



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

Diocese of Chester

SSOM Incumbent Level Appointments – Good Practice Guide and Notes

January 2024

Last update: March 2026

Please note:

This information is to provide clarification and guidance for Self-Supporting Ministers, considering an incumbent level appointment, as a Priest-in-Charge, or as an Incumbent of a benefice, as a response to a vocational call upon their life, or who may be in the process of being appointed as such.

Likewise, this guidance is also relevant and should be noted by Parish Representatives, Churchwardens, and PCC members. Other clergy and licensed lay ministers within the parish, should also be aware and familiar with the contents of this document, as should the relevant Rural Dean.

It is important to note that the information, advice, and guidance provided herein does not replace or supersede any existing diocesan policy (such as the '*Clergy Information*' booklet, or the '*Guidance for Clergy on Receipt of a Gift*', that can be accessed via the HR pages of the Diocesan website) or practice.

Finally, **this guidance should be read in conjunction with the '*SSOM Handbook*'**, that can be accessed on the SSOM page of the diocesan website. That document contains a wealth of information that will supplement any discussions and decisions pertaining to the appointment and effective ministry of any SSOM appointed to an incumbent level post.

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Introduction

As a church, we recognise societal change and changes within the church as a whole. Consequently, models of ministry across the Diocese of Chester vary 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 to which the church is called.

Within that overall picture, the role of Self-Supporting Ministers (SSOMs) is very important, and in many ways, is becoming even more so, as we seek to minister and serve not just existing congregations, but those who are un-churched and do not yet know Jesus.

In summary, SSOMs hold the Bishop's Licence but are not in receipt of a stipend. They are more often than not licensed to a parish, but some do operate as sector ministers. There is some debate as to the precise terminology that best describes their work, but essentially, SSOMs fall into one of the following broad categories:

- Some SSOMs are in either full or part-time employment, but see the main focus of their ministry in the parish;
- Some SSOMs work in either full or part-time employment, and see the main focus of their ministry in the workplace;
- Some SSOMs are not in any form of employment at all.

Those SSOMs who are exploring an appointment to an incumbent level post, and their parishes, must work through the practicalities of what that appointment will 'look like', not least as any such appointment will not be remunerated.

Some key challenges include:

- striking an appropriate balance between ministry in the parish and a secular job and/or other responsibilities and commitments
- discerning what it means to be the 'incumbent' *and* an SSOM
- discerning what this will 'look like', especially if the SSOM has other responsibilities, such as work and care responsibilities
- nurturing good relationships with other leaders (often lay) within the parish, especially if the SSOM Incumbent is not always readily 'available'

- discerning the expectations of the church and wider Parish around the SSOM nature of the role
- adjusting to certain 'domestic arrangements', which could include living in parish (and in which case, will the SSOM's 'private' home be seen as a 'quasi-vicarage' or living in another parish).

Whatever the reasons for appointments being open to SSOMs – vocational, financial, organisational and so on – the SSOM should never be regarded by themselves or by others within the church as 'second-best', with 'full-time' stipendiary ministry being the 'gold standard'. All SSOMs are called by God to priestly ministry within His Church, regardless of personal circumstances, and the circumstances of parishes. SSOMs have their own unique and distinctive vocation and ministry.

The notes that follow are offered in the hope of providing further guidance, support and clarification, as regardless of who is appointed to any given role – we all have a God-given responsibility to ensure that they are enabled to thrive and flourish within that role, as if they do, the church thrives and the Kingdom grows.

1. Discernment

For clarity, at Stage 2 of the Shared Discernment Process, candidates are sponsored for a particular order and form of ministry. The order relates to whether the candidate is sponsored as:

- Ordained minister: **Distinctive Deacon**
- Ordained minister: **Priest**

Within the order of ministry, the focus of sponsorship may be:

- **Incumbent / incumbent status** (please see below for further information)
- **Assistant minister**
- **Ordained local minister**, or **locally deployable minister**
- **Ordained pioneer minister** (always 'incumbent' or 'incumbent status')

It is important to note that the focus category is **not** related to whether a candidate is expected to receive a stipend. It is related to leadership and the degree of responsibility expected of a candidate; a requirement to set and grow a vision; responsibility for others in ministry, and a level of ministerial autonomy. Thus, it is possible for a candidate to be sponsored as:

- A Distinctive Deacon **and** a potential incumbent
- A self-supporting ordained minister **and** a potential incumbent

That means, if an SSOM has been sponsored and recommended under the 'Incumbent Status' category, it is entirely appropriate for them to be appointed to a post within the church at that level of ministry. However, it will not be possible for an 'Assistant' SSOM to apply for a post with incumbent responsibility.

More detailed guidance is available from the Bishop's Adviser for Diocesan Discernment of Ordained Ministry, via Church House.

2. Initial Considerations for Congregations

Congregations / PCCs exploring, or in the process of appointing an SSOM to an Incumbent level post should, prior to any appointment, consider the bullet pointed questions below. These questions are designed to enable congregations and/or PCCs to enter into the process with an understanding of what might be the same and different, if an SSOM were appointed:

What has brought the parish to the position where an SSOM incumbent level appointment is being considering and/or in process?

- How do the congregation / PCC / Churchwardens feel about this?
- How does this model of ministry differ from that which has gone before?
- What might be advantages be for an SSOM appointment?
- What might the disadvantages be of an SSOM appointment?
- Following an SSOM appointment, what could stay the same?
- Following an SSOM appointment, what might have to change?
- What are the expectations of the parish for the person appointed?
- How can the parish support the SSOM in role?
- What might this support 'look like'?
- How much time would the SSOM be expected to give over to parochial activity / the role?
- How does this time commitment fit with that expressed / offered by the SSOM?
- How does the envisaged ministry of an SSOM incumbent complement and dovetail alongside the wider ministry, whether of other clergy, licensed lay people, or the wider congregation?
- How will others minister in a way that supports and enhances the ministry of the SSOM incumbent?
- What might this support 'look like'?

The above list of questions is not exhaustive but is designed to get parishes 'thinking'. Please see below for more detail re: expectations – and consider carefully what these expectations may be.

The Bishop's Adviser for Self-Supporting Ordained Ministry and the Bishop's Adviser for Curate Development and Clergy Transitions are both available to support congregations and/or PCCs work through any such considerations and can be contacted via Church House.

3. Initial Considerations for the SSOM

SSOM clergy exploring, or in the process of being appointed to an Incumbent level post should, prior to any appointment, consider the bullet pointed questions below. These questions are designed to enable the SSOM to enter into the process with an understanding of what ministry might 'look like', if they were appointed:

- Is the appointment a response to a real vocational call?
- How do close family and friends feel about the appointment, especially any dependents and/or spouse?
- Is the appointment a realistic proposition – what, if anything, will need to be 'given up' in order to fulfil the requirements of the role?
- Will the post require a house-move and/or is diocesan housing provided, in the form of a vicarage / rectory? *
- What support can and will the parish offer to sustain the ministry offered?
- Does this support 'match' that which is required / desired?
- If employed, or undertaking care commitments, how will these responsibilities be balanced alongside the parish responsibilities?
- Are there any parochial activities that will be impossible to undertake, due to other commitments, such as secular work (e.g., funerals, schools work etc)?
- How much time can be given over to parochial activity / the role?
- How does this time commitment fit with that expressed / desired by the parish?

The Bishop's Adviser for Self-Supporting Ordained Ministry and the Bishop's Adviser for Curate Development and Clergy Transitions are both available to support SSOM clergy work through any such considerations and can be contacted at Church House.

** If the post comes with a parsonage, this can be seen to fundamentally change the dynamics of the appointment, not least as the post cannot be seen to be unremunerated and could be treated as a 'House for Duty' post. The implications of this need to be thought through, as will any tax implications.*

4. Support Mechanisms

It is vital appropriate support is put into place in order to enable the SSOM Incumbent to thrive and flourish in post. However, any such support needs to be efficient and effective – it should not and cannot be something that is ‘done’ to the SSOM, but rather something they themselves take a lead on. That said, it is **EXPECTED** that the SSOM will co-construct a ‘support package’ with a relevant designated colleague (such as Rural Dean, Bishop’s Adviser for Self-Supporting Ordained Ministry, Bishop’s Adviser for Curate Development and Clergy Transitions, Archdeacon etc).

In most cases, the SSOM Incumbent will have limited time and any support implemented should *enhance* their role, rather than detract from it, and so avoid it becoming ‘yet another meeting’. ‘Generic’ support can include:

- Spiritual Accompaniment
- Soul Friend
- Cell Group
- Clergy Support Group
- Counselling
- Mentoring
- Pastoral Supervision
- Continuing Ministerial Development (including the annual CMD grant)
- Ministerial Development Review
- Sabbaticals
- SSOM Diocesan Network Meetings
- Support from:
 - The Bishop’s Adviser for Self-Supporting Ordained Ministry
 - The Bishop’s Adviser for Curate Development and Clergy Transitions
 - Rural Dean
 - Archdeacon
 - Bishop

The above list is not exhaustive. Many of the above examples can be 'brokered' or provided by the Diocese, although some can be arranged on a more informal basis by the SSOM Incumbent themselves.

It is also important that support is implemented at a parochial level. This support could include:

- Churchwardens
- Standing Committee
- Parochial Church Council

It is also worth remembering, the Diocese partners with 'Health Assured' to provide an **Employee Assistance Programme** (even though clergy are not technically employees) for all clergy - stipendiary and SSOMs - and Church House staff. The programme provides a free 24-hour confidential helpline, as well as proactive advice on matters such as families issues; legal information; medical information; financial information; stress and anxiety; bereavement; and addiction issues. Further details can be found on the Diocesan Website.

The SSOM Incumbent will need to think carefully about what support they feel they would benefit from – it is **EXPECTED** that support mechanisms will be in place, as extensive research and experience have shown pro-active support is far better than re-active support, insofar as by the time re-active support is implemented, any issues or concerns can often be insurmountable.

Besides 'generic' support, it is vital that SSOM Incumbents and their parishes also detail what practical support can be offered to the SSOM as they undertake their role.

This support should include some or all of the below:

- Administrative / clerical support (including Diocesan 'returns', *CCLI* returns etc)
- Pastoral support with arranging and undertaking occasional offices
- Assistance with filling any 'gaps' on the worship / ministry rota
- Oversight of any church yard / burial ground and ensuing regulations
- Fundraising
- Visiting
- Children's, youth, and schools' work

NB, this list is not exhaustive, and **all such support MUST be captured in the Memorandum of Understanding**, as detailed below.

Where there are licensed lay people within the parish, they should be fully utilised and empowered, as per their individual Ministry Agreements.

A Brief Note on Mentoring

This section of the Guide **should be read in conjunction with the 'SSOM Handbook'**, that can be found on the SSOM page of the Diocesan website.

It may be appropriate for the SSOM Incumbent to have a mentor. An SSOM Mentor is an experienced priest (either an SSOM themselves or stipendiary – depending upon need and 'fit'), from outside the mentee's parish, who is able to listen and guide an SSOM during the period of their appointment.

The mentor and mentee will meet together, as and when required. When they do, the mentor should discuss with and help the mentee discern what 'being' an SSOM Incumbent might 'look like' for them, and how it is 'working', as well as give other information, insights, support and advice, especially around incumbency.

Mentoring sits outside of the Ministry Development Review (MDR) processes.

If any SSOM Incumbents would like to be mentored or become an SSOM Incumbent mentor themselves, they should get in touch with Bishop's Adviser for Self-Supporting Ordained Ministry, who will facilitate the process, in the first instance.

A Brief Note on Pastoral Supervision

Pastoral Supervision is offered free at the point of access to all serving clergy – not just those in receipt of a stipend! It provides a regular space for those in ministry to engage in reflective practice in relation to their ministerial work. Supervisor and supervisee meet together up to 10 times a year and are resourced by the Diocese.

This is a safe and confidential space, which is less intervention-focussed than mentoring or coaching.

Like mentoring, Pastoral Supervision sits outside of the Ministry Development Review (MDR) processes.

For more information on Pastoral Supervision, please contact the Bishop's Adviser for Curate Development and Clergy Transitions at Church House.

5. Continuing Ministerial Development

This section of the Guide **should be read in conjunction with the 'SSOM Handbook'**, that can be found on the SSOM page of the Diocesan website.

It is important that as a Diocese we ensure any SSOM Incumbent is not overloaded and fully consider any well-being matters, issues or concerns.

That said, CMD is a further support mechanism and should not be seen as another 'event' that must be attended, but rather as a tool that can support, develop, empower, and equip ministry.

Training will be delivered, and support offered to those who are new to incumbency and/or who have undergone a move.

The key questions surrounding any training for SSOM Incumbents, include:

- What aspects of training will be required for an SSOM Incumbent that will not be required for a stipendiary incumbent – and vice-versa?
- How will / should training differ for those incumbents new to post, who are full-time / part-time stipendiary and/or SSOM?
- What time does the SSOM Incumbent actually have in reality to dedicate to training?

The SSOM Incumbent could be 'time-poor' in terms of commitment to any such training, but attendance should be prioritised for any events that are relevant and pertain to role. However, there is no expectation that leave (either paid or unpaid) should be taken from paid employment to attend any such training.

SSOM Incumbents will be contacted about any training as and when they are in post. If, however, any training is inaccessible, due to work or care commitments, please contact the Bishop's Adviser for Curate Development and Clergy Transitions at Church House and bespoke arrangements will be implemented.

SSOM Incumbents are reminded that they can also access an annual CMD grant. More information is available in the '**SSOM Handbook**'.

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 and also the '**SSOM Handbook**' for further details and information).

6. Safeguarding

Safeguarding training is absolutely non-negotiable - non-compliance will result in either no licence being issued and/or any current licence / appointment being withdrawn / terminated. Without a licence, it is impossible to operate as an ordained minister in or for the Church of England.

Before any appointment can be made, it is an **obligatory requirement** that all clergy must have an enhanced DBS disclosure and should work in accordance with the national church's policy and Practice Guidance:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/more/safeguarding/policy-practice-guidanc>

For details re: Safeguarding training, please see the '**SSOM Handbook**' for more details, but in summary:

Licensed SSOMs				
<i>Module</i>	<i>Obligatory</i>	<i>Renewable</i>	<i>When</i>	<i>How</i>
Basic Awareness	Yes	Desirable	Every 3 years	Online: CofE SG Portal
Foundation	Yes	Desirable	Every 3 years	Online: CofE SG Portal
Domestic Abuse	Yes	Yes	Every 3 years	Online: CofE SG Portal
Safer Recruitment	Yes	Yes	Every 3 years	Online: CofE SG Portal
Human Trafficking	No	Desirable	Every 3 years	Online: CofE SG Portal
Leadership Pathways	Yes	Yes	Every 3 years	Online Diocesan Course

Whereas it is recognised for some SSOMs who are Incumbents, time could be especially precious and at times 'something will have to go', the 'something' can never be related to Safeguarding. Therefore, **it is the responsibility of the SSOM to keep any Safeguarding training up to date.** Remember, the Safeguarding Team at Church House are always available to answer any questions or queries regarding training.

7. Managing Expectations

SSOM Incumbents 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 evolving procedures of the '*Clergy Discipline Measure*' or its equivalent, not least as the Diocese expects all clergy to adhere to them.

It is true to say that where conflicts or difficulties arise in a parish, it is often due to disagreements over expectations, often in terms of what is / is not expected from the SSOM Incumbent.

SSOM Incumbents need to be clear with their parish as to the level of their commitment and activity therein. Equally, parishes need to be realistic as to what they can expect an SSOM Incumbent to undertake (especially one who is employed, or has care commitments), always remembering that although the SSOM Incumbent holds the Bishop's Licence, they are nevertheless 'volunteers', with commitments and callings outside of the church.

For this reason, it is clear that both SSOM Incumbents and the parish 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 a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) is key to providing clarity (see below). **The Bishop's Adviser for Self-Supporting Ministry should be involved in devising any MoU, as should the Bishop's Adviser for Curate Development and Clergy Transitions.**

Where there are difficulties and issues that cannot be resolved, and they are too fundamental for people to simply agree to differ, the SSOM Incumbent / Churchwardens should contact the Bishop's Adviser for Self-Supporting Ordained 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, Bishop and/or the Director of Human Resources.

8. Common Tenure

a. Common Tenure

All clergy appointed to a post are appointed and licensed under Common Tenure – whether a stipend is involved or not. Thus, both stipendiary and SSOM 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);
3. and in the case of SSOM Incumbents, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), which is devised on a 'local level'.

More information regarding Common Tenure can be found in the '**SSOM Handbook**', that can be found on the SSOM page of the Diocesan website.

For an SSOM Incumbent, the Statement of Particulars will 'broadly detail' hours, holidays, sickness arrangements etc. It is for this reason that the '**local Memorandum of Understanding should reflect more adequately what the time commitment will be to the Parish, as well as any arrangements for holidays etc.**

The 'local' MoU should take account of what the Statement of Particulars says, and should include details re: expenses etc. If the MoU has to be changed significantly over time (it is after all, a working document), it may be necessary for the SOP to be updated, although if this is the case, HR at Church House must be involved in this process.

In summation:

- 'Common Tenure' applies to all licensed clergy;
- All clergy have a Statement of Particulars;
- And SSOM Incumbents **MUST** have a 'Local' Memorandum of Understanding, but that must cohere with the Statement of Particulars.

Further guidance on Common Tenure and SOPs, can be provided on request by the Director of HR at Church House.

b. Insurance

As SSOM Incumbents 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 policies cover the SSOM if and when engaged in any secular work commitments.

SSOMs who work need to be aware that any injury sustained whilst undertaking church work, making themselves unfit for their paid employment, could invalidate any claim to sick-pay. Therefore, SSOM Incumbents are strongly advised to check the provision of insurance within the parish and where necessary, refer to it in the Memorandum of Understanding (see below).

If the SSOM Incumbent has any concerns re: insurance, they should refer the matter to the relevant Archdeacon, in the first instance, who will support parishes in ensuring this is in place.

However, any aspects of the work the SSOM undertakes for the DBF (Diocesan Board of Finance), is covered by Diocesan Policies, although in most cases, it is unlikely an SSOM Incumbent will be engaged in work directly for the DBF. For further information, SSOMs are advised to contact the Diocesan Secretary and/or the Director of HR at Church House.

9. Memorandums of Understanding

All SSOM Incumbents MUST have a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with their parish in place before their licensing – this is non-negotiable.

A Memorandum of Understanding is an agreement between the SSOM Incumbent and their parish – often negotiated prior to any appointment, with the Churchwardens / Parish Representatives, with assistance and input from the Bishop’s Adviser for Self-Supporting Ordained Ministry and the Bishop’s Adviser for Curate Development and Clergy Transitions.

The MoU is not a legally binding document, but rather sets out what the ministry of the SSOM Incumbent will ‘look like’ as well as detailing support that will be implemented by the parish and beyond.

The MoU is designed to support the SSOM Incumbent in their ministry and should not simply be seen as an administrative exercise. The MoU should set out those things that will help the SSOM Incumbent give structure to their vocation and calling, as well as to deal with the everyday practicalities of ministry.

To avoid any misunderstandings, it is important that the MoU is clear regarding expectations – both for the SSOM Incumbent and the parish. To this end, it is helpful, as part of the agreement, to consider the following:

- The SSOM’s skills and experience
- Expected time commitment to parochial work
- Details of time ‘off’ and holidays
- Details of any ‘external’ support
- What meetings the SSOM Incumbent is expected to attend
- Provision of office and clerical support
- Expectations around clerical dress, including during services
- Expenses
- Ministerial Formation and Continuing Ministerial Development
- What will happen if there is a ‘work-related’ crisis, or if there is an emergency in the parish
- Confidentiality.

As stressed above, it is important that any 'local' MoU takes account of the relevant Statement of Particulars. It is worth noting that the MoU should be 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. In some cases, the pattern may well be, there is no pattern! However, until a pattern is discerned and works well, much patience may be required.

SSOM Incumbents who work and/or see themselves as MSEs should make clear reference to this in the MoU, and ideally it is helpful to outline how the parish can support the MSE in their secular role(s).

Finally, as, when and if SSOM Incumbents are absent from the parish for a prolonged period of time (e.g., due to illness or a sabbatical), the same expectations apply as for a parish overseen by a stipendiary priest, in so far as the Churchwardens, with the Rural Dean, have overall responsibility for the parish in question.

A template for an SSOM Incumbent MoU can be downloaded from the Diocesan website (see also the appendices below).

All Memorandums of Understanding, including every amended, reviewed or updated version thereof, MUST be 'lodged' with both the Bishop's Adviser for Self-Supporting Ordained Ministry and the Bishop's Advisor for Clergy Development and Transition at Church House.

10. Ministerial Development Review

As a Diocese, we are as committed to supporting the development of SSOMs. Ministerial Development Review (MDR) is about investment, and not simply a 'process'.

MDR is administered and runs in exactly the same way for all clergy, whether they are stipendiary, SSOM or an SSOM Incumbent. All are encouraged to engage as actively as they can in the process, not least as the process is **compulsory!**

That said, Ministry Review is not about appraisal, but about equipping, resourcing and encouraging those involved in ministry. Although SSOM Incumbents may be 'time poor', they are nevertheless requested to prioritise MDR at every stage of the process.

At the various stages of the process, SSOMs may wish to consult the Bishop's Adviser for Self-Supporting Ordained Ministry for further support and guidance and should feel entirely free to do so.

Further information, advice and guidance can be found in the '**SSOM Handbook**', that can be found on the SSOM page of the Diocesan website or from the Bishop's Adviser for Ministerial Development and on the Diocesan website.

11. Expenses

The question of expenses is essentially between the SSOM incumbent and the PCC. However, it is important that reference to expenses is made explicit and detailed in any Memorandum of Understanding.

It is worth highlighting the following points:

- The decision to claim out of pocket expenses is down to the SSOM Incumbent and the Churchwardens. However, the SSOM Incumbent should never be 'out of pocket' in order to resource their ministry. It is for this reason it is highly recommended expenses are claimed – if only to ensure parishes understand the cost of the ministry offered.
- Expenses are normally claimed for:
 - Travel, such as to and from a funeral visit, PCC meetings 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 SSOM'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 MoU should clearly detail them
 - Parking (e.g., at a hospital), if conducting a pastoral visit
 - Postage
 - Stationery (e.g., paper and/or ink for printing)
- The SSOM Incumbent should not suffer any undue hardship due to out-of-pocket expenses.
- Some PCCs may agree a budget each year to support further development in the SSOM Incumbent's practice, e.g., for books, learning resources, software, professional mentoring, and the like. If they do, PCCs should encourage the SSOM Incumbent to fully use this support in her / his practice.
- Expenses should be claimed regularly (monthly or quarterly).

- 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 MoU what can and cannot be claimed.
- Many parishes also rightly assist with the purchase of clerical shirts, notwithstanding guidance given in the publication *The Parochial Expenses of Clergy*. This is because for SSOMs, ministry is not their 'day-job' / paid employment, thus it is entirely appropriate, with agreement, for these claims to be made. It is important that the MoU details arrangements for the purchase of clerical shirts.
- The SSOM Incumbent cannot however claim any fees for baptisms, weddings or funerals or for taking services in a church and/or at a crematorium (neither for that matter can stipendiary colleagues or Licensed Lay Ministers!). It is for this reason SSOM Incumbents should ideally only undertake the 'occasional offices' at their will and in a voluntary capacity – especially if taking any such services means they need to take any leave (paid or unpaid) from work. In the extremely rare and exceptional circumstances where an SSOM Incumbent does receive fees, it is important that this is first agreed in writing with the relevant Archdeacon, in consultation with the Diocesan Secretary. SSOM Incumbents need to be aware of their personal tax position in respect of any fees paid.

It is worth noting that every parish is different and has multifarious financial constraints under which they work, but expenses still need to be paid. However, if there are any issues, or any clarification is sought, then do contact the Bishop's Adviser for Self-Supporting Ordained Ministry.

Reference should also be made to the Church of England's publication: *The Parochial Expenses of Clergy* and attention is drawn to the 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 SSOM clergy and their families. Their wide range of grants includes

financial, wellbeing, health, emergency and debt support. All clergy and their spouses / partners who struggle with sleep are eligible to receive access to 'Sleepstation' for free. The website clergysupport.org.uk includes an easy online eligibility checker. All requests made are treated as strictly confidential.

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.

Conclusion

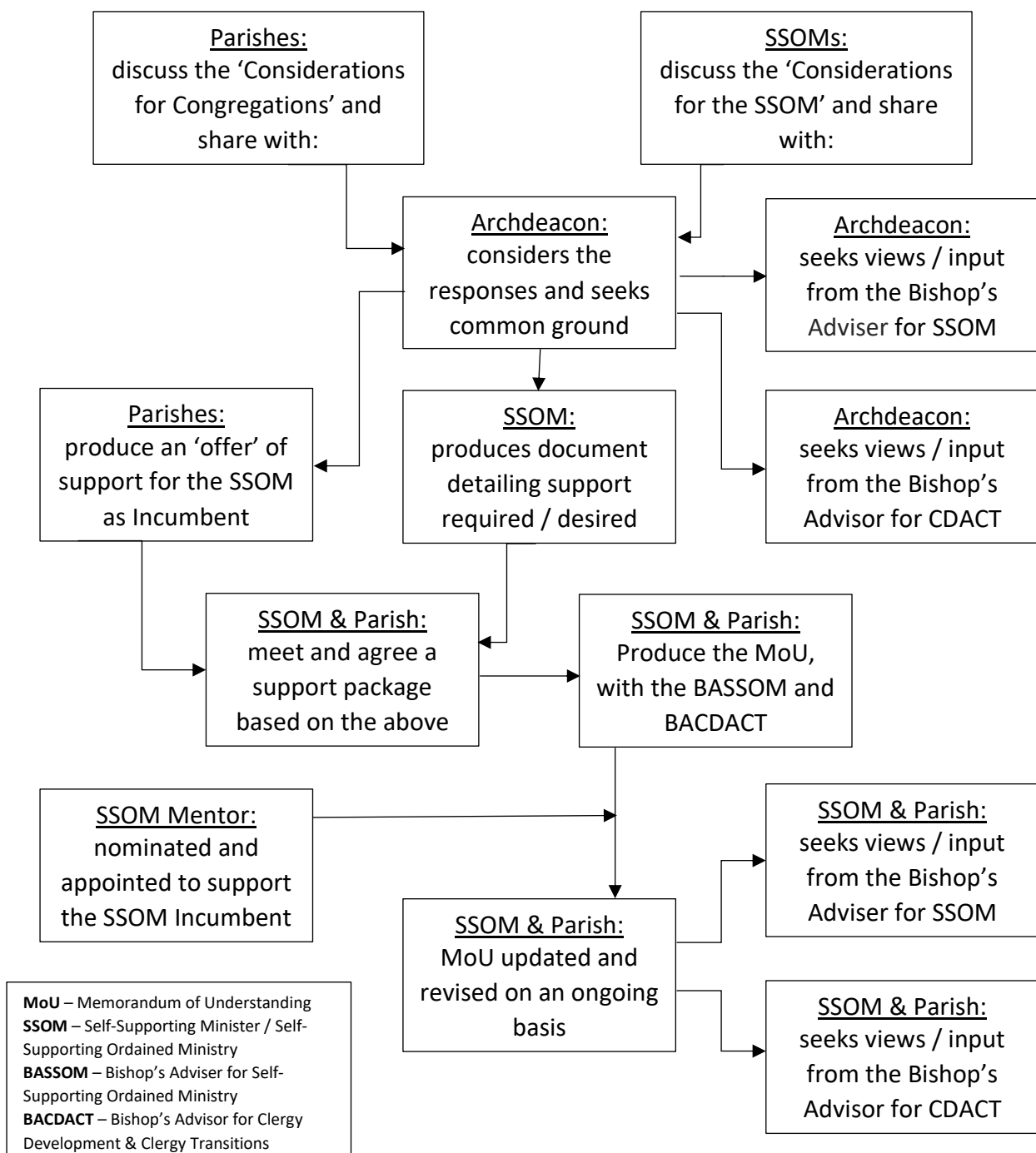
It is hoped the information above provides further clarity around SSOMs and Incumbency. The role of the Bishop's Adviser for those in Self-Supporting Ordained Ministry is to be a resource for the diocese as a whole, through providing advice and guidance on the role of SSOMs – whatever that role may be. Therefore, all SSOMs, 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.

Finally, although there are many resources and books that can support SSOMs in living their vocational response to God's Call, the following books may be of particular use to all those who are SSOM or work with SSOMs in whatever capacity, including those holding or exploring incumbency roles (with the last book also being relevant to those SSOMs approaching 'retirement'):

- John Lees, *Self-Supporting Ministry: A Practical Guide* (SPCK, 2018)
- Jenny Gage, *Priests in Secular Work: Participating in the Missio Dei* (Sacristy Press, 2020)
- James Francis, *Busking the Gospel: Ordained Ministry in Secular Employment* (Sacristy Press 2021)
- Tony Neal & Leslie Francis, *A New Lease of Life: Anglican Clergy Reflect on Retirement* (Sacristy Press, 2020)

Appendix 1: Flow-Chart of Actions pertaining to an SSOM Incumbents Appointment

The 'flow-chart' below is the 'SSOM specific' detail, and does not supersede nor replace the usual HR policies and procedures.



Appendix 2: Memorandum of Understanding Template for SSOM Incumbents

The Memorandum of Understanding Template below can be downloaded from the Diocesan website and edited accordingly but is reproduced here for information purposes.

NB, it is EXPECTED all SSOM Incumbents will have a Memorandum of Understanding (see relevant section above for more details).

When drawing up the Memorandum of Understanding, please always refer to the above notes, especially the sections entitled:

- Common Tenure
- Memorandums of Understanding

Please also consult the Bishop's Adviser for Self-Supporting Ordained Ministry, and the Bishop's Adviser for Curate Development and Clergy Transitions, when devising and/or revising a Memorandum of Understanding.

All Memorandums of Understanding, including every amended, reviewed or updated version thereof, MUST be 'lodged' with both the Bishop's Adviser for Self-Supporting Ordained Ministry and the Bishop's Advisor for Clergy Development and Transition at Church House.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) is not for use by SSOM clergy who are not Incumbent level post-holders – alternative arrangements are in place for them. Please see the *SSOM Handbook* for further details and guidance.

Memorandum of Understanding for Self-Supporting Incumbents



The Memorandum of Understanding for SSOM clergy,
appointed to Incumbent roles within the Diocese of Chester

When drawing up a 'local' Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), clergy are reminded to read the 'SSOM Handbook' on the Diocesan website.

It is important that this MoU reflect the SSOMs Statement of Particulars (SOP).

NB, this template is for use by SSOMs who are in the process of being appointed or who have been appointed to the role of an 'SSOM Incumbent'. The Bishop's Adviser for Self-Supporting Ordained Ministry, and the Bishop's Adviser for Curate Development and Clergy Transitions, should be consulted when devising and/or revising a Memorandum of Understanding.

Name of SSOM Incumbent	<i>Enter name here...</i>
Parish / Benefice	

Contact details (preferred email and phone details for contact regarding parish matters)	Home: Mobile: Email:
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Employment / Other Commitments

<i>Enter details of employment and how this can / could impact upon availability in the Parish. If not employed, there may well be other demands on your time, such as childcare or care commitments etc. Indicate also, any non-Parochial commitments in the Diocese, such as spiritual director, or community commitments, such as school governor etc.</i>

Time commitment within the parish

The Self-Supporting Incumbent's time spent on parochial duties will include time for leading worship, taking occasional offices (including preparation and follow-up), meetings, reading, prayer and sermon preparation. Time spent within the parish must take account of special responsibilities and commitments outside the faith community, as well any at a Diocesan level.

Days and times:

On average, how many hours per week is the SSOM Incumbent offering to the parish?	<i>Refer to the SOP, and be as specific as possible</i>
Are there specific day(s) of availability / unavailability?	<i>Again, be specific</i>

'Sunday' expectations:

How many Sundays per month will s/he be leading worship?	<i>This needs not be a 'hard and fast' rule, but more a generalisation, such as 'at least...' or 'at most...'</i>
What will happen on Sundays when the SSOM Incumbent is 'absent'?	<i>Who will arrange 'cover'. This may not always be the SSOM Incumbent, but they should be fully consulted re: who undertakes cover if this 'role' is delegated</i>
How many times per month will s/he be preaching, including homilies and other addresses?	<i>This needs not be a 'hard and fast' rule, but more a generalisation, such as 'at least...' or 'at most...'. What will happen when the SSOM Incumbent isn't preaching?</i>

'Other' expectations around worship:

Approximately how many funerals, weddings and baptisms will the SSOM Incumbent be doing through the year?	<i>This needs not be a 'hard and fast' rule, but more a generalisation, such as 'at least...' or 'at most...', as well as detailing circumstances, such as 'congregants only' etc.</i>
How will any 'occasional offices' be conducted if not taken by the SSOM Incumbent? Who will 'oversee' them within the parish?	<i>It is perhaps unrealistic to expect the SSOM Incumbent to arrange services they are not taking. What provision will the parish make to ensure appropriate arrangements are made and cover provided? This may not always be the SSOM Incumbent, but they should be fully consulted if this 'role' is delegated</i>

What are the expectations around services on days other than Sunday (e.g., mid-week services)	<i>Will the SSOM Incumbent take these? How often? What are the arrangements and who makes them, if the SSOM Incumbent is not available?</i>
What are the expectations around services on 'high days' and 'holy days' other than Sunday (e.g., Ash Wednesday, Ascension etc)	<i>Will the SSOM Incumbent take these? How often? What are the arrangements and who makes them, if the SSOM Incumbent is not available?</i>
What are the expectations regarding the daily offices?	<i>Work commitments may prohibit saying the Offices with other clergy and lay ministers within the Parish</i>
When will the SSOM Incumbent and other 'staff', including Wardens, pray together?	<i>Indicate when, where, frequency etc</i>

Other commitments

What other 'activities' will the SSOM Incumbent participate in?	<i>List these here, e.g., school's work, visiting parishioners, hospital visiting, services in care homes etc</i>
Nature of activity 1: (e.g., School's work)	<i>Detail what the activity is, and expectations around it</i>
Add / delete rows as required...	<i>Detail what the activity is, and expectations around it</i>

Time off

What times / days will the SSOM Incumbent be expected to be 'available'?	<i>Details re: when, as well as not. Also provide details re: what happens in 'emergencies'</i>
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Holidays

What holidays will be taken, and how will holiday dates be coordinated between the SSOM Incumbent and the Parish?

Refer to the SSOM Handbook. It is important that holidays are taken by the SSOM Incumbent, in addition to however many Sundays per year may be taken as 'time off'. It is unhelpful for SSOMs to be limited to only six Sundays per year off, especially if they are in fulltime employment. However, communication and clarity around what and when are key. Also, detail briefly (see above) how 'cover' will be arranged

Support and Supervision

These meetings are for mutual support, personal review and growth, and theological reflection.

Mentor Meetings

Name of Mentor	<i>Enter name</i>
How often will they take place?	<i>Suggest at least four times per year?</i>
Where will they take place?	<i>Indicate where and when...</i>
What will the "rules" of meeting be?	<i>These may include standing items</i>
What are the intended 'outcomes' of this type of support?	<i>Detail how these meetings will enhance and support the SSOM</i>

Parochial Support

Detail what support (not captured elsewhere in this MoU) the parish will give to the SSOM Incumbent. This support should be practical

Deanery Support

Detail what support (not captured elsewhere in this MoU) the Deanery and Rural Dean will give to the SSOM Incumbent. This support should be practical

Diocesan Support

Detail what support (not captured elsewhere in this MoU) the Diocese and its officers / advisers / staff, will give to the SSOM Incumbent. This support should be practical

Other meetings

At what meetings (e.g., ministry team, Chapter, Synod) will attendance be expected (subject to availability)? What meetings will the SSOM Incumbent not attend?

Be realistic in terms of time commitment.

Office space

What office space and/or administrative support will the SSOM Incumbent have?

This can include support towards the purchase of consumables etc. Capture anything here not detailed elsewhere in this document.

Clerical dress

What is normal liturgical dress? What other expectations are there regarding dress code?

Within the Parish generally, when undertaking ministry (e.g., clerical collar), and for services – cassock, stole, chasuble etc.

Expenses

Reference should be made to *Parochial Expenses of the Clergy 2017* (available online) which gives guidance to clergy and Treasurers about the reimbursement of expenses.

How will the SSOM Incumbent claim expenses? How frequently and to whom?	<i>Also, will a claim for be used?</i>
What can the SSOM Incumbent claim for?	<i>The SSOM Incumbent should never be out of pocket for ministry – be specific here in terms of what can be claimed</i>

Ministerial Formation and Continuing Ministerial Development

The SSOM Incumbent should take responsibility for his/her own professional / ministerial development. Ministerial formation and CMD should never be seen as simply something that 'has to be done', but rather embraced positively:

What time is to be allocated to learning events, ministerial formation and study?	<i>This should be included in the hours per week offered to the Parish</i>
What plans are there for making a retreat and attending conferences?	<i>Additionally, can / will the parish pay anything towards the cost of these?</i>

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.

Further Ministerial Support

What other arrangements are in place in terms of professional support, coaching and spiritual direction etc?

How can the Parish support and facilitate this? Additionally, if also an MSE, how can the Parish support you in this sphere?

Other boxes can be added at this point to capture any aspects not covered elsewhere in this template.

Insurance

SSOMs and their Incumbent should check arrangements re: insurance of the SSOM whilst engaged in parochial activities.

Enter insurance details in this box

Confidentiality

In the case of any safeguarding matters, all disclosures will be dealt with in line with Diocesan guidelines and confidentially will **NOT** be maintained.

Grievance procedures

The SSOM Incumbent and Churchwardens agree that any misunderstandings and/or grievances they experience will be discussed in private, never in public, although it may be appropriate to the Rural Dean and/or the Bishop's Adviser for Self-Supporting Ordained Ministry, and the Bishop's Adviser for Curate Development and Clergy Transitions to attend any meetings where potential issues may arise. The SSOM Incumbent should be free to contribute openly and with integrity to any discussions within the parish but should also demonstrate loyalty to colleagues and church officers, as well as be afforded the same loyalty back.

The SSOM Incumbent, Wardens and PCC therefore agree to support each other publicly but maintain their individual viewpoints and contributions. If any issue cannot be resolved and is too fundamental for colleagues simply to agree to differ, then advice should be sought from The Bishop's Adviser for Self-Supporting Ordained Ministry, and

the Bishop’s Adviser for Curate Development and Clergy Transitions in the first instance, or the relevant Rural Dean, before approaching the Archdeacon and/or Bishop.

This Memorandum of Understanding has been devised and agreed between:

The SSOM Incumbent:

Signed and dated:	<i>Enter name</i>	<i>Date</i>
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and the Churchwardens of the Parish:

Signed and dated:	<i>Enter name</i>	<i>Date</i>
Signed and dated:	<i>Enter name</i>	<i>Date</i>

Counter-signatory:

Signed and dated:	<i>Rural Dean</i>	<i>Date</i>
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Agreed date for reviewing this Memorandum of Understanding	<i>Generally, annually...</i>
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All Memorandums of Understanding, including every amended, reviewed or updated version thereof, MUST be ‘lodged’ with both the Bishop’s Adviser for Self-Supporting Ordained Ministry and the Bishop’s Advisor for Clergy Development and Transition at Church House.

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