**Bishop’s Officer for Self-Supporting Ordained Ministry**

**Background**

Across the Diocese of Chester 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. Within that overall picture, the role of Self-Supporting Ministers (SSM) 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 may operate as sector ministers.

The precise shape of SSM ministry and secular employment varies widely:

* Some SSMs who are in in secular employment see that work as the primary focus of their ministry and they see themselves as Ministers in Secular Employment;
* Some SSMs work in secular employment, but regard the main explicit focus of their ordained ministry as in the parish;
* Some SSMs are not in secular employment at all.

SSM ministry can bring particular challenges with it: striking an appropriate weekly balance between ministry in the parish and a secular job or other responsibilities; discerning what it means to be an ordained presence in a secular workplace; nurturing good relationships with stipendiary colleagues who might face different challenges. Some stipendiary ministers move into SSM because of changed domestic circumstances.

In addition to SSMs, there are in the Diocese of Chester an unusually high number of stipendiary ordained ministers operating on a part-time basis. While it is recognized that some of the pressures described above will apply to these ministers as well, the primary responsibility of this post is for those ministers not in receipt of a stipend.

**Role**

**Pastoral support for SSMs**

* To be a resource for SSMs, including the provision of advice on the specific challenges of this role;
* To facilitate the provision of events for SSMs to promote fellowship and sharing of good practice;
* To circulate, at least twice each year, a newsletter or other such information relating to their role(s), to help SSMs feel part of the wider mission and ministry of the diocese;
* To work with the CMD officer to ensure that ongoing training and development is as accessible as possible to SSMs, and to be someone to whom those who are SSM can refer if they feel that they are being excluded from diocesan provision and/or if they feel their training needs are not being met;
* To be available alongside bishops, archdeacons and rural deans, as a resource to help with the resolution of conflicts involving SSMs.

**Selection and training of SSMs**

* To work alongside and under the direction of the DDO in supporting and assisting those exploring non-stipendiary ministry with the discernment process;
* To offer all ordinands who have been selected for non-stipendiary ministry the possibility of at least one conversation during their training on an individual basis;
* To advise training incumbents and SSMs as requested on the content of SSM role descriptions, including the specific expectations of scale and nature of parish responsibilities;
* To attend, where possible, the key events in the induction process for new deacons, such as the residential for training incumbents and curates;
* To work with the MDR, CMD and IME officers to facilitate continuing ministerial development opportunities for SSMs, with particular attention to those who are Ministers in Secular Employment and to those who have work (or care) commitments, and with particular attention to those in IME Phase 2;
* To ensure that SSMs are being proactive in their IME and making the most of the opportunities available to them**.**

**Wider Policy Matters**

* To contribute to the work of the Committee for Ministry, including through Officers’ Meetings and through attendance as appropriate at meetings of the Committee;
* To attend relevant inter-diocesan events including conferences;
* To highlight to Bishop’s Staff any particular issues of concern to SSMs;
* To bring insights from the role of SSM to the attention of the wider diocese, for example in the area of whole life discipleship;
* To attend, where practical and desirable, Deanery Chapters and Deanery Synods to raise awareness of SSM issues and promote a wider understanding and appreciation of the role(s), as well as the privileges and the challenges.

**Practical matters**

* This role is not remunerated, but reasonable expenses in connection with the role, including travel and attendance at inter-diocesan SSM events, will be covered;
* It is expected that the post-holder will offer around seven hours per week on average in the role, plus occasional attendance at further events as necessary;
* There would be advantages to spending some office time with colleagues in the department at Church House but this will depend on their work commitments – otherwise attention will need to be given to developing alternative structures for collaborating with colleagues.

It would be an advantage for candidates to have had personal experience of SSM ministry, including working in secular employment alongside parish ministry.