' to change to reflect that the SSM is no longer 'in training', although in the true legal sense all licensed clergy serving in a parish, who do not have incumbent status, are 'curates'.

The standard title to be used by SSMs is 'Associate Priest.' Any discussions concerning the need for an alternative title should involve the relevant Archdeacon and will need to be referred to Bishopsgrove for final approval.

If the SSM stays within their training parish, there will be a licensing service to mark the new relationship with an existing congregation. It is desirable that incumbents/Priests-in-Charge and PCCs communicate this change clearly within the church and the wider Parish and Deanery. Best practice could include marking and celebrating the role undertaken so far;

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highlighting where key training and roles have been completed and new responsibilities are being taken on; noting external ministries, outside work or personal responsibilities (as appropriate) and the granting and sharing of a new local role title, e.g. Associate Priest.

All SSMs who become licensed ministers at the end of the IME-phase or at any point thereafter, will require a new Statement of Particulars (SOP), Licence and a Ministry Agreement (see below). Those who reach the age of 70 will usually move to PtO ministry which will require a new Ministry Agreement with their Incumbent.

Any decisions regarding deployment must in the first instance be discussed and agreed with the Bishop and/or Archdeacon.

It is worth noting that SSMs wishing to move on into stipendiary ministry, such as an incumbency, are required to have successfully completed IME2. This is in addition to the successful completion of the curacy, in its broadest sense, in line with the Qualities. This is especially important to note, as dioceses are increasingly insisting that demonstrative evidence that IME2 has been successfully completed in its entirety, as well as the successful completion of the curacy is provided as confirmed by the sign-off from the Bishop. The curate then has one year from sign-off before the curacy formally ends, and during that time, they are free to seek a first substantive post.

Normally, an SSM who wishes to move to stipendiary ministry would have to undergo a further Candidates Panel if the SSM was not discerned under the incumbent level responsibility at Stage 2 of the discernment process. At the end of the Training Phase, should the curate stay in the training parish, there should be a service to mark the end of the curacy for the benefit of both the curate and the church.

4. Continuing Ministerial Development

a. Continuing Ministerial Development

As with IME, SSMs should seek to be actively engaged in the CMD programmes – ministerial development should be seen as a life-long formational process and not a ‘one-off’ event.

It is however recognised that being SSM does bring specific challenges and as such, the Diocese is committed to providing additional bespoke CMD for SSMs through:

- Providing opportunities for SSMs to meet in cairns to share experiences and good practice;

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- Highlighting specific areas of interest/concern to SSMs through regular emails. Those SSMs in employment, or who have care commitments, must ensure that they prioritise CMD wherever possible, ideally, this should be before parochial commitments.

An important aspect of CMD is an annual retreat, which all SSM clergy are advised to undertake. Time spent on retreat should not be considered as 'leave' and should count towards any 'agreed hours' the SSM serves. This will normally take the form of 3-5 days between Sundays and funding for annual retreats is available.

NB, all clergy, whether stipendiary or self-supporting are required to attend Safeguarding training as and when requested by the Diocese, as well as be subject to enhanced DBS checks, as per Diocesan cycle/requirements (see below).

SSMs are reminded they should also, as part of their commitment to CMD, ensure they have adequate pastoral and spiritual support throughout their ministry. This could include spiritual direction/accompaniment and/or Pastoral Supervision. Pastoral Supervision is available to clergy within the Diocese, including SSMs, upon request.

b. Sabbaticals

The guidance surrounding sabbaticals (which are generally granted every ten years in ministry) is the same for all clergy, whether they are stipendiary or self-supporting, as all hold the Bishop's Licence.

However, it is crucial that SSMs in secular or sector posts are aware that sabbaticals do not apply to that aspect of their ministry/work. For example, an SSM employed as a nurse, may take a sabbatical from church responsibilities, but the Diocese would not be able to contribute to their secular salary in order to cover any leave the sabbatical necessitated from nursing. Therefore, a sabbatical for some SSMs might mean they carry on working, but step back from church responsibilities for the duration of the said sabbatical.

Thus, it is conceivable that in some circumstances, sabbaticals, in the full sense, are impossible for certain SSMs: it really does depend upon the individual's circumstances and context.

For further information about Sabbaticals, SSMs are required to contact the Diocesan Ministry and Discipleship Team in the first instance, as any sabbatical must be agreed at Diocesan level, rather than simply between the SSM and their Incumbent/Priest-in-Charge/Parish. Application for a Sabbatical should normally be addressed with an Archdeacon at a Ministry Development Review (MDR).

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c. Mentoring

Regardless of length of service or ministerial stage, some SSMs may find it useful to find an SSM Mentor. An SSM Mentor is an experienced SSM, from outside the mentee's parish, who is able to listen and guide an SSM during their training and early years in ministry (or at any other point thereafter), assisting the SSM from their experience of ministry in an empathic way suitable to the context the SSM mentee finds themselves in.

The mentor and mentee meet together, as and when required. When they do, the mentor should discuss with and help the mentee discern what being SSM might look like for them, as well as give other information, insights, support and advice, that perhaps stipendiary colleagues might not be able to share.

Mentoring sits outside of the MDR processes and is simply a further support mechanism available to SSMs to access, if required. SSMs can dip in and out of the mentoring depending upon need, thus some SSMs will require a mentor for maybe only a short period of time, whereas others find it useful to have one on a more permanent basis.

If any SSMs would like to be mentored or become an SSM mentor themselves, they should get in touch with Lead for Revive, who will facilitate the process, in the first instance.

d. Safeguarding

Safeguarding training is non-negotiable and non-compliance by any clergy will result in either no licence being issued and/or any current licence, being withdrawn. Without a licence, an SSM cannot exercise ministry as an ordained minister in or for the Church of England.

You must complete (and keep/provide when requested, a certificate of completion as evidence for) –

- The online Basic Awareness module
- The online Safeguarding Foundation module
- Leadership module

The above modules will have a three-year renewal date. All three need to be completed. However, only the highest level needs to be renewed. This is usually Leadership for clergy and PtO clergy.

- The Raising Awareness of Domestic Abuse module
- The online Safer Recruitment and People Management module

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These modules have a three-year renewal date. These, however, have to be renewed after the three years, to keep your knowledge and understanding up to date – renewal is not optional. Additionally, you may also wish to complete, as a matter of good practice (and keep/provide when requested, a certificate of completion as evidence for) –

- The online Modern Slavery & Human Trafficking module

This module is desirable and online.

- The diocesan has delivered an Spiritual Abuse module

This again is a desirable module and worth exploring.

So, in summary:

Licenced SSMs				
Module	Obligatory	Desirable	When	How
Basic Awareness	Yes		Every 3 years	Online Portal
Foundation	Yes		Every 3 years	Online Portal
Domestic Abuse	Yes		Every 3 years	Online Portal
Safer Recruitment	Yes		Every 3 years	Online Portal
Human Trafficking		Yes	Every 3 years	Online Portal
Spiritual Abuse		Yes	Every 3 years	Diocesan Led Training
Leadership	Yes		Every 3 years	Diocesan Led Training

The diocesan Safeguarding Team are always available to answer any questions or queries regarding training.

It is the responsibility of the SSM to keep all Safeguarding training up to date, so it is important a careful note is made of any expiry dates, as well as to retain electronic and/or paper copies of the course certificates.

5. Managing Expectations

a. General

SSMs are subject to the same expectations regarding their conduct, as stipendiary clergy. As such, attention should be given to the 'Guidelines for the Professional Conduct of the Clergy' and the 'Clergy Discipline Measure'.

It is true to say that where conflicts arise between SSMs and stipendiary colleagues, this is mainly due to disagreements over expectations, often in terms of time commitment or the

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type of ministry in which the SSM is engaged. It is important that expectations are made clear and managed at every stage, from the training phase, through to IME2 and beyond.

SSMs need to be clear with their incumbents as to the level of their commitment and activity within the parish. Equally, incumbents need to be realistic as to what they can expect an SSM to undertake, always remembering that although SSMs hold the Bishop's Licence, they are nevertheless volunteering their time, with commitments and callings outside of the church. For this reason, it is clear that both Incumbents and SSMs need to be fully conversant with the Statement of Particulars as defined by Common Tenure (see below).

Nevertheless, flexibility and transparency are required at all times. It is for this reason that Ministry Agreements are key to providing clarity.

Equally, it is hoped that consideration will be given to the timings of parish ministry team meetings, Deanery Chapters etc. in order to accommodate SSMs, but for practical reasons, this may not always be possible. It is worth noting that any misunderstandings or grievances should be discussed in private, and never in public within the parish. The SSM should feel free to contribute openly and with integrity to parochial matters and discussions but should also demonstrate loyalty to colleagues and church officers.

The SSM and the incumbent should always seek to support one another publicly. Although the SSM has a ministry and calling in their own right, they are and should nevertheless minister and work under the authority of the Incumbent/Training Incumbent/Priest-in-Charge of the parish to which they are licensed. It is true to say that although an 'Assistant Priest' is not the 'priest's assistant', the SSM should at all times be mindful, despite sharing the Cure of Souls, where the legal authority within the parish rests.

Where there are difficulties and issues that cannot be resolved, and they are too fundamental for colleagues to simply agree to differ, clergy should contact the Archdeacon in the first instance, who can assist in the resolution of any conflicts that may arise and provide clarity and guidance. Clergy are also free to seek additional support and advice from the relevant Area Dean, Lead for Revive or the Bishop.

In some extreme cases and situations, a move can be arranged for the SSM, although this must be with the full agreement and support of the relevant Archdeacon and the Bishop. Expectations around absence and holidays should also be made clear and discussed/agreed (see also the section below detailing Ministry Agreements).

b. Absence from Ministry due to Sickness or other reasons

If an SSM is absent from ministry due to sickness, they should out of courtesy, ensure their Incumbent/Priest-in-Charge is aware of their absence and any likely return date to ministry.

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Regardless of how long an absence lasts, it would always be inappropriate for an Incumbent to ask to see a 'Fit to Work Note'.

However, an SSM may choose to share relevant medical information with the Diocese where this assists in providing pastoral support or considering any implications for the exercise of licensed ministry.

Where a period of illness significantly affects an SSM's ability to exercise ministry under their licence, the SSM and incumbent should inform the Diocese so that appropriate pastoral support, risk assessment, ministerial adjustments and licensing considerations can be explored. This is to avoid SSM simply absenting themselves from ministry, with no clear end or return date.

It is anticipated an informal review of the SSMs sickness absence will take place on an agreed frequency or until such time as the SSM returns to active ministry. These reviews will be conducted by a person nominated by either the Director of Ministry and Discipleship and HR at Peninsular House.

Where an SSM steps back from ministry, due to a change in personal circumstances, ministerial calling or other reason, permission to 'step back' must always be sought from the Bishop.

Again, it is important SSMs and/or their Incumbents to inform HR at Peninsular House when this happens, so appropriate support for the SSM can be implemented.

SSMs who step back from licensed ministry for whatever reason, will remain on the SSM database and receive relevant communication from Peninsular House around SSM matters, to ensure they remain fully informed of diocesan events and policy/procedures.

Where an SSM steps back from ministry for a period of time, it is anticipated an informal review of the SSM's absence will take place every three months thereafter, or until such time as the SSM either returns to active, licensed ministry, or decides to cease to exercise ministry on behalf of the Church of England on a more permanent basis. These reviews will be conducted by a person nominated by either the Director of Ministry and Discipleship and HR at Peninsular House.

Absence due to Sabbaticals falls under different processes (see Section 4 above, 'Continuing Ministerial Development'). For further details around sickness and absence, please contact HR at Peninsular House.

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6. Common Tenure

a. Common Tenure

All clergy appointed to a post are appointed and licensed under Common Tenure – whether a stipend is offered or not. Thus, both stipendiary and SSM clergy have the same rights and privileges. This means, all clergy on Common Tenure should have: 1. a licence; 2. a Statement of Particulars (often referred to as a SOP).

The Licence is simply the legal document permitting clergy to operate within a certain geographical area. It also enables clergy to share the ‘cure of souls’ with the Bishop.

The Statement of Particulars is a statutory document required under the Ecclesiastical Offices (Terms of Service) Measure 2009. It sets out the principal terms on which the office is held but does not constitute a contract of employment. When an Ordinand intending to be SSM draws near to the end of their training, they should, in consultation with the Diocesan Director of Vocations & Ordinands, agree what contribution they can make to parish life (e.g., Sunday plus seven hours a week etc.). This will then be used when negotiations take place between an Ordinand and parish re: a possible appointment. This Statement of Particulars will broadly detail hours, holidays, sickness arrangements etc. As SSMs are in effect volunteering their time, their holiday entitlement, number of Sundays ‘off’ per year etc. will not necessarily be the same as that of stipendiary colleagues, but negotiated in their SOP prior to appointment. It is therefore ‘unhelpful’ for stipendiary Training Incumbents/Incumbents to impose the same terms and conditions on SSMs as exist for them, in terms of time and holiday commitments. Equally, many stipendiary clergy quite rightly ‘guard’ their time off and ensure adequate holiday provision – the same courtesy should also apply to all SSMs. Therefore, as the SOP will only ‘broadly define’ hours, holidays etc, it is important that the ‘local’ Ministry Agreement reflects adequately what the time commitment, in the case of the SSM, will be to the Parish, as well as arrangements for holidays etc.

b. Insurance

As SSMs are office holders acting on behalf of the Diocese of Portsmouth, they are covered by the Diocesan Insurance policy. This provision was confirmed in July 2026.

C. Status

Self-Supporting Ministers are office holders, not employees of the Diocese, parish, PCC, incumbent, or any other Church body. Holding office under Common Tenure does not create a contract of employment. Nothing in this Handbook, any Statement of Particulars, Ministry

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Agreement, role description, or local working arrangement shall be construed as creating an employment relationship.

Whilst SSMs are accountable through ecclesiastical structures and are expected to work collaboratively within agreed ministerial arrangements, they are not subject to employment contracts, employment policies, line management arrangements, performance management procedures, sickness management procedures, or disciplinary procedures applicable to employees, except where expressly provided for in ecclesiastical legislation or diocesan policy.

7. Ministry Agreements

What's in a name?

In one sense, what the agreement is called is irrelevant, it is what it captures and perhaps more importantly, the conversations that matter. However, the term Ministry Agreement (MA) is used in this document: this term is used for the agreements of all SSMs.

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Prior to, or shortly after ordination, curates-in-training will draft an MA with their Training Incumbent (TI). It is expected practice that the IME2 Officer will be involved in this process. There are other example templates in the IME2 handbook.

As the IME phase comes to an end, it is expected practice for a new Ministry Agreement to be drawn for the new role as a licensed minister. The agreement is designed to support the SSM in their ministry and should not simply be seen as an administrative exercise/task. The agreement should set out those things that will help the SSM to give structure to their vocation and calling, thus it should help fulfil the SSM's vocational response.

To avoid any misunderstandings, it is important that the agreement is clear re: expectations (see also Section 5, 'Managing Expectations' above) on the part of the SSM and the Training Incumbent/Incumbent.

To this end, it is helpful, as part of the agreement, to consider the following:

- The SSM's skills and experience
- Expected time commitment to parochial work
- Details of time 'off' and holidays (see also Section 5, 'Managing Expectations')
- Details of supervision meetings, including frequency
- What other meetings the SSM is expected to attend e.g. Deanery Synod.
- Any specific or special responsibilities the SSM may have in the parish

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- Provision of office and clerical support
- Expenses
- Ministerial formation and continuing ministerial development, including Pastoral Supervision, spiritual direction etc
- Confidentiality.

As stressed above, it is important that any local Ministry Agreement takes account of the relevant Statement of Particulars. Agreements should always be 'more' than a working agreement, as it should not simply be about what an SSM does, but also about what they are and will become. Formation is thus an important aspect of any agreement. Ministry Agreements should therefore be informed by the Ordinal, as well as any list of competencies.

Newly ordained SSMs need to be aware ordination is a life-changing event and it will inevitably take some considerable time to make the necessary adjustments, in terms of settling down as an ordained minister. For that reason, the Ministry Agreement is likely to change and develop and should be seen as a working document.

It is important that it is regularly reviewed, at least annually if not more often. It is worth recognising it can take some time to achieve an equilibrium and pattern of ministry in terms of expectations, commitment and time, between parochial duties, work (where applicable) and family/leisure time. However, until a pattern is discerned and works well between the Training Incumbent/Incumbent and the SSM, in some cases, much patience may well be required!

Training Incumbents/Incumbents should ensure that SSMs in their parish(es) experience a broad and balanced range of ministerial experiences, and certainly for those in the IME phase, have the relevant experiences to successfully complete their curacy. However, SSMs must also ensure that they do not simply cherry-pick those aspects of ministry which they wish to be involved in – the needs of the parish must always be considered, as well as the needs of the SSM.

It is worth noting, that while the ultimate decision regarding the SSM's ministry within the parish, in terms of duties, rests with the Incumbent/Training Incumbent, this should be a collaborative exercise honouring both the context and the calling of the individual. Experienced SSMs, who have successfully completed IME, may wish to focus upon particular aspects of ministry within the parish.

SSMs who work and/or see themselves as MSEs should make clear reference to this in their agreement, and ideally it is helpful to outline how the parish can support the MSE in their secular role(s). It may also be that some further agreement is also negotiated with the workplace.

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It may be helpful to think of the relationship of the Incumbent/Training Incumbent and the SSM in terms of challenge and support.

- High challenge and low support – things will be ‘done to’ the SSM, and the relationship can become punitive. Doing things ‘to’ people may get compliance, but there will be little ownership on the part of the SSM.
- High support and no challenge – things will be ‘done for’ the SSM, who then becomes dependent on the incumbent. They become a passenger, rather than ‘part of the crew’.
- Low support and low challenge – without adequate challenge and support, the SSM is not effectively led.
- High challenge and high support – this is where ministry is ‘done with’ the SSM, in a collaborative environment and should generally be the goal.

A Note on PCCs

All SSMs will sit as ex-officio members of the PCC. As all PCCs are either recognised as registered charities, then the SSM will be a trustee and must fulfil the role and requirements of a trustee as set out by the Charity Commission.

8. Ministerial Development Review

As a Diocese, we are committed to supporting the development of SSMs. Ministerial Development Reviews (MDRs) are about investment, and not simply a process. MDRs are administered and run in exactly the same way for all clergy, whether they are stipendiary or SSM. All are encouraged to engage actively in the process which is a requirement under Common Tenure.

A Ministerial Development Review is not about appraisal, but about equipping, resourcing and encouraging those involved in ministry. Although SSMs may be time poor, they are nevertheless requested to prioritise MDRs at every stage of the process. It is worth stating that MDRs for SSMs should reference and make explicit any aspects of ministry the SSM is engaged in that are not parochial, and this should always include secular work commitments, whether they are deemed a focus of ministry or not, and/or personal care commitments.

Further information on MDRs, along with advice and guidance is available from the diocesan website.

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9. Expenses

Those newly ordained to the diaconate will receive a First Appointment Grant to cover the cost of robes, vestments, books and/or other requisites of ministry as determined by the SSM. How and where this money is spent, within these parameters, is entirely down to the discretion of the SSM concerned.

The more general question of expenses is however essentially between the SSM, the incumbent and the PCC. However, it is important that reference to expenses is made explicit and detailed in any Ministry Agreement. The decision to claim out of pocket expenses is down to the SSM, in consultation with the relevant Incumbent/PCC. However, SSMs are entitled to expenses, as described in the Guide to the Parochial Expenses of Clergy, and should never be out of pocket in order to resource their ministry. It is for this reason it is highly recommended expenses are claimed by the SSM – if only to ensure parishes understand the cost of SSM ministry.

Expenses are normally claimed for:

- Travel, such as to and from a funeral visit, pastoral visit etc. This is usually paid at the current HMRC rate, per mile. Mileage should be calculated from the start to the end of the journey (return), e.g., from the SSM's home address to the crematorium and back again, unless it is explicitly agreed this is not the case. Where other arrangements are implemented, the MA should clearly detail them
- Parking (e.g., at a hospital), if conducting a pastoral visit
- Postage
- IT financial support or for telephone costs may be provided
- Stationery (e.g., paper and/or ink for printing)
- A contribution towards the SSM's annual retreat.

Some PCCs agree a budget each year to support further ministerial development by the SSM, e.g. books, learning resources, conferences, software, professional mentoring.

Expenses should be claimed regularly (monthly or quarterly), as agreed with the PCC Treasurer. Some parishes will also support with the purchase/replacement/mending of robes as and when required. Again, this needs to be made explicit in any MA what can and cannot be claimed. Many parishes also rightly assist with the purchase of clerical shirts, notwithstanding guidance given in the publication 'The Guide to the Parochial Expenses of Clergy'. This is because for SSMs, ministry is not their 'day-job'/paid employment, thus it is entirely appropriate, with agreement, for these claims to be made.

The general expectation is that SSMs cannot claim any fees for baptisms or weddings or for services that fall under their local parish ministry offered in their Ministry Agreements.

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However, in specific cases where time off from work is required or commitments cause significant personal impact the SSM may contact their Archdeacon to discuss the allocation of fees. Further details can be found in the [current fees policy](#).

In line with current diocesan policy SSMs may claim fees for funerals or for taking services in a church yard or at a crematorium when asked to do so by the Incumbent/Priest in Charge. SSMs should only undertake the occasional offices at their will and not out of a sense of obligation or duty. It should also be noted that SSMs do need to be aware of their personal tax position in respect of any fees paid.

However, if there are any issues, or any clarification is sought, then do contact the Archdeacon. There are various societies that offer financial support to clergy facing hardship. It should not be assumed such groups only exist to support and benefit stipendiary clergy. For example, the Clergy Support Trust gives grants to thousands of clergy and their families including SSM clergy and their families. Their wide range of grants includes financial, wellbeing, health, emergency and debt support.

Finally, please remember, it is not possible to designate an office as self-supporting and then make payments by calling the payment an honorarium, or by using such terms as housing allowance, payments in lieu of expenses, or compensation for not receiving benefits. Such payments are taxable and will need to be declared to HMRC.

SSMs in Portsmouth Diocese are able at this time to claim fees for the following services.

	Funerals	Weddings	Sunday and Mid-Week Services
SSM Clergy who are not House for Duty	Yes		
PtO Clergy who have been SSMs and are of State Pension Age	Yes	Yes	Yes if outside home benefice

10. Vacancies/Absence of Incumbents

a. Vacancies

Any SSM who finds themselves at a parish which is in, or about to be vacant, is strongly encouraged to speak to the Archdeacon at their earliest convenience.

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Essentially, there are four stages to any vacancy:

1. Pre-vacancy, once the incumbent has announced their resignation
2. The vacancy (proper)
3. Post-appointment, pending installation and licensing
4. Post-installation and licensing

Each stage of the vacancy can bring challenges for the SSM, and Churchwardens, in particular, need to ensure sensitivity of approach and support collaborative working at every opportunity.

It is worth noting that the role of an SSM during a parochial vacancy is often misunderstood. Legally, during any vacancy, responsibility for the parish falls to the Churchwardens, and the Area Dean: it is they who have overall legal responsibility for the parish in question. Area Deans provide clerical advice to the Churchwardens during a vacancy. They should be the first source of support. However, the SSM has a position of some spiritual authority, in that they share the cure of souls with the Bishop.

Although Churchwardens are legally in charge of the parish, they do not have any line-management or supervisory responsibility over or for the SSM. This is exercised as ministerial oversight by the Archdeacons and Bishop. To avoid any misunderstandings, as the vacancy begins, the SSM, together with the Churchwardens and where possible, the Area Dean, should meet to clarify roles and expectations. Thus, it is entirely appropriate that agreement is reached as to what the SSM might, could and should do, as well as not do, during the vacancy.

For the actual appointment process, the SSM should have no involvement. However, it is entirely right that candidates may meet with the SSM ahead of any formal interviews, to provide an opportunity for them to ask any questions of the SSM, either about the parish, or the ministerial contribution they make. SSMs should ask the relevant Archdeacon, in the first instance, if it is appropriate for them to meet candidates, if it is their wish to do so, ahead of the actual interviews. NB, this may not always be possible, but good practice dictates this should happen when possible. If during the appointment process, there is an opportunity for candidates to meet key people within the parish, it is expected the SSM should be included as a matter of course.

Once an appointment has been made, it is appropriate to discuss ways in which the licensing service/induction could include the SSM and acknowledge the role played by SSMs as the new priest begins their work.

b. Absence of Incumbents

If for any reason the Incumbent/Priest-in-Charge of a parish is absent for a prolonged period of time (e.g., due to illness or a sabbatical), the same expectations as outlined above apply,

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in so far as the Churchwardens, with the Area Dean, have overall responsibility for the parish in question.

Again, it is however entirely appropriate that liturgical matters (e.g., worship rotas, arranging baptisms etc.) may be devolved to an SSM, but roles and expectations should be clarified as far as is possible. Thus, it is entirely appropriate that agreement is reached as to what the SSM might, could and should do, as well as not do, during any prolonged period of absence by their Incumbent/Priest-in-Charge. For clarity, it is worth emphasising that the SSM is not in any of the above cases in charge of the parish and thus has no legal responsibility for the life and work of the parish, save that of sharing the cure of souls with the Bishop.

11. 'Extra-Parochial' Work

Many SSMs by virtue of secular working or established networks, may be asked to conduct occasional offices or other expressions of ministry by work-colleagues, friends and neighbours, in churches and parishes other than those to which they are licensed. SSMs are reminded to be mindful of the sensitivities around parish boundaries and seek the support of the Incumbent in whose parish they intend to carry out any work, prior to any commitment being made – this includes in the workplace for those who consider themselves Ministers in Secular Employment. It is worth noting that workplaces are unlikely to be licensed for formal church services such as Eucharists or Weddings.

It is hoped that Incumbents will offer a welcome and hospitality to SSMs from outside their parish, as and when the need arises, but the SSM does not have an automatic right to minister outside of the parish to which they are licensed, even if in the same diocese.

If any difficulties arise, the SSM is advised to speak with their own Incumbent in the first instance, who may be able to resolve the issue. Alternatively, their Archdeacon can be contacted for advice.

12. Retirement

As stated above, when an SSM retires from public ministry and ceases to hold a licence, if they wish to continue in ministry, they need to seek Permission to Officiate (PtO) from the Diocesan Bishop, via Bishopsgrove. Without PtO, they cannot carry out ministry on behalf of the Church of England. As with stipendiary clergy, the upper retirement age for SSMs is 70 and can be extended in exceptional circumstances by the Diocesan Bishop.

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Those retiring may be required to take a three to six month total break from ministry, but this is at the Bishop's discretion.

There is now provision for SSMs to make use of PtO Plus status within the Portsmouth Diocese if there is a deanery post to which they can be appointed. Please refer to the PtO Plus policy found on the diocesan website. This status allows PtO clergy to remain on Deanery Synod and PCCs where this is beneficial.

Upon retirement and the issue of PtO, the status of SSM ceases, and the now retired SSM with PtO falls under the pastoral care and supervision of the Diocesan Retired Clergy Officers. Additionally, they will have a designated responsible person, who is usually their Incumbent/Priest-in-Charge, or their Area Dean, to whom they are accountable.

When preparing for retirement, there are numerous things that both the SSM and their parish should consider. For further information, support and guidance regarding retirement, please feel free to contact the Retired Clergy Officers or the Lead for Revive.

Conclusion

It is hoped the information above provides further clarity for those involved in and with, or who support SSMs.

Finally, although there are a wealth of resources and books that can support SSMs in living their vocational response to God's call, the following books may be of particular use to all those who are SSM or work with SSMs in whatever capacity, including those holding or exploring incumbency roles:

- J. Lees, *Self-Supporting Ministry: A Practical Guide* (SPCK, 2018)
- J. Gage, *Priests in Secular Work: Participating in the Missio Dei* (Sacristy Press, 2020)
- J. Francis, *Busking the Gospel: Ordained Ministry in Secular Employment* (Sacristy Press 2021)

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Appendix 1:

Ministry Agreement Template – SSM

Preliminary Notes

- 1) Many different types of ministry will be covered by this template, with many different availabilities of time for ministry. It is recognised that ministry occurs not only in church or other ministerial surroundings, but in the whole of life.
- 2) This template agreement can be amended and supplemented as necessary to suit a wide variety of ministries. It is not a contract or an inflexible agreement.
- 3) The agreement needs to be specific and realistic. To avoid later misunderstanding and difficulties, careful consideration should be given by both parties before the agreement is drawn up to all potential areas and implications of ministry. These will include:
 - The mutual and separate, and possibly conflicting, expectations of the parties. It can be helpful for both to list these at an early stage.
 - Perceived specific needs and interests of the Self Supporting Minister.
 - The expectations and needs of the SSM's spouse and family if applicable.
 - The hopes and needs of the parish, their vision and strategy for the future.
 - The need for the wardens and PCC of the parish to be aware of the main features of the agreement, including recognition and affirmation of a work-focused ministry and any consequential limitations of time for parochial ministry.
 - The building into the agreement of any relevant skills and experience of the Minister gained through their secular employment.
 - Provision if appropriate for support and review of ministry in the work place, and/or a mentor/work consultant with experience of ministering in a secular environment.
- 4) The Diocese of Portsmouth is committed to safeguarding, safer recruiting practices and promoting the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults and expect all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. You are expected to report any concerns relating to the safeguarding of children, young people or vulnerable adults in accordance with the agreed procedures. If your conduct in relation to the safeguarding of children, young people or vulnerable adults gives cause for concern, the diocese grievance procedure will be followed, alongside consideration of the Clergy Discipline Measure as well.
- 5) The post holder and incumbent will each keep a copy of the agreed document. It is often useful for Churchwardens also to have a copy. During a vacancy it will generally be appropriate for an Area Dean to receive a copy.
- 6) It is suggested that a new ministry agreement should be reviewed after six months, then every 12 months may be appropriate.
- 7) When completed, a copy of the Agreement should be sent to the Bishop and to the Area Dean.

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Ministry Agreement

The Self Supporting Minister is the Revd.....

The Incumbent is the Revd.....

The Parish/Benefice is.....

In the Deanery of.....

Focus and style of Ministry

The main centre of ministry will be parish/work/sector based at

.....

(and if applicable the balance of time between parish and work/sector will be)

.....

Conditions of this Agreement

- 1) The hours to be given by the SSM will average around hours per week, inclusive of preparation of sermons and worship, pastoral work, participation in occasional offices, PCC and evening meetings, Deanery and Diocesan meetings, CME and the time taken by matters listed under *Wellbeing, spiritual development and ongoing training*.
- 2) Holidays and time off:

Sundays off duty

Amount of annual holiday

Other holiday allowances

Particular areas of responsibility

- 1) The Minister will offer to officiate on Sundays per month at the following services:

.....
- 2) The Minister will offer to preach on Sundays per month.

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3) The Minister will be allocated Funerals, Weddings and Baptisms as follows:

.....

4) Pastoral responsibilities in the parish will be:

.....

5) The Minister will be expected to be involved in administrative responsibilities as follows:

.....

6) The Minister's regular/sabbath day off each week will be:

.....

The Minister will be assigned the following particular areas of responsibility, and will be accountable for each of them as follows:

Area of responsibility	Accountable to

Expand as necessary

Wider responsibilities

The Minister will attend PCC meetings, Deanery Chapter and Deanery Synod on the following basis.

PCCs (as licensed staff SSMs are PCC Trustees)

Chapter

Synod

There will be recognition of time devoted to diocesan roles, voluntary societies (e.g. mission agencies, local charities) and wider community involvement;

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Provision for staff meetings

There will be a regular meeting to arrange duties and timetable between Incumbent and Minister on

Wellbeing, spiritual development and ongoing training

Appropriate time is to be allowed and set aside for private prayer, spiritual direction, study, retreats and courses. The parish and/or Incumbent will provide support for these by (list as appropriate, including resources, financial support etc.)

Prayer

Spiritual Direction

Study Days

Annual Retreat

CMD Days/Courses

Other

Reimbursement

Expenses: All expenses relating to the work of the minister will be reimbursed with the agreement of the PCC on the following basis:

- Travel:
- Stationery:
- Books:
- Postage:
- IT:
- Telephone:
- Support for an Annual Retreat:
- Other:

Office facilities (if applicable)

The parish will provide:

- Office space
- Copying
- Filing
- Provision for refreshments
- Other

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Parochial Fees

SSMs are able at this time to claim fees for the following services.

	Funerals	Weddings	Sunday and Mid-Week Services
SSM Clergy who are not House for Duty	Yes		

MDR Status

Have you completed an MDR process in the last year?

With Whom?

Have matters that were raised been acted upon?

Process for dealing with any disputes

Any dispute or grievance arising from this agreement which the parties cannot resolve themselves is to be referred to the Archdeacon.

Provision for renewal of Ministry Agreement

This Agreement will be reviewed by the parties on

and every thereafter.

Date

Signed by:..... the Minister

..... the Incumbent

If included in this process

..... the Warden/Wardens

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