



Self Supporting Ministers Guidance







This booklet is to provide further clarification and guidance for Self-Supporting Ministers (SSM), as well as their training supervisors, clergy, churchwardens and PCCs who may have a self-supporting minister licensed to their benefice.

The information, advice and guidance provided does not replace or supersede any existing diocesan policy or practice, nor does it cover those who are ministering on a House-for-Duty basis or who are retired. Separate arrangements are in place for those ministers.

Growing in God



Welcome

I am very pleased to offer my support to this booklet for SSM in the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich.

We live in a culture which is changing rapidly and the opportunities and challenges which face the church as we serve God's mission are both challenging and exciting. We live amongst people hungry to find meaning in their lives and whether we are lay or ordained we are all called as disciples of Christ to do what we can to encourage, nurture and deepen faith in others.

Self-supporting ordained ministry is a key part of this witness, both within the parish, as well as in chaplaincies and in the workplace. I am enormously grateful for the work of self-supporting ministers, who over the years have demonstrated the commitment to work alongside other ministers, both lay and ordained, in ministry which is both distinctive and truly collaborative.

In our own diocese, as we seek God's will in serving the people of Suffolk in every community, we have been innovative in developing additional processes of discernment and approaches to formation, so more people who hear God's call to self-supporting ordained ministry are be able to respond.

We hope that this guidance, which is intended to be a comprehensive bringing together of information relevant to self-supporting ordained ministry from a number of sources, will encourage both existing self-supporting ministers, and those who are wondering whether God might be calling them to minister in this way. I warmly commend it to you.

+Mark



Across the diocese, the nature of ordained ministry varies significantly, not least in the extent to which that ministry is stipendiary or self-supporting, full or part-time. This diversity brings a great richness to the mission and ministry to which the church is called. Within that overall picture, the role of SSMs is very important. SSMs hold the Bishop's Licence but are not in receipt of a stipend. They are usually licensed to a parish, but some operate as sector ministers or chaplains or as ministers in secular employment (MSEs).

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

- They may be in either full or part-time employment, but see the main focus of their ministry as in the parish.
- Some work in either full or part-time employment, and see the main focus of their ministry as the workplace (MSEs).
- Some SSMs are not in any form of employment, but seek to offer their services free of a stipend on theological grounds.
- For some, the pressures of family or other commitments mean that they can only offer limited time to ministry in its narrowest sense.
- Regardless of how SSMs are trained or licenced, they are all ordained as equal clergy with their stipendiary colleagues. We make no distinction between them, and the nature of their ministry is a matter for discernment as to ability, skills and gifts.

SSM ministry can and does bring particular challenges with it including:

- Striking an appropriate balance between ministry in the parish, a secular job and other responsibilities.
- Discerning what it means to be an ordained presence in a secular workplace.
- Nurturing good collaborative relationships with stipendiary colleagues who might face different challenges, and have a different understanding of the value of SSM.
- Well-being in general.

It is also worth noting that some stipendiary ministers move to SSM because of changes to domestic circumstances and calling, and vice-versa.

To that end, SSMs should never see themselves or be regarded by any others within the church as the 'vicar's-helper', 'gap fillers', 'volunteers' or 'cheap assistants'.

Introduction

SSMs are called by God to priestly ministry within his Church, regardless of personal circumstances, and regardless of whether they receive a stipend – they have their own unique and distinctive calling and ministry.

Regardless of 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 be present at, Holy Communion on all Sundays and other principal Feast Days.

SSMs, again regardless of personal circumstances, should also ensure they seek regular and structured spiritual counsel / direction / accompaniment, and attend regular retreats.

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

The Revd Tony Redman
Bishop's Advisor for Self-Supporting Ministry



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Discernment

Discernment takes place in the same way as all offering themselves for priestly ministry. It begins with a talk with your incumbent and members of your ministry team. It might be helpful for those expressly exploring SSM to meet with the Bishop's Advisor for Self-Supporting Ministry and other SSMs you might know, and then with a member of the Diocesan Director of Ordinands' team.

There are several pathways for those exploring Self-Supporting Ministry, some go through the national discernment process, and their call is considered at a Bishops' Advisory Panel (BAP). They might be discerned as having either incumbent potential or assistant minister potential, and after training will have a nationally recognised ministry which makes them deployable across the country. SSMs can also train on part-time courses which include distance learning, private study and written work, dependant on their other commitments. Others may be discerned locally to train through the Auxiliary Ordination Pathway (AOP), in which case they are ordained for ministry within the diocese normally within their home parish. This course is less academic but none the less rigorous. Please see our leaflet on AOP on our website.

If you are not recommended for these pathways further discernment may be required and support is offered from the diocese.

“ God is a god of the unexpected. How could he take an insecure, shy young woman and transform her into his vessel of grace and leadership in his church? I felt God challenging me to leave behind a stable wage and trust God completely for all that I needed. The move has enabled me to become Padre to Sudbury 2470 Squadron Air Cadets and work as a volunteer within St Nicholas Hospice Care Chaplaincy Team. Perhaps the greatest aspect of Self-Supporting Ministry is the opportunity to stand in that precious space between world and church, opening the door for each to meet with the other and find God’s blessing. The Revd Jenny Ridley.

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Training

Training through a national training course will involve time and study with others from neighbouring dioceses and this requires focus and commitment and a certain amount of academic study and written work.

If you chose to train through AOP you will be supported by regular meetings with the Bishops. Training follows a broad curriculum and learning points, and some written work is required to help assess how well you have engaged with the training inputs, and your reflections on these will be a key part of your final portfolio.

Ordinands will be expected to serve two placements, one in a parish different from their own to broaden their experience and understanding of the Church of England, and another at the Cathedral. Some might be encouraged to undertake a longer placement to explore new experiences and learning opportunities. These strengthen the formation experience.

Most SSMS move 'back' to the sending parish upon the successful completion of the curacy and Initial Ministerial Education.

During training, all ordinands join a group run by a mentor, meeting about eight times a year, studying a book together and reflecting on their training and to monitor how they are working with their training supervisor.

All clergy are required to attend Safeguarding training in line with Diocesan policy, as well as be subject to enhanced DBS checks.



Initial Ministerial Education

IME2

All newly ordained Priests are required to be involved in the IME2 programme. This is a continuation of ministerial formation and training, and the 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.

SSM curates must ensure that they prioritise attendance at IME2 sessions wherever possible, and certainly these should always take precedence over parochial commitments in all but the most exceptional of circumstances. It is also important that SSMs are fully conversant with the IME2 programme which is available in the IME2 Handbook.

For SSMs, time given to IME must be a part of any agreed hours, as detailed in the Statement of Particulars and the Ministry and Training Agreement (see sections below). Training supervisors should actively seek to support the SSM with their IME2, as well as assisting with its prioritisation, keeping a close eye on wellbeing.

Some SSMs may not be able to attend every aspect of the IME2 programme and they should contact the Bishop's Advisor for SSM, as bespoke arrangements can, in some circumstances, be put in place.

It may also be helpful to the SSM to seek a personal mentor. This will be an experienced SSM who can act as a 'sounding board' and provide further input and guidance around SSM issues. If you are seeking a mentor please contact the Bishop's Advisor for SSM.

Completing IME2

SSMs who feel called to move into stipendiary ministry are required to demonstrate that they have successfully completed all of IME2. This is especially important to note, as all dioceses are increasingly insisting on demonstrative evidence that IME2 has been successfully completed in its entirety, as well as providing evidence for the successful completion of the curacy.

An interview process, which will include an external assessor, will also need to recommend the move. Those trained on the AOP who feel called to ministry beyond this diocese will be required to undertake further discernment.

At the end of the training phase, there is no liturgy or ceremony to mark the end of the curacy.

As SSMs are not in receipt of a stipend, it is entirely acceptable for them to remain in the parish, as opposed to moving on elsewhere.

You may wish to change your title to reflect that you are no longer in training, although in the true legal sense all licenced clergy serving in a parish, who do not have incumbent status, are curates. Nevertheless, post-IME2 titles could include: Associate Minister or Assistant Priest.

There is no common practice in offering a welcome to SSMs to a new relationship with an existing congregation. However, it is desirable that incumbents and PCCs communicate this change clearly within the church and the wider parish and deanery. Best practice could include celebrating the role undertaken so far; highlighting key training completed and outline new responsibilities; noting external ministries, outside work or personal responsibilities (as appropriate) and the granting and sharing of a new local role title.

Some SSMs might be licensed to a non-parochial context such as chaplaincy, or as ministers in secular employment (MSE), and special arrangements will be put in place in such circumstances.

SSMs who change parishes at the end of successfully completed IME or at any point thereafter, will require a new Statement of Particulars (SOP), Licence and Role Agreement.

Any decisions regarding deployment must in the first instance be discussed and agreed with the relevant Archdeacon. Any change in title should be requested and referred to the Bishop's office in order for the relevant approvals to be given.



Continuing Professional Development

Chapter meetings

All licensed clergy are entitled to attend chapter meetings for mutual support and an opportunity to reflect on ministry in its broader setting with colleagues. This is an essential element of well-being and should be a place of sharing and prayer support. Chapters are not intended to be sub committees of the deanery mission and pastoral committees. They can include active ministers with PTO, and 'greater chapters' will include all ordained ministers actively involved in ministry.

On-going study

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 an 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 fellowship and share experiences and good practice through their mentor groups
- highlighting specific areas of interest / concern to SSMs through regular emailing of a newsletter by the Bishop's Advisor for SSM.

Those SSMs in employment, or who have care commitments, must ensure that they prioritise CMD whenever and wherever possible, ideally, this should be over parochial commitments.

SSMs are reminded that they can also access an annual CMD grant. Most of the courses the diocese runs are free, so there is no need to use the CMD allowance for any of these events.

Retreats

An important aspect of CMD is an annual retreat, which all SSM clergy are encouraged to undertake. Time spent on retreat should not be considered as 'leave' and should count towards any agreed hours the SSM serves within their role. The CMD allowance can be used to fund all or part of the retreat. However, where necessary, PCCs should be prepared to meet some (or all) of the costs incurred, if the CMD grant has been exceeded.

Study leave (sabbaticals)

The guidance / rules surrounding sabbaticals (which are generally granted every ten years) are 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 study leave does not apply to that aspect of their ministry / work. 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 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 sabbatical duration.

For further information about study leave, SSMs are required to contact the Diocesan Study Leave Co-ordinator, as it must be agreed at diocesan level. Equally, the Sabbatical should have an agreed focus and desired outcome, mutually agreed between the Diocesan Study Leave Co-ordinator and the SSM.

Mentors

After the completion of IME2, we encourage all SSMs to find a work mentor relevant to their context. The Bishop's Adviser for SSM would be happy to assist in finding one for you, but you might have your own contacts. This is an informal and personal appointment, and differs from the Ministerial Development Review (MDR), which is important reflecting on ministry overall and for setting goals, and spiritual direction, which specifically helps you to reflect on your spiritual well-being. A mentor should have:

- experience of ministry in a SSM context, similar to the person being mentored
- empathy, developed from having a similar ministry background to the person being mentored
- listening skills
- coaching experience is advantageous
- discernment of what is not being said in ongoing conversations and the ability to reflect this back to the mentee.

You should meet your mentor at least three times a year, probably for no more than an hour each time. The conversations will be confidential between the parties, with any issues being flagged up to the Bishop's Adviser for SSM, with permission, if further action is required.

The purpose of mentoring is:

- to ensure that the SSM and their incumbent understand each other's pressures and points of view, and value the other's skills, gifts and talents, in much the same way that the cohort mentor has done during IME2
- to encourage a sound theological understanding that SSM ministry is different from but not essentially subordinate to stipendiary ministry, working within collaborative teams
- to encourage good practice in the balancing of time commitments, priorities, "being versus doing", a healthy understanding of authority and responsibility, an outward focussed mission focus, and to understand the responsibility of 'leading from the second chair'.
- to support the SSM in an ongoing relationship of mutual trust and support outside of a line management or spiritual directional relationship.

The benefits of mentoring are:

- The SSM is invariably being trained by a stipendiary priest with little or no experience of simultaneously working within two or more contexts, and with little understanding of the peculiar pressures faced by SSMs.
- Some stipendiary colleagues may have a preconceived idea of the role of an SSM working within a subordinate role, which limits their future development and deployability. Appropriate mentoring might help SSMs to imaginatively explore the possibilities for the future.
- Working with SSMs (who are effectively volunteers) is a particular skill, which IME and CMD does not always cover.
- Support and understanding are required to help both stipendiary clergy and SSMs explore the joys and pitfalls of SSM.
- Many SSMs have held senior posts in a different context prior to training for ministry, and some need support and help to adjust to working within collaborative teams, whilst understanding the role of their transferrable skills where appropriate
- For ongoing mentoring post-IME2 to enable SSMs to receive support, nourishment, and challenge regarding outcomes and accountability, with a view to producing ministry which flourishes within a team context

The length of the mentor role will be subject to personal chemistry, but given good will and a positive approach, it could last a lifetime, but good practice suggests that this is reviewed regularly to ensure it still fulfils your need.

Managing Expectations

SSMs are subject to the same expectations with regard to their conduct, as stipendiary clergy. As such, attention should be given to the 'Guidelines for the Professional Conduct of the Clergy' and the evolving procedures of the 'Clergy Discipline Measure' or its equivalent.

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 and/or the type of ministry / activity the SSM is engaged in. It is important that expectations are made clear and managed at every stage, from during 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 volunteers, 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 Role Agreements (formerly known as Working Agreements) are key to providing clarity. Equally, it is hoped that some 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.

Any misunderstandings and/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 minister and work under the authority of the incumbent / training incumbent / Priest-in-Charge of the parish to which they are licensed. You 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 Bishop's Adviser for Self-Supporting Ministry 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 Rural Dean, Archdeacon and the Bishops.

In some extreme cases and situations, a move can be brokered for the SSM, although this has to be with the full agreement and support of the relevant Archdeacon and Bishops.

“ Beware of going to Diocesan Synods! It was at one such meeting that the nudges that God, through clergy and friends, had been giving me over the years became a more noticeable shove in the direction of exploring ordination.

I was a teacher, and as our Bishop talked about our Diocesan mission 'Growing in God' it was as though pieces of a jigsaw began to fall in place.

My 'shove' towards ordination made me realise that God was calling me to use my skills in a new and exciting way. God's shove proved to be into the deep end of ministry but the challenges and privileges of serving my locally community continue to fill me with joy. The Revd Alison Alder

Common Tenure

Any clergy person appointed to a post is appointed under Common Tenure – whether a stipend is involved or not. Thus, both stipendiary and SSM clergy have the same rights and privileges. This means all clergy should have:

- A licence - a legal document
- A Statement of Particulars (often referred to as an SOP) - the Statement of Particulars is a 'non-contractual contract', in line with the Ecclesiastical Offices (Terms of Service) Measure 2009.
- A Role Agreement

Licence

This permits the clergyperson to operate within a certain geographical area. It also enables the clergyperson to share the 'cure of souls' with the Bishop.

The Statement of Particulars

This includes within its terms of service, details of working hours, holidays, sickness arrangements etc. As SSMs are in effect volunteers, their holiday entitlement, number of Sundays off per year etc. will not necessarily be the same as that of stipendiary colleagues, but negotiated, as per the 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.

When an ordinand intending to be SSM draws near to the end of their training, they should, in consultation with the relevant member of the DDO team, agree what continuing contribution they can make to parish life. This SOP will then be used when negotiations take place between an ordinand and parish regarding a possible appointment. When agreeing an SOP, it is perhaps worth noting that SSMs can of course do more than their SOP detail; it is often when they do less that issues can occur.

Role Agreements

This should take account of what the SOP says, and should include details regarding payment of expenses etc. If the local role agreement has to be changed over time it may be necessary for the SOP to be redrawn, although if this is the case, the Bishop's Office must be involved in the process.

To avoid any misunderstandings, it is important that the role agreement is clear regarding expectations on the part of the SSM and the incumbent. To this end, it is helpful, as part of the role agreement, to consider the following:

- the SSM's transferable skills and experience
- expected time commitment to parochial work
- details of time off and holidays
- details of supervision meetings, including frequency
- what other meetings the SSM is expected to attend e.g., PCC, daily office
- any specific or special responsibilities the SSM may have in the parish
- provision of office and clerical support
- expectations around clerical dress, including during services
- reimbursement of reasonable expenses
- ministerial formation and Continuing Ministerial Development
- confidentiality

The role agreement 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 role agreement. They should therefore be informed by the Ordinal, and contain a list of particular list of competencies.

Insurance

As SSMs are office holders and not in receipt of a stipend, they are not covered under or by any diocesan insurance policy. Instead, they should be covered by the policy / policies held by the parish to which they are licensed. Nor does any diocesan insurance policy cover the SSM if and when engaged in any secular work commitments.

SSMs are strongly advised to check the provision of insurance within the parish with their incumbents, and where necessary, refer to it in the Ministry and Training Agreement (see below). However, any aspect of the work the SSM undertakes for the DBF (Diocesan Board of Finance) is covered by diocesan policies, although in most cases, it is unlikely the SSM will be engaged in work directly for the DBF. For further information, SSMs are advised to contact the Diocesan Secretary.

Expenses

Claiming expenses is essentially a matter between the SSM, the incumbent and the PCC. However, it is important that reference to expenses is made explicit in any Role Agreement. It is worth highlighting the following points:

SSMs are entitled to recover expenses incurred within the fulfilling of their role agreement and statement of particulars. Expenses are normally claimed for:

- travel (eg: to and from a funeral visit, PCC meetings etc) usually at 45p per mile
 - parking (eg: at a hospital, if conducting a pastoral visit.)
 - postage
 - stationery (eg: paper and/or ink for printing)
- some PCCs agree a budget each year to support further development in the SSM's practice, eg: for books, learning resources, software, professional mentoring and the like, and encourage the SSM to fully use this support in her/his practice
- SSMs cannot claim any fees for pastoral services. This includes during any vacancy or at other churches in which the SSM is invited to minister.
- When an SSM 'retires' and ceases to hold a licence, they need to seek PTO from the Diocesan Bishop, via the Bishop's Chaplain. Without PTO, they cannot carry out ministry on behalf of the Church of England. Often, they will be required to take a three month 'study break'. It is hoped when the SSM retires, even if they remain in the same parish, that churches will mark this significant event in the life of the SSM and parish (see below for more details regarding retirement).

I never thought that I would be a priest, in fact I was in my 50's when I returned back to being a regular church goer. I have since realised that God has a plan for each of us, and that when we are ready, we are called.

I first experienced a call when I was asked to help with a confirmation class, the priest suggested that I put myself forward for Reader training which I did. However, I always felt that there was more. I thought I was too old for ordination and I was stunned when a chance to be ordained using the Auxiliary Ordination Pathway happened.

There is freedom in SSM as secular and church work inform and complement each other. There is a genuine joy in being a priest for the love of it unfettered by financial means. The Revd Brian Jolley

During vacancies and absence of incumbents

SSM role during a vacancy

During a parochial vacancy the role of the SSM is often misunderstood. Legally, during any vacancy, the churchwardens with the rural dean have overall responsibility for the parish in question including the arrangements for taking services, and as such, SSMs work / minister under their direction. Care should be taken to ensure that churchwardens in particular are not 'disenfranchised' of their responsibility with regard to leadership during the vacancy.

It is however entirely appropriate that liturgical matters (eg: worship rotas, arranging baptisms etc.) may be devolved to an SSM, but it is of paramount importance that all remember the SSM is not 'in charge' of the parish.

Equally, the SSM must ensure the status quo is maintained and service patterns, policies, procedures etc. are not changed without consultation with the churchwardens and PCC, or ahead of the appointment process.

To avoid any misunderstandings, as the vacancy begins the SSM together with the Churchwardens and, where possible, the rural 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.

The Clergy Representation Rules stipulate that clergy licensed to serve within a parish that is in vacancy, either as stipendiary or as SSMs (this also includes retired clergy), cannot be appointed or nominated to serve as the 'parish representatives'. They may however take part in PCC meetings and be asked to contribute to the parish profile, but they should not write it themselves.

It is the rural dean's responsibility to provide pastoral support and oversight of SSMs in a parish during a vacancy within their deanery in the first instance.

That said, parishes and churchwardens should be aware that the vacancy and the process of finding of a new incumbent are key times of change and can also be sources of great concern for SSMs.

PCCs and churchwardens can help by:

- ensuring all SSMs are included in discussions and contribute towards the drafting of the parish profile
- ensuring the role(s) and scope of the ministry the SSM undertakes is referred to in the role description and/or the parish profile
- ensuring existing role agreements are upheld during the vacancy, with a view to it being renegotiated within the first year of any new incumbency
- ensuring any areas of additional responsibility held temporarily (e.g., co-ordinating worship) during the vacancy are acknowledged and discussed with sensitivity
- suggesting ways in which the licensing service / induction could include the SSM and acknowledge the role(s) played by SSMs as the new incumbent / Priest-in-Charge begins their work.

SSMs, churchwardens and rural deans may wish to consult the Bishop's Advisor for SSM for further support and guidance.

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 study leave), the same expectations as outlined above apply, in so far as the churchwardens, with the rural dean, have overall responsibility for the parish in question.

Again, it is however entirely appropriate that liturgical matters 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.

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.

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 MSE.

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.

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, the Bishop's Advisor for SSM can be contacted for advice.

“ I'm finding it harder to reply to the question, "What do you do?"

The answer, "I work in the electronics industry as a software engineer and also minister - occasionally at the same time" rarely seems to help but it's the best response I have for the moment.

Ultimately, being an SSM is not an activity but how I believe I am called to be present in the ministry and mission of the church, so perhaps a better question would be "How are you?" to which the answer is, "I am a disciple, a husband, a father, a grandfather, a priest, a software geek...and busy". The Revd Simon White

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Retirement

As with stipendiary clergy the retirement age for SSMs is 70 and can only be extended in exceptional circumstances by the Diocesan Bishop. Upon retirement and the issue of permission to officiate (PTO), the SSM will come under the care of a designated responsible person, usually their incumbent, to whom they are accountable.

When preparing for retirement, the SSM should:

- during an MDR review, ideally two years before the SSM's anticipated retirement date, review their recent ministry and share with their reviewer and incumbent the nature of their contributions
- consult, discern and pray about the style and extent of ministry they can envisage for the next 3-5 years – thus, the transition period from being SSM to a holder of PTO
- consider seriously whether ministry in retirement will be largely based in their current parish, or possibly elsewhere.

A ministry with PTO is in the gift of the Bishop and then by invitation(s) from the/an incumbent, which can be accepted or declined.

Ideally, when the SSM ends their service under licence, their retirement (even if they are to remain in the parish) should be marked with parochial / community expressions of appreciation and followed by the suggested period of three months' study leave before the resumption of any form of ministry under PTO.

The Diocesan study leave co-ordinator will encourage you to undertake proper study leave, on the same basis as study leave taken during licensed ministry normally by stipendiary clergy, including a spell of relaxation, spiritual refreshment and proper study. At the end of the study leave period, it is hoped that insights of SSM ministry may be gained which would be of benefit to the diocese in the years ahead.

The SSM, once retired and holding PTO, will find it helpful to consider how they respond to invitations now that their licensing arrangements have been changed. As previously stated, PTO is ministry by invitation only. Additionally, in any ensuing vacancy, they must ensure responsibility rests with the rural dean and churchwardens, who can 'invite' as they choose. With the arrival of a new incumbent, the role agreement should be reviewed fully as explained in previous sections.

When	What	Who
At least six months before 70 th birthday	Discussions take place about planning for retirement as part of MDR	MDR reviewer and/or Bishop's Ministry Officer
Three months before 70 th birthday	A letter to be sent out from SSM Advisor to explain what the options are	Bishop's office ghosting for SSM Advisor
	SSM explores with <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incumbent/Archdeacon and makes appointment with SSM Advisor to discuss Ministry after age of 70 PT Service to mark the end of ministry and then reports to the Bishops 	SSM Clergy and SSM Advisor
Two months before 70 th birthday	SSM <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sends formal letter to the Bishop 	SSM Clergy and SSM Advisor
	Notice of retirement sent out	SSM Clergy
One month before retirement	Bishop replies to letter: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thank you Informs them of three month break as study leave Affirms retirement ministry as <u>discusse</u>. Details of how to apply for PTO Reminder not to officiate or preach following retirement until PTO is granted Giving details of diocesan retirement officer and encouraging them to get in contact 	Bishop
	If desirable PTO applied for, designated responsible person appointed and statement of expectations agreed.	SSM and Bishop's Office
By due retirement date	PTO granted (for a period until the next DBS check is due)	Bishop's Office
Annually	Regular reviews	SSM and Incumbent

Conclusion

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

The role of the Bishop's Advisor for SSM is to be a resource for the diocese as a whole, through providing advice and guidance on the role of SSMs. Therefore SSMs, other clergy, churchwardens and PCCs are reminded to make use of that provision, with the aim of further resourcing and equipping all those who seek to serve the church and build the Kingdom of God. To that end, some Deanery Chapters and Deanery Synods have requested a presentation to promote a wider appreciation and understanding of the work of SSMs, as well as the privileges and challenges.

In addition, the Bishop's Advisor for SSM contributes to and attends the diocesan Mission and Ministry team meetings and relevant inter-diocesan events, to further support and promote the ministry of SSMs.

The Bishop's Officer for SSM is also responsible for highlighting to Bishop's Staff any particular issues or concerns relating to SSMs.

Finally, although there are a wealth of resources and books that can support the SSM 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:

- Self-Supporting Ministry: A Practical Guide, John Lees, (SPCK, 2018).
- Priests in Secular Work: Participating in the Missio Dei, Jenny Gage, (Sacristry Press, 2020)
- Bivocational, returning to the roots of ministry, Mark D. Edington, (Church Publishing, New York 2018)

For further information please visit the SSM national website: www.ssmnetwork.org.uk



For more information

Please visit our website pages for SSM at
www.cofesuffolk.org/deepening-faith/training-for-ministry/

If you would like to discuss anything about this role, please contact:

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