

Ellel Ministries Safeguarding Policy

Introduction and Purpose

“Speak out on behalf of the voiceless, and for the rights of all who are vulnerable” – Proverbs 31:8

At Ellel Ministries, we are committed to ensuring a positive and safe working and ministry environment for all team, volunteers and guests. We recognise that the nature of our work is very personal and requires a level of vulnerability as people outwork their past hurts, traumas and personal issues. This naturally puts all of our team and volunteers in a place that we require a heightened awareness and understanding of safeguarding for all. As a faith-based ministry, we must be aware of the potential risks of spiritual abuse. As such, this is covered explicitly in this policy.

Whilst we very rarely have guests that fall into the scope of a legally vulnerable individual (including children), in order to fulfil sensible due diligence, we ask all our team and volunteers to complete a Self-Declaration Form in the process of recruitment. This identifies any past, present or pending criminal convictions. (See Appendix A: Safeguarding Self-Declaration Form).

A criminal record will not necessarily be a bar to appointment, only if the nature of any matters revealed could be considered to place children or vulnerable adults at risk and will depend on the circumstances and background of the offence(s).

Definitions

Team and Volunteers – This term refers to all those who work as employees, staff, unpaid workers (for any length of time), associate ministry team and associate teachers.

Guest – This term refers to anyone who attends an event run by Ellel Ministries, visits an Ellel Ministries property (including tradesmen, non-event visitors etc.) or is receiving prayer ministry or teaching authorised by Ellel Ministries (e.g. church visit etc.)

Legally Vulnerable Individuals - A person who is in need of special care, support, or protection because of age, disability, risk of abuse or neglect.

- A child, that is a person under the age of 18
- Any adult (person over the age of 18) unable to take care of themselves or protect themselves from exploitation.

Vulnerable Individuals - Any person who is under our care and is exhibiting signs of vulnerability through the sharing of trauma, pain or emotional stress. We adhere to the UK Government discourse on vulnerabilities (amended to place it in a ministry rather than healthcare setting):

“Vulnerability, traumatic experiences, and wider inequalities can impact on people’s health and wellbeing from childhood and across the life course. As those who minister into people’s lives, having

an awareness that this impact is not always visible and understanding how best to support individuals who may be vulnerable (including suggesting accessing appropriate external services) will enable care to be provided that is accessible, appropriate and effective.” (Ref: [Vulnerabilities: applying All Our Health - GOV.UK](#) (Amended))

Scope of the Policy

This safeguarding policy relates, without exception, to both legally and non-legally vulnerable individuals, as defined above.

This policy works in conjunction with other policies and procedures within Ellel Ministries, including (but not limited to):

- Spiritual Abuse Policy
- Bullying and Harassment Policy
- Whistleblowing, Grievance and Disciplinary Procedures
- Best Ministry Practice and Best Ministry Practice Training, which includes particular rules relating to spiritual abuse (copied as Appendix B)
- Best Teaching Practice

Policy Statements

We aim to build, maintain and develop a sound culture of safeguarding that:

- 1) Adheres to the best practice in accordance with the national/regional legal requirements and best practices for employment.
- 2) Adheres to this policy in its completeness and without exception.
- 3) Provides the necessary funds, resources and expertise to ensure the safeguarding of others.
- 4) Ensures equality in protection, that all individuals, regardless of their legal status, position, sexual orientation, race or religious beliefs receive equal protection from harm.
- 5) Cultivates a working and ministry environment where employees and volunteers are:
 - a) Up to date on safeguarding protocols.
 - b) Can access safeguarding advice and support easily.
 - c) Know how to report concerns.
 - d) Know how to respond to safeguarding risks.

Roles and Responsibilities

As an organisation, we recognise, and take seriously, our responsibility to:

1. Protect all individuals from harm, abuse and neglect.
2. Provide an environment of work and ministry where people are safe to express their personal vulnerabilities in a safe and supportive environment.
3. Provide adequate training and supervision to ensure team members are competent in identifying, reporting and responding to safeguarding concerns.
4. Engage and consult with team members and volunteers on a regular basis regarding safeguarding obligations and provide advice and supervision on issues relating to safeguarding.
5. Undertake regular risk assessments, taking note of guests and/or team who may require additional support or care.
6. Provide easy access to the safeguarding policy and reporting process for all team members, volunteers and guests through both electronic and physical media. (See Appendix C: Safeguarding Poster)
7. Provide easy access to details of Safeguarding Officers and Leads and their contact email.
8. Respond to any report of safeguarding issues in a timely manner.
9. Consult with safeguarding agencies and lead in a collaborative approach to safeguarding others.

The above responsibilities need the full cooperation of all employees and volunteers who are required to give all possible assistance aimed at the successful implementation of this policy. In order to achieve this, it is the responsibility of every team member and volunteer to:

1. Comply with the safeguarding protocols, training and Best Practice documents issued by Ellel Ministries.
2. Follow the guidance of the four 'R's of safeguarding:
 - a. *Recognise: Identify signs of abuse or neglect. This involves being vigilant and aware of the indicators that someone might be at risk.*
 - b. *Respond: Take appropriate action when you suspect abuse or neglect. This means addressing the concern promptly and effectively.*
 - c. *Report: Communicate your concerns to the safeguarding officer or lead, ensuring that the information is passed on to those who can take further action.*

- d. *Record: Document your observations and actions. Keeping accurate records helps in tracking the situation and providing evidence if needed.*
3. Cooperate with Ellel Ministries to ensure that the aims of our safeguarding policies and endeavours are achieved, and any requirements imposed on the organisation are complied with.
4. Report any safeguarding concern in a timely manner to a Safeguarding Officer or Lead.
5. Follow and cooperate with the Safeguarding Reporting Process in a timely manner.
6. Undertake all safeguarding training provided by Ellel Ministries including particular attention to spiritual abuse and coercion. (See Appendix D: Spiritual Abuse Policy)

Safeguarding Roles within Ellel Ministries

Safeguarding Lead – The person who acts as the main source of support, advice and expertise for safeguarding in your organisation. Within Ellel Ministries we have a Safeguarding Lead for Guests and a Safeguarding Lead for Team. They are both accessible by contact through a designated email address: safeguarding@ellel.org

Safeguarding Deputy Lead – The person who supports, and can be contacted in the absence of, the Safeguarding Lead. They take an active part in the support, advice, implementation and reviews of safeguarding related matters. They are also responsible for the keeping of safeguarding incident logs and records and provide reports to the Trustees. They will also have access to the safeguarding email account.

Safeguarding Trustee Lead – The charity trustee who considers the organisation's strategic plans and ensures they reflect safeguarding legislation, regulations, statutory guidance, and the safeguarding expectations of the Charities Commission, insurance requirements or additional external authorities' requirements.

Safeguarding Officer – A designated representative who would be the initial person to contact with any safeguarding concerns. Usually, this would be someone geographically in the immediate vicinity.

Full details of these roles are expounded in Appendix E: "EMI Safeguarding Roles"

Reporting a Safeguarding Concern, Including Spiritual Abuse

As a faith-based, charity that engages in prayer-based ministry and counselling, with a team of employees and volunteers (some who live within a working centre), we recognise we are vulnerable to various issues that may raise a safeguarding concern. Examples of which are (but are not limited to):

- Spiritual Abuse (*see Appendix B: Excerpt from Best Ministry Practice and Appendix D: Spiritual Abuse Policy*)
- Sexual Harassment (including inappropriate and/or non-consensual touching)
- Bullying and Harassment
- Verbal Abuse (including that of using prayer, Scripture and/or 'prophecy' in an inappropriate way)
- Neglect (including of guests/team member's physical, medical and/or psychological needs)
- Physical abuse (including that of a guest threatening a team member or volunteer)

Reports can be made by the victim, or on their behalf (including without their knowledge), to any of the following:

Local Safeguarding Officer	As displayed on internal posters	
Safeguarding Lead (Guests)	Lindsey Hanekom	safeguarding@ellel.org
Safeguarding Lead (Team)	Irma Steel	
Safeguarding Deputy Lead	Robert Hay	safeguarding@ellel.org
Safeguarding Lead Trustee	Matt Moore	safeguarding.trustee@ellel.org

On receipt of a safeguarding report or complaint, whether that be verbal or written, the following procedure must take place in a timely manner:

- 1) The person in leadership to whom the potential safeguarding situation is first reported must take necessary immediate steps to prevent further harm and, if required, call emergency services.
- 2) Immediately report the situation to a Local Safeguarding Officer who must then immediately report it to the Safeguarding Lead. Every complaint should be reported to the Safeguarding Lead. If in doubt whether or not a safeguarding issue exists, the situation must be reported to the Safeguarding Lead, who will decide whether and to what extent safeguarding issues need to be addressed.
- 3) Timely meet with the alleged victim and any witnesses to gather information and make a written record of the claimed incident. Such record should include details of dates, times, witnesses and the alleged actions of the abuser. The alleged victim should be permitted to bring a friend or companion if they so choose. This meeting will be hosted by at least two Ellel Ministries team, one of whom should be the Safeguarding Lead who will conduct the meeting and the other who will take notes.
- 4) The Safeguarding Lead should conduct the meeting in the following manner:
 - a) Listen carefully, without prejudice or assumption.

- b) Avoid interrupting, other than to bring clarification, and without defending the organisation or the individual.
 - c) Respond in a non-judgemental manner, clearly expressing that the disclosure will be taken seriously.
 - d) Avoid minimising what is being shared, making a personal judgment or adding opinions to it.
 - e) Avoid showing disbelief, denial or any strong emotions.
 - f) Be aware that a person may have experienced some harmful teaching, ministry, prayer or treatment.
 - g) Do not direct the victim to follow the procedures of Matthew 18 (resolving disputes by speaking directly to the person who they claim has hurt them). This is not the role of the Safeguarding Lead in this context. In the case of spiritual abuse, it can cause further harm for a victim to speak or interact with their alleged abuser.
 - h) Be aware that one form of concern may involve other forms of concern and be vigilant of any additional issues (e.g. a prayer minister gave a long, inappropriate cuddle to someone, and then told them to keep quiet about it. The first issue is a safeguarding concern in relation to sexual harassment, the second is a spiritual abuse issue in coercing someone to remain quiet about it).
 - i) No promise of complete confidentiality can be made but it must be made clear that only those in rightful authority and those implicated will be informed.
 - j) Explain that the next step of the process is for Ellel Ministries to investigate the complaint. There will be some notification to the victim as to the outcome of that investigation.
 - k) No promise of the outcome of the subsequent investigation(s) can be made.
- 5) Investigation – Every safeguarding concern must be investigated, without exception. The investigation will include meeting with the alleged perpetrator(s) and any known witnesses or others deemed to have related knowledge to the situation and/or people involved. The allegations will be laid out and each area of concern discussed. Again, it is important that both parties are listened to without pre-judgment.
- 6) Evidence of criminality – If there is evidence of criminality found, then the case should be reported to local law enforcement immediately.
- 7) Outcome – Following the investigation, there must be a defined and recorded outcome and conclusion to the report. If there is evidence that there has been a breach of safeguarding, the perpetrator(s) will be disciplined in line with the Ellel Ministries Disciplinary Procedures (as laid out in the Best Ministry Practice, the EMI Personnel Manual and the EMI Team Manual).
- 8) Support for the Victim – Following the conclusion of the incident report, investigation and outcome, the victim will be contacted with a summary of the outcome. This does not necessarily need to include details of disciplinary sanctions but will be sensitive to the needs of both parties to conclude the issue.

- 9) Report to the Trustees – A summary of every safeguarding report and investigation should be made available to the Safeguarding Lead Trustee who will report to the Trustee Board. Any concern related to safeguarding and the charitable status of the organisation should be reported to the Charity Commission in a timely manner. This includes a serious safeguarding breach and/or repetitive or patterns of breaches.
- 10) Confidentiality – All safeguarding reports are to be kept confidential. This confidentiality follows the managerial/accountability structure of the ministry and those in official safeguarding roles.

Training and Awareness

N.B. Since this policy is new, training will be rolled out and completed over the next twelve months.

All team and volunteers must undertake the EMI Safeguarding Training. This is made available online and an acknowledgment form should be signed to say they have undertaken the training.

Additionally, those involved in prayer ministry must undergo the Best Ministry Practice Training and the Additional Safeguarding and Spiritual Abuse Training that is made available online.

We commit to regularly reminding teams and volunteers of the need for awareness regarding safeguarding issues.

Safeguarding posters and 'adverts' will be made publicly available both physically and easily accessible online on the Ellel Ministries Website.

Monitoring and Review

In order to remain effective and up-to-date, the safeguarding policies and procedures will be reviewed at least annually, or when deemed necessary by the Safeguarding Lead, the Safeguarding Trustee Lead, or the International Director. In response to any changes, additional or updated training will be provided to all team and volunteers.

As an organisation, we remain open to improvements in our safeguarding policies and procedures. As such, we welcome feedback from team, volunteers, and beneficiaries regarding our policy and its implementation. Feedback can be sent to safeguarding@ellel.org.

Documentation and Record-Keeping

The Deputy Safeguarding Lead is responsible for keeping appropriate records of all safeguarding incidents and actions taken. This includes:

- Incident Log – A summary sheet of all safeguarding incidents, reports, outcomes and actions taken. This enables any patterns of breaches to be identified as soon as possible.
- Confidentiality – All documentation, electronic or otherwise, must be kept within strict confidential and secure bounds.

Appendix A: Safeguarding and Criminal Record Self Declaration Form

To be completed by all Prayer Ministry Team.

As a Christian Ministry, we have a spiritual and moral obligation to provide a safe and secure environment for those children and families of team members who live on site, and for children who may come for the purpose of receiving help and prayer ministry, or otherwise participate in activities with parental consent.

We also take our responsibility for the welfare of vulnerable adults very seriously indeed; whether they are team members, family of team members or guests at the Centre.

In order to ensure that we have undertaken due diligence in the selection process, it is necessary for all prospective associate prayer ministers to complete this form in full and sign the declaration statement.

A criminal record will not necessarily be a bar to appointment, only if the nature of any matters revealed could be considered to place children or vulnerable adults at risk and will depend on the circumstances and background of the offence(s).

This form will be retained securely in accordance with current local legislation and guidelines and subject to the provisions of any general data protection regulations and all other relevant legislation relating to the data privacy of individuals.

On completion, this form should be returned in a sealed envelope addressed to the Ministry Manager.

Have you ever been in serious trouble with the police or any other authority?	Yes	No
Have you ever been accused or convicted of any offence involving children?	Yes	No

If you have answered yes to either of the above, please give full details in the space below:

Do you have any criminal convictions which are not yet regarded as 'spent' according to the law of your country?	Yes	No
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Are you at present the subject of any criminal investigation or pending prosecution? Yes No

If you have answered yes to either of the above, please give full details including the nature of the offences and the dates in the space below.

Where relevant please give details of the court(s) where your conviction(s) were heard, the type of offence and sentence(s) received. For current investigations or pending prosecutions please give details of the police station or other authority dealing with the matter.

You may also find it helpful to explain the reasons and circumstances that led to the offence(s).

Please continue on a separate piece of paper if necessary.

I confirm that I have never been accused or convicted of any offence involving children or vulnerable adults other than that which I have stated above.

If appointed I agree to inform the Centre Director if I am convicted of any offence or become the subject of a police or social services child protection investigation. I understand that any failure to do so may lead to my immediate suspension and/or termination of appointment.

I consent to undergo a criminal records check if at any point it is determined in law, or otherwise, that the role for which I have applied falls within the definition and scope of a legally regulated activity with children or vulnerable adults and thus a check is required to be made. I accept that any failure to do so may lead to termination of any appointment.

I declare that to the best of my knowledge and belief the information I have given above is correct. I understand that if I am appointed and the information I have provided is incorrect, or has been unlawfully withheld, I will be liable to dismissal.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Name: _____ Covering Centre: _____

Appendix B: Best Ministry Practice – Addendum

Spiritual Abuse

“Speak out on behalf of the voiceless, and for the rights of all who are vulnerable” – Proverbs 31:8

The very nature of our work means we often encounter people at their most vulnerable. Whilst most of our guests would not be legally considered a ‘vulnerable adult’ (see definition below), they are allowing themselves to be extremely vulnerable before us, and God. As such, we are naturally in a position that can have a deep impact on them, and we must ensure we treat this vulnerability with respect and care. We must keep in the forefront of our minds that we can facilitate great good but also, potentially, great harm, and we must be hyper-aware of the impact of our behaviours.

We must adhere to the practices of the Best Ministry Practice to avoid any harm that we could potentially, and unwittingly, inflict upon others.

We need to understand our position is that of a facilitator, not an authority figure. A guest does not come under our authority, and we should have absolutely no power over them. Our role is to draw alongside them and lead them to Jesus for His compassion to outwork in their lives.

We see and know in part, the guest sees and knows in part, and God knows in the fulness of all. When we think we know best and we push our agenda, we can put ourselves in danger of erring into abusive behaviour, albeit unwittingly.

Important Definitions

Legally Vulnerable Adult: *A person who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness; and*

who is or may be unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation”

Vulnerable Individuals - Any person who is under our care and is exhibiting signs of vulnerability through the sharing of trauma, pain or emotional stress. We adhere to the UK Government discourse on vulnerabilities (amended to place it in a ministry rather than healthcare setting.) *

“Vulnerability, traumatic experiences, and wider inequalities can impact on people’s health and wellbeing from childhood and across the life course. As those who minister into people’s lives, having an awareness that this impact is not always visible and understanding how best to support individual who may be vulnerable (including suggesting accessing appropriate external services) will enable care to be provided that is accessible, appropriate and effective.”

Spiritual Abuse: *Spiritual abuse is a form of emotional and psychological abuse. It is characterised by a systematic pattern of coercive and controlling behaviour in a religious context. Spiritual abuse can*

have a deeply damaging impact on those who experience it. This abuse may include: manipulation and exploitation, enforced accountability, censorship of decision making, requirements for secrecy and silence, coercion to conform, control through the use of sacred texts or teaching, requirement of obedience to the abuser, the suggestion that the abuser has a 'divine' position, isolation as a means of punishment, and superiority and elitism' (Oakley, 2018) (Spiritual Abuse in the Christian faith settings: Definition, policy and practice guidance', Journal of Adult Protection 2018.

Our Commitment

We are completely committed to ensuring our guests experience a safe and positive ministry environment. As such, there are NO exceptions to these rules:

Stop means stop – If a guest wants to stop ministry, you stop immediately and without question. It may be a pause, it may be for a longer length of time, it may be forever. The guest is free to indicate they are ready to restart but you must always respect the wishes of the guest.

No means no – If a guest doesn't want to discuss something, pray something or do something, that is fine, and you let their no be no.

Never force anything – God never forces us and we should never force anyone else to do or say anything. This includes (but is not limited to):

- Manipulative behaviour E.g. "Unless you pray this prayer, God can't bless you and we are just wasting our time.")
- Forcibly pushing Scriptures as a demand to make a certain choice
- Saying they can't leave the room/centre
- Demanding they behave a certain way, pray a certain prayer (e.g. you must worship now, you have to pray this prayer)
- Physically restraining a person or forcing physical touch or contact of any form (including hugs, laying on of hands, etc.) unless preventing them from imminently harming themselves or someone else. If there is an immediate threat of harm, a leader should be notified immediately and emergency services called as required.

There are no secrets – Whilst we maintain confidentiality, we also maintain accountability, and these must both be held in tension. All ministry team must be open and willing to discuss details of their ministry with anyone above them in the accountability structure. Equally, we never tell a guest not to share what happened during their time with us.

Never tell a guest what to do or think – It is our role to offer help, insight, thoughts, Scriptures etc. We lay them before a guest as an invitation for their consideration. We never dogmatically tell them what to do or what to think or how they should respond.

Never set ourselves as the voice of God - We are flawed and do not hear God perfectly. We only see and hear in part, and we must hold loosely anything we think God has said to us about someone else's situation or struggles. We offer anything we think God is saying to a guest for their

consideration and response. We do not use the name of God as a weapon to force someone to do, say or respond in a certain way.

If necessary, seek medical help – We are not experts, psychiatrists or psychologists. If a guest is exhibiting serious mental health issues, breakdown or psychosis, medical intervention should be strongly encouraged. If the person is an immediate danger to themselves or others (i.e. imminently suicidal or murderous) emergency services should be called. We never negate the physical or psychological needs of a guest. *See more below: “When a Guest Becomes too Vulnerable”.*

Never allow ministry to be outside of the guest’s control – A guest should never be totally out of control. There may be times of deep, emotional pain and expression of hard feelings but they should always be within the person’s ability to choose to stop. Similarly, deliverance ministry should be conducted only with the individuals full and conscious consent and while respecting the individual’s right to say stop or no at any point in the ministry.

Ministry times should be of reasonable lengths and with good breaks – We do not minister for hours and hours, without a break. If a guest is receiving a few days of ministry, allow for down times, time for them to be alone and rest.

We minimise times of distress – A guest should never be asked to face ongoing distress. There may be times of deep, emotional or spiritual connection but these should be limited to short periods of time where there is a positive outcome. If there is no positive outcome, do not keep going and cause more distress.

We never allow dependence on us – No guest should see Ellel Ministries as the only solution to their needs. We work within the wider community of their family, their church, the medical profession, and other organisations. If a guest reaches a place of ‘needing Ellel’ then we should pause connection with them. If Ellel seems to be taking the place of their family or their church, then we should pause connection with them. If Ellel becomes more important than God, their family or their ordinary life, then we should pause connection with them. If a guest becomes dependant upon us, we are putting ourselves in an ungodly powerful position in their lives.

When a Guest Becomes Too Vulnerable

If a person becomes extremely distressed, agitated, or showing signs of a mental health crisis, any prayer ministry must be stopped immediately and the person cared for in an appropriate manner. Such vulnerability includes (but is not limited to) someone who is imminently suicidal*, suffering psychosis, self-harming, having a panic attack, threatening harm to others, or is in the throes of substance abuse.

When in a state of a such crisis, a person is not fully grounded in reality in their mind, will or emotions. They may not have control over their behaviour but will often be aware of it. There are various signs someone is experiencing a crisis or manic episode which can include:

- Excessive talking
- Over the top emotions (anger, crying, hysteria)

- Extreme feelings of fear, panic and not being safe
- Loss of control of their behaviour (often inappropriate)
- Unawareness or care of other people's feelings and choices
- Highly tuned to talk about anything super-spiritual and the spiritual realms

**Imminently suicidal means someone who has the means, the plan and the ability to attempt to take their own life now.*

Our response to such crises is to:

- Ensure that nobody is in immediate danger or threat and that anyone can leave the room or area easily. Nobody is expected to place themselves in harm's way; if you feel threatened or in danger, you are free to leave.
- Get support – contact a leader or the Ministry Manager as soon as you can.
- Stop any prayer ministry but continue with quiet intercession for the person.
- Gently ask the guest if they feel safe – If not, ask what would help them feel safe.
- Allow the person to speak, even if it doesn't make sense.
- Do not try to refute anything they are experiencing, however strange or unreal it is. This can lead to more distress.
- Recognise and explain to them that you can see they are distressed and they must feel scared but they are safe.
- Offer options in how to manage this by asking such questions as: "Do you need medical help?" or "Is there someone you usually talk to when you feel this way?"
- Keep talking to the person, trying to ground them in reality. You can ask what they can see out of the window, talk about the colour of the furnishings in the room, etc. This can help bring a person back to the present reality safely.

Reporting a Safeguarding Concern

If you feel a guest or Team Member has experienced a breach of safeguarding, including spiritual abuse, within their time at Ellel Ministries, report this to your Local Safeguarding Officer and/or the Safeguarding Lead (in cases involving leaders or serious criminal breaches.)

If you feel a guest or Team Member is experiencing some form of criminal or safeguarding concern at home, report this to your Local Safeguarding Officer with details and any written evidence of your concerns.

Reports can be made to safeguarding@ellel.org and are kept in the strictest of confidences.

For full details, see our Safeguarding Policy.

Appendix C – EMI Safeguarding Poster

This is an image of the poster – the full-size poster image is made available online to our teams through SharePoint.



Appendix D - Ellel Ministries International Spiritual Abuse Policy

Purpose

As a Christian organisation, we are committed to prevent spiritual abuse within Ellel Ministries. This policy applies to all leaders, team members, volunteers, and guests of the organisation.

This policy works in conjunction with other policies and procedures within Ellel Ministries, including (but not limited to):

- Safeguarding Policy
- Bullying and Harassment Policy
- Whistleblowing, Grievance and Disciplinary Procedures
- Best Ministry Practice and Best Ministry Practice Training, which includes particular rules relating to spiritual abuse (copied as Appendix B to Ellel Ministries' Safeguarding policy)
- Best Teaching Practice

Definition of Spiritual Abuse

Spiritual abuse is a form of emotional and psychological abuse. It is characterised by a systematic pattern of coercive and controlling behaviour in a religious context. Spiritual abuse can have a deeply damaging impact on those who experience it. This abuse may include: manipulation and exploitation, enforced accountability, censorship of decision making, requirements for secrecy and silence, coercion to conform, control through the use of sacred texts or teaching, requirement of obedience to the abuser, the suggestion that the abuser has a 'divine' position, isolation as a means of punishment, and superiority and elitism' (Oakley, 2018) (Spiritual Abuse in the Christian faith settings: Definition, policy and practice guidance', Journal of Adult Protection 2018.

Key Characteristics of a Healthy Christian Culture:

- Every individual should be treated with honour, respect and dignity.
- All actions and decisions should be transparent and accountable.
- Genuinely open dialogue is encouraged.
- Everyone is valued, respected and nurtured; no one is isolated or excluded.
- Harmful behaviour (e.g. bullying) can be challenged by anyone and will not be allowed to persist.
- Power is distributed; not vested in one or two individuals.
- Self-reflection and personal autonomy is promoted.
- Safeguarding is promoted, preventative & responsive.

- Everyone is heard, supported and responded to when raising a concern.

Key Characteristics of Spiritual Abuse

Below is a non-exhaustive list of the key characteristics of spiritual abuse that often occur as a regular pattern of behaviour. Whilst some are more relevant to leaders towards followers, spiritual abuse can also occur from people towards leaders.

- Using religious/spiritual position to coerce and control.
- Demanding unquestioning obedience and loyalty, because of a perceived or claimed divine authority or special spiritual insight.
- Discouraging or penalizing questioning or expressions of doubt or disagreement, often labelling it as sinful, rebellious, or 'ungodly'.
- Seeking to protect the organisation or other leaders, more than the people involved in it.
- Restricting personal choices so that individuals feel they are unable to make their own personal choices in life in order to 'fall in line' or 'be good enough'.
- Restricting a person's 'voice' to speak up or challenge in appropriate contexts.
- Using Scripture, prayers, teaching, or interpretation of Scripture to coerce, control or threaten.
- Manipulating and/or exploitation through unfounded promises (including misuse of Scripture).
- Pressuring to conform and requiring unquestioning/blind obedience under the pretence of promoting unity.
- Using reference to someone's 'divine calling' to coerce, manipulate or exploit.
- Coercing through censorship, e.g. pressurising people into silence or secrecy.
- Excluding and isolating someone for disobedience or non-conformity.
- Public shaming and humiliation for disobedience or non-conformity.
- Threatening spiritual consequences (thereby suggesting that "God is complicit" with the abuser) to control or manipulate.
- Misusing mentoring or pastoral/ministry relationships, including overstepping person boundaries set (especially those that have been verbalized) by someone in the relationship.
- Using spiritual beliefs or practices to control or manipulate individuals, often by instilling fear, guilt, or shame.
- Encouraging or enforcing isolation from family, friends, or the broader community.
- Taking advantage of individuals for personal gain, whether financial, emotional, or sexual, under the guise of spiritual guidance.

- Twisting or selectively using Scripture to justify abusive behaviour or to maintain control over individuals.
- Creating a dependency on the leader or group for spiritual, emotional, or physical needs, making it difficult for individuals to leave.
- Using shame and blame to control behaviour, often making individuals feel responsible for their own suffering or the group's problems.
- Offering love and acceptance only when individuals conform to specific behaviours or beliefs, withdrawing it as a form of punishment.
- Using fear of divine punishment, hell, or other spiritual consequences to control behaviour and maintain loyalty.

Examples of Healthy to Abusive Behaviour

It's important to recognise spiritual abuse within the range of behaviours observed in the context of our work and ministry environment. To help us understand, we can see this range as a spectrum. On one end, we have positive, healthy, and nurturing behaviour that fosters a safe environment that results in people growing and flourishing. As we move along the spectrum, we encounter unhelpful behaviours. These actions aren't harmful but aren't beneficial either, and we all exhibit them occasionally.

Further along the spectrum, in the context of spiritual abuse, we may notice a consistent pattern of negative behaviour. This is when we find ourselves hesitating before interacting with someone, or when they are not open to questions. Such behaviour becomes unhealthy and is often a cause for concern.

When this pattern devolves into persistent, coercive, and controlling behaviour that aligns with the definition of psychological abuse but is justified by religious reasoning, it crosses the line into spiritual abuse.



Below are some examples of how we can identify behaviours in how we work, teach and minister within Ellet Ministries.

HEALTHY

All team and guests are able to question, discuss and respectfully challenge messages that are shared and how things are done.

UNHELPFUL

Being overly defensive when asked a question or being challenged respectfully.
Not actively listening to a concern.

UNHEALTHY

Developing a pattern of defensive and aggressive responses to any question or challenge.
Creating a culture in which challenge and questioning are seen as threatening unity or implying it is rebellion.
Regularly suggesting that anyone raising an issue is themselves the issue.

SPIRITUAL ABUSE

A consistent pattern of controlling behaviour suggesting that questioning or challenge is an inability to be obedient to God and a reflection of a problematic personal faith.

Seeking to use Scripture, prophecy, position, or spiritual threats to close down discussion or silence an individual rather than to engage with the issues they are raising.

HEALTHY

Asking a guest if it is OK to touch them in a normally recognised safe way (e.g. touch your shoulder, hold your hand, light hug).

Explaining how human touch can sometimes help with inner isolation and you are there if they would like to hold a hand or have your arm around their shoulder.

Giving space for someone to cry without jumping straight in with a hug.

UNHELPFUL

Long 'cuddles' and/or attributing them to being a replacement mum or dad.
Hugging someone as soon as they start crying, telling them it will be OK.

UNHEALTHY

Keeping hold of someone for longer than is expected.
Resisting the person pulling away.
Insisting on hugging someone when they are upset.

SPIRITUAL ABUSE

Touching genitalia, sexual or private areas of a person's body, even with permission.

Enforcing touch, because you believe God has told you to do so.

Enforcing touch even when someone has said, "no".

HEALTHY

Ensuring guests are an active part in prayer ministry sessions.

Giving time and space to process issues raised and consider their personal responses.

Allowing a person to choose not to go in the direction you think is the best.
Respecting each individual person's free will to choose if they want to engage with a topic and prayer or not.

UNHELPFUL

Praying for the person, without their engagement.
Rushing responses when posed with an issues raised.
Telling a person to just 'pray this prayer', even if they don't want to.

UNHEALTHY

Behaving in a way that comes across as, "This is what God says we should do. So we are going to do it, even if you don't agree with us."
Sulking or using manipulative techniques or phrases. E.g "Fine then. We will just sit and wait until you agree."

SPIRITUAL ABUSE

Telling a person you will not pray for them unless They say or do something you tell them to.

Ganging up on someone by drawing in other people to prove your point and solidify your position.

Implying or letting a person feel they are letting you, someone else or even God down by not praying what has been suggested.

HEALTHY

Encouraging a person to attend all relevant sessions whilst also giving them freedom to stop any prayer ministry or leave a room during teaching at any time. Allowing a less threatening place for them to sit if they would prefer (ie: the back or another room if they can still hear)

Giving a person the option to return when they feel able to.

Support them if they are distressed.

Respecting that sometimes a topic is too hard hitting and the guest may be better skipping the topic and going for a walk or having a rest.

UNHELPFUL

Telling a person they can't be blessed if they aren't in the room.
Tell them it's "the rules of Ellet" and you have to stay and listen.

UNHEALTHY

Trying to coerce someone to join the meeting with manipulative comments or making them feel guilty like they are letting God or someone down.

Telling someone to just be stronger and sit it out.

Telling someone that they are weak because they can't stay in the room.

SPIRITUAL ABUSE

Stopping someone from leaving the room.

Telling someone they will not be blessed by God if they leave.

Telling someone that they have offended you by leaving during teaching, prayer or ministry.

A full set of examples can be found at the end of this document.

Prevention

Ellel Ministries is committed to preventing spiritual abuse in all its guises and forms. In order to facilitate this there are several established protocols:

- All team and volunteers will receive safeguarding and spiritual abuse training.
- All prayer ministers will have access to the Best Ministry Practice and will undertake the Best Ministry Practice Training.
- All teachers will have access to the Best Teaching Practice and will undertake the Best Teaching Practice Training.
- All team and volunteers will have access to the Safeguarding Team through posters and ready access to Safeguarding contacts.
- All team will be subject to our Safeguarding policy, including Safeguarding self-declaration.

Reporting and Response

Any allegations of spiritual abuse should be reported to the Safeguarding Team as soon as possible.

Local Safeguarding Officer

As displayed on internal posters

Safeguarding Lead (Guests)

Lindsey Hanekom

safeguarding@ellel.org

Safeguarding Lead (Team)

Irma Steel

Safeguarding Deputy Lead

Robert Hay

safeguarding@ellel.org

Safeguarding Lead Trustee

Matt Moore

safeguarding.trustee@ellel.org

All safeguarding concerns raised will be taken seriously (without exception) and will follow our formal Safeguarding Policy.

Review and Monitoring

In order to remain effective and up-to-date, the safeguarding policies and procedures will be reviewed annually, or when deemed necessary by the Safeguarding Lead, the Safeguarding Trustee Lead, or the International Director.

In response to any changes, additional or updated training will be provided to all team and volunteers.

As an organisation, we remain open to improvements in our safeguarding policies and procedures. As such, we welcome feedback from team, volunteers, and beneficiaries regarding our policy and its implementation. Feedback can be sent to safeguarding@ellel.org.

HEALTHY

All team and guests are able to question, discuss and respectfully challenge messages that are shared and how things are done.

UNHELPFUL

Being overly defensive when asked a question or being challenged respectfully.
Not actively listening to a concern.

UNHEALTHY

Developing a pattern of defensive and aggressive responses to any question or challenge.
Creating a culture in which challenge and questioning are seen as threatening unity or implying it is rebellion.
Regularly suggesting that anyone raising an issue is themselves the issue.

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HEALTHY

Offering prophetic words or pictures to a wider group for their prayerful opinion and response.

Allow for free discussion about the interpretation.

Once relayed, to allow it to fall away if it is not deemed as correct or relevant.

UNHELPFUL

Offering prophetic words or pictures to a wider group with a personal interpretation put on it that cannot be discussed.

Holding fast to the word even if it is not deemed as correct or relevant. Waiting to push the prophecy again and hope for a different result.

UNHEALTHY

Using prophetic words or pictures as 'the perfect voice of God' and therefore unchallengeable.

Using prophetic words or pictures for your own gain or that benefit you personally.

Insisting that because a person has a track record of "hearing from God" that everything they offer has to be taken as from God.

SPIRITUAL ABUSE

Labelling or treating someone as rebellious, dissentious, wrong or bad for not agreeing with a prophetic word or picture.

Labelling or treating someone as "not as spiritual" because they don't connect to the word given and feel it is from God

Refusing to accept that you could be wrong and forcing it as a truth others should agree to, otherwise there will be consequences.

HEALTHY

Asking a person if they recognise any sin areas in their life that they feel they want to confess and bring before God, in relation to all they have shared.

Asking someone if they feel comfortable having some time with God to pray and see if the Holy Spirit brings any sinful behaviours to mind so that they can reach a place of receiving God's forgiveness.

Respecting someone's personal space and choice, that they may not identify the same areas you think are of concern.

UNHELPFUL

Making a suggestion or making hints that they may want to repent of a sin area that you say you see in their life.

Setting an expectation that the person will repent of what you tell them to.

UNHEALTHY

Saying that they will need to deal with what you tell them to or there will be consequences.

Getting into an argument over whether something is a sin or not
(eg: Pilates, yoga etc)

SPIRITUAL ABUSE

Insisting that someone has to repent and deal with their sin or you won't continue to pray with them.

Implying God won't love them or be there for them if they continue sinning.

Implying they are tarnished because of what they shared or haven't repented of.

Consistently pointing out sin in other people's lives, seeing it as a role God has asked of you.

Telling other people about their sinful behaviour in order to bring more shame to them.

HEALTHY

Seeking advice on how to help a person they are praying with and may talk to their ministry manager. This will be done in private and not where they can be easily overheard.

All conversation should be with dignity for the guest and pure intentions to help them further.

Using debriefing opportunities effectively and confidentially.

UNHELPFUL

Telling a guest, "We don't know what to do so we are going to have to get some help".

Making a guest feel like they are a bigger problem than others.

Inferring that someone is beyond help.

UNHEALTHY

Sharing details of what has been told to you in confidence with others just for the sake of chatting.

Giving your appraisal of how the guest responded and what they did right or wrong in response to the prayer.

Talking about a person's confidential ministry in public and in general terms, but where everyone knows who you are talking about.

Sharing any frustrations you feel that the prayer didn't go how you hoped or expected.

SPIRITUAL ABUSE

Labelling or holding people to judgements you have made because of what they have shared.

Telling a guest they are beyond help because they have committed 'the unforgivable sin'.

Consistently expose people's confidential sharing with others for any reason.

Telling a guest not to tell anyone else what happened in the ministry time.

HEALTHY

Encouraging all people that God has given them gifting and it is a wonderful journey of discovery to find the giftings God has given you.

Encouraging people that sometimes you could be placed by God in a role that you are not naturally gifted in but that God can use any of us in any way and He will give the giftings He needs you to have.

Asking someone what they enjoy doing and what makes them feel fulfilled.

UNHELPFUL

Telling someone what their gifts are without leaving room for the exploration or development of other gifts or skills.

Tell someone to 'just get it done' when they are unsure of how to do something.

UNHEALTHY

Using the identification of a positive gifting to imply that they are doing another role/job badly and are therefore failing.

Telling someone it is OK to not do a job because they don't have the skills, rather than helping them learn the skills required.

Telling someone else what your giftings are and how good you are at them, implying you are better than them because of your gifts/skills.

SPIRITUAL ABUSE

Speaking dogmatically about a person's skills or gifts that denies any space for growth or change: E.g. "You will never be a leader." "You will never be a teacher." "You've reached the limit of what you can achieve."

Treating someone differently because you see their gifts as less important or spiritual as yours.

Deliberately setting people up to fail by putting them into roles that you know they cannot fulfil.

HEALTHY

Teaching and helping people see how the enemy operates and tries to manipulate our emotions, thoughts, behaviours and choices in life as a Christian.

We can calmly pray and bind the enemy from any influence in prayer ministry and in a person's life.

UNHELPFUL

Talking about the enemy in response to everything a guest says, focussing more on the enemy than on God.

UNHEALTHY

Implying a person's problems can be solved if we just deal with the enemy and tell him to go in Jesus name.

Raising our voice when praying in regards to the enemy.

Focussing too much on the enemy than the needs and care of the person which makes the person feel disengaged and not in control of the ministry.

SPIRITUAL ABUSE

Telling someone that the way they are feeling and what they are saying is a demonic force speaking or emoting out of them.

Devaluing a person and their own feelings and choices and labelling it a demonic force.

Using language like "they have a Jezebel spirit", "they have a rebellious spirit" when talking about someone.

Ignoring any requests from the guest for the ministry to stop.

HEALTHY

Reminding guests that God knows all things and if we can't remember things specifically we can still pray for God to bring any healing without needing to mention or remember any specifics.

Assuring guests that if God does bring up any memories of things that have happened, He is able to bring healing to that area and it is not too big for Him and he will not overwhelm the guest.

Assuring a guest that they do not have to re-live traumatic times in their life for God to bring healing to them.

UNHELPFUL

Giving knowing looks if someone says something that could imply they have blocked memories or signs of possible abuse.

Encouraging someone to embrace a thought or niggly feeling that something happened as fact but rather than encouraging them to leave it with God and not let imaginations run off.

Saying to a guest "This is a bigger prayer need than I can pray for at this moment". This leaves a guest feeling their problem is too big for God.

UNHEALTHY

Asking someone "do you think you were abused"? "Can you picture any memories of abuse"

Planting false memories by suggestion e.g "I can just imagine your Mum walking out on you in that moment."

SPIRITUAL ABUSE

Telling someone that something happened to them that they don't actually personally remember or recollect eg: "you were abused".

Treating a word or dream that you had that could reinforce something happened to another person of significance, as a truth from God and not allow for disagreement.

Appendix E - Safeguarding Roles

Safeguarding Lead

The Safeguarding Lead acts as the main source of support, advice and expertise for safeguarding in Ellel Ministries. Responsibilities in this role include the following:

- Advise and support the leadership team in developing and establishing your organisation's approach to safeguarding.
- Play a lead role in maintaining and reviewing your organisation's plan for safeguarding.
- Create, review (annually) and distribute the safeguarding policy, procedures and safeguarding resources throughout Ellel Ministries.
- Advise on training needs and development.
- Provide or source training where appropriate.
- Provide safeguarding advice and support to staff and volunteers.
- Ensure all staff are aware of who the safeguarding co-ordinator and deputy safeguarding co-ordinator are and how and when to contact them.
- Manage safeguarding concerns, allegations or incidents reported to your organisation.
- Manage referrals to key safeguarding agencies (e.g. social services or police) of any incidents or allegations of abuse and harm.
- Maintain accurate and secure records.
- Ensuring Ellel Ministries has sufficient safer recruitment procedures.
- Complete children and adult's safeguarding training, and safeguarding leads training at regular intervals.

Safeguarding Trustee Lead

The Safeguarding Trustee Lead has the responsibility to:

- Consider the organisation's strategic plans and make sure they reflect safeguarding legislation, regulations specific to Ellel Ministries' activities, statutory guidance, and the safeguarding expectations of the Charities Commission.
- Work with the designated safeguarding lead regularly to review whether the things the organisation has put in place are creating a safer culture and keeping people safe.
- Ensure the organisation's risk register reflects safeguarding risks properly and plans sensible measures to take, including relevant insurance for trustees liability.
- Secure space on the agenda for safeguarding reports and help trustees understand and respond to those reports.
- Ensure an annual review of safeguarding policies and procedures takes place and that this is reported to the Board of Trustees.
- Understand Ellel Ministries monitoring process to ensure that safeguarding policies and procedures are effective.
- Call for audits of qualitative and quantitative safeguarding data (either internal or external) when needed.
- Act as the point of contact for those claiming a lack of action in relation to safeguarding concerns.
- Attend relevant safeguarding training events and conferences.
- Support the trustees in developing their individual and collective understanding of safeguarding.
- Work with the designated safeguarding lead in order to manage all serious safeguarding cases.

Local Safeguarding Officer

- Implement safeguarding policies and procedures as provided by Ellel Ministries International.
- Keep up to date on the latest safeguarding policies and procedures
- Provide training and support to staff and volunteers on safeguarding issues.
- Raise awareness about safeguarding practices and the importance of protecting vulnerable individuals.
- Handle reports of safeguarding concerns or incidents.
- Conduct investigations into reported concerns and take appropriate action, in conjunction with the Safeguarding lead.
- Provide support to individuals who have been affected by safeguarding issues.
- Advocate for the rights and protection of vulnerable individuals.
- Share information and best practices to improve safeguarding measures.
- Monitor the effectiveness of safeguarding policies and procedures.
- Evaluate safeguarding practices and update them as needed in consultation with the Safeguarding Lead and Safeguarding Officer.