

# 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.

## 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. Recognise the dynamics of power/power imbalance in our ministries and will ensure that our positions will not be misused.
5. 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.
6. Undertake regular risk assessments, taking note of guests and/or team who may require additional support or care.
7. Provide easy access to the safeguarding policy and reporting process for all team members, volunteers and guests through both electronic and physical media.
8. Provide easy access to details of Safeguarding Officers and Leads and their contact email.
9. Respond to any report of safeguarding issues in a timely manner.
10. 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 Spiritual Abuse Policy)

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## Safeguarding Contact

[safeguarding@ellel.org](mailto:safeguarding@ellel.org)

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## PROCEDURES

### 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
- 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)
- Misuse of Power

On receipt of a safeguarding report or complaint, whether that be verbal or written, the following procedure must take place in a timely manner (N.B. verbal complaints should be written out for future records):

- 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.
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- 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.

## 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](mailto: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.

# 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.
- Best Teaching Practice

## A Definition of Spiritual Abuse

Spiritual Abuse is covered in UK Law as psychological harm. For the purposes of this document, we have adopted this definition:

*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.

## 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.

## SPECTRUM OF BEHAVIOURS



## 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.

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## Safeguarding Contact

[safeguarding@ellel.org](mailto:safeguarding@ellel.org)

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## Review and Monitoring

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