**Spiritual, alternative and faith organisations in Glastonbury: their challenges and resources**

**Dione Hills, Tavistock Institute, with contributions from those interviewed**

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*‘I think some spiritual organisations can have – and we have had – ups and downs – and you lose the heart – or it becomes too body or too head. It’s about recognising where the organisation is and whether all three are in balance’*

*Interviewee.*

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# Summary

During 2019 and 2020, a small piece of research was undertaken, sponsored by the Tavistock Institute (London) and the Glaston Centre (Glastonbury). This involved interviews with nine people involved in spiritual and alternative organisations in Glastonbury, many of which currently make a significant contribution to the economy and culture of the town. The economy of the town in particular, has received a considerable boost in recent years from the investment of talent and money represented by such organisations, which provide employment and skill development for local residents as well as attracting visitors to the town, boosting demand for accommodation and other local services.

Although many people come to the town with an interest in establishing new activities and businesses, the path to success is not always easy. Some lack prior experience, and in addition to the usual challenges of establishing a new business or running a successful organisation, have to cope with a highly transient population of visitors and residents including some who are going through life (emotional and spiritual) crises. Given the level of competition, finding and keeping customers and volunteers can prove be harder than anticipated.

The organisations represented by those interviewed were relatively stable and well established, but interviewees were still able to describe a range of challenges both in their own and in other organisations in the town both currently and in previous years. These included both the practical challenges of establishing a successful business, but more specifically, finding a suitable structure and leadership approach that was both flexible enough to respond to changing circumstances and robust enough to provide stability and reflect their original vision. People described how their personal or spiritual experience and experience of establishing businesses or of spiritually inspired organisations prior to coming to Glastonbury, had helped them manage these challenges. Informal support from others, both inside their own organisations or elsewhere in the town, was also important, with four of those interviewed themselves providing support and training to others seeking to establish or running businesses in the town, either on a formal or informal basis. Turning to external or more formal sources of support (consultants, mentors, advisors) was relatively rare, although there was some appetite for help in specific areas – particularly on finding styles of management, solutions to business challenges or ways to facilitate groups and meetings that chimed with their personal values, practices and beliefs.

This could be particularly important for those who lacked experience recent developments in the areas of employment practice and in equal opportunities (understanding of structural inequalities of racism, sexism etc). In addition to the legal obligations, leaders in spiritual and alternative organisations are often dealing with vulnerable clients, customers, staff and volunteers, making self- awareness, and a willingness to be challenged by colleagues and others in their network, particularly important.

As the research itself was limited, it was not possible to say with confidence that the views of those interviewed are representative of all ‘alternative and spiritual’ organisations in the town. Nor can anything be said definitively about the extent to which such organisations contribute to the economy and culture of the town. It does, however, indicate that a more thorough exploration of both of these, together with further exploration of whether there are any support or resources that might be provided, would be helpful in further ensuring the successful – and safe - development and functioning of this part of the town’s economy.

# Introduction

This report is an account research undertaken during 2019 and early 2020, with the aim of exploring the challenges facing those involved in spiritual and alternative organisations in the Glastonbury, and the resources that might be helpful in supporting them. It also provides an indication of the contribution that such organisations make to the economy and cultural life of the town, indicating areas where this could be enhanced by further research.

Many people have moved to Glastonbury in recent years, some of whom have sought to set up alternative or spiritual businesses or organisations in the area. In some respects, Glastonbury is the perfect location for such activities, with its rapidly growing ‘alternative’ culture, together with a long history of attracting ‘pilgrims’ drawn by the abbey and rich legendary culture of the area.

The influx of ‘alternative’ ventures has not always chimed comfortably with the traditional economy and culture of the town, but there can be little doubt that these have represented an important contribution to the vibrancy of the area. Such activities often representing significant new investment and employment opportunities and attract visitors and tourists who then contribute to the wellbeing of other local businesses. However, the sheer number of such activities in the town can also present challenges to the would-be entrepreneur. Some of these, such as finding a successful business model, premises staff and volunteers, face any small business, charity, community or faith organisation. But there are also challenges are unique to the character and energies of Glastonbury itself. An exploration of these challenges was part of the aim of this study.

The study was supported by the Glaston Centre and is part of a larger research project (being undertaken by the Tavistock Institute, London) looking at the challenges that face spiritual and religious organisations, and how these are handled. The nine people interviewed represented some of the more established organisations in the town, which all make a significant contribution to its cultural and economic life. They also representing a range of different roles and experience: some are leaders and founders of their organisation, others were involved as staff or volunteers or, in some cases, participants in activities. All brought a range of experience to the discussion, some based in their involvement in organisations in the town, and some from their involvement in spiritual and alternative organisations, and mainstream business activities elsewhere.

The terms ‘alternative and spiritual’ have been used as broad catch-all terms that encompasses a wide range of different activities which are generally associated with ‘New Age[[1]](#footnote-1)’, environmental and new religious movements (NRM)[[2]](#footnote-2). The terms ‘spirituality’ and ‘faith’ can mean very different things to different people and spiritual and alternative organisations can come in a wide variety of shapes and sizes, from loose movements, collectives or communities of fellow seekers, to more formal organisational arrangements. Most of the organisations in which those interviewed were involved were relatively well established, several as charities, with objectives that usually included a ‘spiritual’ dimension alongside other aims such as seeking to preserve or promote the town’s rich history and mythology, support its diverse community or bring about greater environmental awareness. One of the organisations – the Glastonbury Abbey Trust – can in no way be construed as ‘alternative’ but does represent a faith-based organisation facing some interesting challenges when operating within an ‘alternative’ environment.

## The research

Interviews with the nine people selected were based on a topic guide, although often strayed into other areas. The main topics were:

* Current organisation
* Background and experience
* Experience of the challenges of spiritual organisations (in their own organisation or elsewhere)
* How these were handled and what they learned
* What additional support might be useful

The interviews were recorded, and notes taken, and the notes then examined to see what topics emerged. The topics were then clustered int broad themes, which form the structure for the rest of the report. These were

* The unique character of Glastonbury as a setting for alternative spiritual organisations
* Practical challenges: (money, premises, staff and volunteers, legal and organisational structures)
* Emotional and ethical challenges
* Leadership challenges
* Support and resources
* Conclusions and thoughts for further action

Many quotes and examples from the interviews have been included in this report, in order to fully reflect the wealth of experience of those interviewed. However, in order to preserve confidentiality, the wording has sometimes been changed slightly: no personal pronouns are used or names of organisations provided, except when the text has been approved by the interviewee, or is taken from information publicly available on websites.

## Unique character of Glastonbury

The economic life of Glastonbury was for many centuries dominated by its large Abbey and the pilgrims this attracted to the area, but this ended with the dissolution of the Abbey in 1536. Since then, Glastonbury has operated like a relatively conventional market town, with an economy underpinned by farming, tourism and the proximity of larger centres of population such as Wells, Shepton Mallet, Bristol and Bath. However, over the last 40 years a new economy has emerged which in some ways harks back to the earlier Abbey days. This began in the early 20th century when people with an interest in Celtic Christianity and western esoteric traditions began to be attracted to the town[[3]](#footnote-3). The abbey returned to church ownership around this time, but the interest was also stimulated by a growing interest in Celtic beliefs, together with the rich mythological history of the town, with its stories of Joseph of Arimathea, King Author and his knights and their mysterious grail quests. Another wave of visitors began arriving in the mid 1960’s, building in part on the same interest as the earlier arrivals, but bringing with them a new set of interests which might be described as ‘alternative’, New Age, ‘Hippy’ or more academically, ‘New religious movements’[[4]](#footnote-4). The town became a magnet for healers, teachers and seekers from a wide range of traditions, with an ‘alternative’ economy emerging, with shops, cafes, retreat centres and spiritual and alternative events catering for a new kind of visitor. This began to change the look and character of its High St[[5]](#footnote-5). Further stimulus came from the establishment of large scale events, such as the annual Glastonbury music festival at Pilton (from 1969), Children’s Festival and the Goddess Conference (from 1996) alongside smaller events such as body mind spirit or vegan fairs in the Town Hall or Assembly rooms, workshops and courses taking place in venues throughout the town.

All of those interviewed were ‘incomers’ to the town: some had lived in Glastonbury for many (over 30) years, while others were relative new -comers. All but one had been attracted to the area because of its alternative culture. Six had been part of the establishment of businesses or spiritual organisations in the town, the others either working or volunteering in such organisations.

All had something to say about the challenges that living and working in the middle of an ‘alternative’ community could present. These were sometimes attributed large number of alternative and spiritual organisations in the town, to the eclectic, transient and sometimes vulnerable or volatile character of its visitors, or to the somewhat ‘pressure cooker’ nature of the environment that these create. Others talked of a special ‘Glastonbury energy’ adding to the challenge. One person described this as ‘swirling around, like at Delphi or Arunachala (a holy mountain in southern India), another attributed the energy to ‘the sacred landscape’ while another identified this with the Goddess of Avalon: ‘She is in energies, a powerful and attractive force which attracts anyone on a spiritual path. People interpret the experience according to their belief-system, it is conditioned by what they already know.’

The energy seen by one person as adding dynamism to the economic and creative activities in the town:

Glastonbury is a place of new ideas and experimentation and [My organisation] is always going to go with what is arising – fits in with this. Why? I suppose I’m a believer in sacred landscape and there a few places in the world where you get a hill in the middle of a flat plane. There is water dropping out of hills coming under the marshes coming up into the Tor. It might not just be the water, but I have a sense that the water creates a whole jangly movement.

On the positive side, as noted above, this created an environment full of creativity and experimentation or, as one person noted, ‘It puts a smile on my face’. One person felt that Glastonbury itself wanted people to succeed.

If we could begin to look at higher consciousness and how does inspiration work – how have these very successful businesses arising in a place like Glastonbury – why are they there. The place itself wants to be available – it wants people to come here and crank themselves up a notch in consciousness – that’s what it does.

However, on the other side, there was also talk of ‘dark forces’ or ‘dark energies’ in the area, although two of the three who mentioned these claimed not to experience these themselves. One person noted that these energies could undermine attempts to get projects and businesses going, as well as affecting individuals:

When you start a project in Glastonbury, the forces of entropy don’t want it to happen. The one thing they can’t cope with is clarity. Any uncertainty and they will leap in, but they cannot penetrate clarity. These forces are not evil; [they are] forces of mischief. I call them forces of entropy because they don’t want anything to be built. And it’s only built because there is absolute clarity about what it is. I don’t see it as darkness – I haven’t experienced it as darkness – I see it as tricksters, a destabilising force.

All of the above have relevance to the challenges mentioned in the sections below. In the practical challenges section, the high level of competition in the town was mentioned, creating challenges for establishing a successful business or finding, and keeping, volunteers. In the section on emotional and ethical challenges, there was mention of the difficulty of maintaining continuity and dealing with some of the more vulnerable people who became involved in their organisations. This raised issues, discussed in the next section, of finding a suitable style of leadership and management. Finally, there is a discussion of the resources that people had used or would like to see available to others in a similar position in the future and some conclusions on what steps might be taken to develop these further.

# Practical challenges

Setting up any business or new enterprise brings a set of very practical challenges. Some are internal to the organisation: finding a successful business model, premises, customers, and clientele. Others concern how best to relate to the world outside, to the public and potential users of products or services, to other local organisations and how to negotiate the many rules and regulations that govern business and charitable organisations.

## Money

One of the first tasks of any organisation is to find a viable ‘business’ strategy that generates sufficient resources to cover basic outgoings. Several of the organisations represented in this report are heavily dependent on volunteers and the unpaid time of their founders and trustees. All have aims which reflect a specific ‘alternative’, faith based or spiritual world view and set of values. However, even an organisation heavily dependent on volunteers and holding strongly alternative or spiritual aims, has to find some source of income that can cover the cost of renting premises, running activities or establishing a website. This, noted one interviewee, will often involve finding a ‘product’ to sell, whether this is in terms of physical objects (gifts, books) or a service that others are willing to pay for.

People are called spiritually to Glastonbury – when they arrive – if they’ve no conventional jobs they have to start selling something. But the only customers with money are people who aren’t spiritually aware – so they are forced to sell trinket that people with money will buy. And people say how appalling – look how commercial it has all become -but this is perfectly fine – these are non-commercial people and they very sensible created something that people want to buy. Whether it’s a service, or a book, or a trinket and with that money they can afford to live a modest life and be spiritual…… It’s about designing your particular way of generating cash.

The process of translating spiritual inspiration into practical business interests is also reported in earlier research studies focusing on Glastonbury[[6]](#footnote-6). All the organisations represented in this report currently had a regular source of income, even if relatively small and unpredictable. This came from subscriptions (e.g. the Glastonbury Abbey and Avalon library), running courses and events, rental of premises and shops and the sales of books and gifts. Some had been established by legacy gifts of money or property (or both). Five were registered charities, and this potentially opens the way to receiving funds through charitable donations, bequests, and external grants. There were mixed views about grant funding. One person observed that it was difficult for spiritual organisations to apply for mainstream funding sources:

We don’t always tick the relevant boxes – as soon as you put spiritual, or pilgrimage or anything to do with spiritual, 89% will run away. Being able to keep it in the mundane and suitable for the secular world but keeping and holding the heart and holding the spirit of something can be very challenging.

One of the organisation specifically provides funding for local alternative, community and environmental organisations, but was sceptical of organisations that continued to depend on external grants.

We have to see a plan of how you are going to generate income. We are supported by trading and we want [those we fund] to be supported by commercial activities. We help them get their assets together. We don’t mind what source [but they] need to become a self- sustaining organisation. They will always collapse if dependent on grant or government income.

 It was, however, recognised that becoming financially viable could be a major challenge, particularly when for those who lacked prior entrepreneurial experience or knowledge of handling accounts or marketing. Three of those interviewed were involved in helping organisations in these areas, either through providing financial support, mentoring or coaching – the latter sometimes on a formal but often on a more informal basis. The Glaston Centre had recently received financial support to provide a more formal business mentoring service.

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| **The Glastonbury Trust**A bequest from Helene Koppejan, owner of the Glastonbury Experience, led to the establishment of the Glastonbury Trust charity in 1997, whose charitable objects are to benefit the public through the advancement of religion, education, citizenship & the community and environmental protection or improvement. Since that time the charity has provided funding and grant support to dozens of individuals, community groups and schools in the local area. The Trust focuses on supporting start-ups for community organisations, encouraging them to become self-sufficient as social enterprises, rather than relying on ongoing grant funding. The Trust supports community owned buildings and land, believing that asset locked community property will provide opportunities for future generations. Particularly relevant to the local economy has been its support for local enterprise through initiatives such as the Red Brick Building, Glastonbury Opportunities, Mendip Community Credit Union and Somerset Trust for Sustainable Development.. The Trust has also worked extensively with local schools in outdoor learning activities. The Trust has given regular grants for rental support to Glaston Centre Ltd, [[the Isle of Avalon Foundation](http://isleofavalonfoundation.com/), Library of Avalon](http://libraryofavalon.org.uk/) and the Glastonbury Goddess Temple.*For more information about the Glastonbury Trust see* <https://glastonburytrust.org/> |

## Premises

 Alongside a viable income, most organisations (unless completely virtual or run from someone’s home) need premises in which to hold activities, provide a service or sell their wares. Two of the organisations had the advantage of having the use of property bequeathed by earlier benefactors. The others currently leased or rented premises which were relatively secure. The town is particularly well endowed, both with small shops and venues for events, in buildings such as the Assembly Rooms, Town Hall and Glastonbury Experience Courtyard and surrounding rooms. However, new organisations can sometimes find it difficult to find a place from which to function, especially before they have sufficient income to rent or buy property of their own. The Pilgrim’s centre, for example (case study example in section 3) had to move a few times before arriving at its current site.

One uniquely ‘Glastonbury’ challenge is the rich historical and mythical heritage of some of the physical sites in the town, and the difficulty of managing diverse and sometimes competing expectations of how these should be used. This was reported to have been experienced by several sites in the town, including the Abbey grounds, the Chalice and White Wells.

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| **Shared space**Glastonbury Abbey has the interesting challenge of having guardianship of a large open space in the middle of the town, which attracts over 100,000 visitors a year (in addition to a membership of over nearly 3000 people). As the interviewee noted, the Trust is custodian of a spiritual site with a life of its own that predates the organisation itself. Although an independent charity (with ex officio members from the Diocese of Bath and Wells diocese) it is required to promote Christianity according to the doctrines of the Church of England. People often do not understand what kind of organisation it is – they think it is National Trust or English Heritage property or belongs to the Church of England. In reality it is entirely independent from other organisation and relies entirely on its own income.Although the site is open to everyone of all or no faith, any activities of a non-Christian nature must be respectful of the Christian context of the site. The Abbey is quite unique in this respect. ‘Having spoken to other types of organisations, they don’t have the same issues. A cathedral is clearly a religious space, but the Abbey also has people coming for history, archaeology, and the natural environment. We have to keep all of these in mind, and cater for everyone, without this impacting on other groups, which is a bit of a balancing act.There is that perception of it as a public space – it’s such a wide-open space – but members also feel they have a stake in the space and are interested in what goes on here. From a spiritual point of view, there may be Christians who feel protective of what happens here – but also alternative people who feel they have guardianship of it too – this can work in our favour, or be challengingThings have come from more vernacular myths – people form their own stories with no input from us. There is a goddess interpretation of this – and an increase of Muslim visitors coming through wanting to see the footprint of Jesus on the egg stone and asking the ticket office where is the footprint of Jesus . A myth that seems of have arisen in recent years by itself.There is a triangle of the landscape, the myths and the intentions people bring with them which feed into each other. There are lots of different interpretations of the myths and lots of different intentions. People come to mark stages in their own life, or to celebrate things in community with other people, or something personal to them.People can come here and be completely free to meditate – but it’s when they are impeding other people through their actions – they may not realise – or may not care… The difficulties do seem to be increasing where we have groups monopolising space. For example, groups encircling Arthur’s grave, and then we have the official guides coming through. When a group books, we may have no idea what they are planning to do, so we are trying to get a clearer idea of what’s people’s intentions in coming, and getting a clear idea of what’s acceptable and not acceptable. In recent years, the trust has been seeking to gather more information about the kind of activities that visitors would like to see at the Abbey, experimenting with different kinds of activities, and talking to other organisations with similar challenges. It has been more important to know what people want to do rather than what they believe. There is a lot of cross over. The myths of the Abbey are vernacular Christianity. People may not call themselves Christian but still be very interested in Mary Magdeline, Joseph of Aramathea. One person may consider themselves a Christian but another Christian may not consider them a Christian.The Trust hasn’t yet come to a conclusion on how to manage people doing different activities without heavy policing. The interviewee mentioned talking to the National trust at Avebury, where a forum of locals and local groups has been set up to come up with behaviour rules to help people to know.We want to enable people to do what they want – we have to find our way through – every group is different. what not to do and what’s required. This could be quite difficult to hold together. *For more information about the Glastonbury Abbey see*<https://www.glastonburyabbey.com/> |

## Marketing

Financial success depends on being seen as interesting and attractive, to those attending events or buying products, or offering to volunteer and support its activities. This can be challenging in a town in which there is much competition. Three people mentioned finding the numbers in attendance at activities highly variable and unpredictable.

The biggest challenge was building numbers. Perhaps people in Glastonbury are a bit more flexible about whether they turn up or not – there are certainly many other draws on people’s time in Glastonbury than in many places.

[When it] started off, it was a rip roaring success – got a lot of attention, a lot of work, a lot of clients – and then it withered away. When it got down to 8 people it wasn’t worthwhile – took a lot of effort to set up, hire a room, bring all my materials in. Glastonbury is quite faddish – people commit to - you know what you are doing and you price it – important not to be too Glastonbury centric – there is so much going on here.

Glastonbury is faddish – a very fickle audience – there is so much here. Lots of splinter groups.

The most successful organisations were often those with a broad reach, relying more on attracting people from outside of Glastonbury, and bringing them into the town, than entirely on a local audience. Some organisations claim to have a considerable national and international reach via their websites, with a new development (encouraged by the COVID 19 lock down and availability of on line meeting platforms like zoom) being the provision of courses and sessions online rather than in person.

Q. How many people do you reach? A. [we have a] Face group book which I started which has the social media reach – we have different strands running reaching different groups of people plus the people coming through [the organisation’s public space]. A difficult question – perhaps 10 to 20,000 . I look at the reach on the stats: the number of people engaging with the website.

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| **Glastonbury Goddess Conference**Glastonbury Goddess Conference was initiated and created in 1996 with the intention of making Goddess visible, and bringing Her presence as a lived experience out into the world. Initially an annual three day event held in the Assembly Rooms, in 2000 it moved to the Town Hall, becoming a six day event, with activities taking place at multiple locations within and around the Town. It now attracts about 500 visitors from across the world most of whom stay in the town in local accommodation, often for up to a fortnight. *For more information about the Goddess Conference, see* <https://goddessconference.com/information/> |

## Legal structures

Establishing an organisation as a legal entity is another important step in its evolution. Five of the organisations were established as charitable trusts and two were companies limited by guarantee. As with seeking grant funding, becoming a charity can prove difficult for an ‘alternative’ or spiritual organisation, particularly if not part of one of the main-stream religions. One organisation had been challenged in relation to their environmental and educational aims at time when environmental issues were still seen as political rather than charitable in purpose (this has now changed) while education activities had to be provided by suitably trained and qualified teachers. Another organisation has chosen not to go down the route of taking on a legal status because of the bureaucracy (paper, money, lawyers) involved. Another interviewee mentioned the extensive work required to get their course approved as a (NVQ) qualification, something that had requiring years of work and study, in order to become familiar with and address all the requirements. However, overall, choosing an appropriate legal structure was not mentioned as a major or current challenge.

## Staff and volunteers

All but one of organisations had at least one paid member of staff (or founder/entrepreneur). with numbers reaching 90 (albeit mainly on sessional or occasional free-lance services basis) for one organisation. Most also had opportunities for volunteers, often in the running of public facing activities, while also relying heavily on the unpaid services of their founders and trustees behind the scenes. Although not specifically asked about this, several of those interviewed mentioned that they did not draw a full-time income from one (their main) organisation but had a number of different sources of income (including personal wealth, provision of individual sessions in therapy or consultancy, providing tours and courses).

Volunteering has widely been demonstrated as having positive mental and physical health benefits for volunteers, improving their social contacts and social skills, as well (sometimes) as providing skills and experience to enables them to find paid employment[[7]](#footnote-7). Many alternative and spiritual organisations have a strong ethos of service and of people donating their time and energy, motivated by their commitment to their organisations’ beliefs and values, or as a means of acquiring spiritual experience and benefit. One interviewee questioned whether this kind of activity could be seen as the same as ‘volunteering’ of a more conventional kind:

‘It’s about passion and desire to do something – not the same as a volunteer. I do my job but I’m not paid for it and never have been. I’m paid for part of my job but there is a large other part for which I’ve never been paid.

Another raised the question of whether some of the ‘volunteering’ could also shade into exploitation:

I do loads of stuff I’m not paid for. You have to make that decision for yourself – and when it’s not feeling in balance then talk about it – because one person’s exploitation is another person’s willing service. It isn’t straight forward.

Although having a team of volunteers – or unpaid contributions by members – could extend the resources of an organisation it could also present considerable challenges, not least because of the number of other organisations in the town potentially competing for the time of would be volunteers. Four interviewees identified difficulties in finding – and keeping – volunteers as a major organisational challenge.

Commitment – people are fickle in Glastonbury – if you don’t quite feed what they are looking for, then they will move on quite quickly – so finding a enough on a volunteer basis and keeping it bedded in is quite a challenge.

Keeping and herding the volunteers is a huge challenge – volunteer egos come in with I’m going to do this and no one else can do this – I’m going to transform your organisation.

The challenge is to create the right reciprocity that keeps the volunteers engaged and at the same time keeps them on message and efficient, so they are not time wasters. In any voluntary organisation you have people who are time wasters, or off message, or have mental health issues – because they have too much time on their hands.

The last of these quotes suggests some of the challenges mentioned in the next section. This was the need to support some of those involved in their organisation, whether as customers, staff or volunteers, to navigate major transition they were going through in their life. The other challenge was maintaining continuity in the face of individuals coming into the organisation, making a big impact and then leaving – something explored in the section four, on leadership.

# Spiritual, emotional and ethical challenges

The majority of those interviewed had more to say about the spiritual and emotional challenges of living and working in Glastonbury than they did about the practical challenges. This was possibly because of the nature of their organisation, or even what they perceived to be the researcher’s orientation and interest. However, it may also have been because the practical challenges mentioned above were not currently causing any major concerns.

## Spiritual and emotional crises

Whether it is a feature of Glastonbury, with its ‘hot house’ energy, is unclear, but nearly everyone mentioned the emotional and spiritual turmoil that people can experience when visiting, living and working in Glastonbury. This was partly attributed to the fact that the town attracts many people who are in the middle of a spiritual or emotional crises, with their visit or move to the town an expression of a seeking for a teaching, way of life and community better attuned to a new and emerging spiritual identity.

One interviewee, with many years of experience in supporting people in finding their spiritual path, described the upheaval that is attendant on having new spiritual insights.

In any spiritual development group and every spiritual community or organisation, one person in ten is either going into, experiencing or coming out of a spiritual crisis. What I mean is, they’ve had a life event or doing spiritual practices which meant that they had a kind of conversion experience, a genuine religious or spiritual experience, and that experience sped them through an identity shift that was so fast that they temporarily lose their sense of integration and stability and ability to function. The symptoms vary from what looks like a burn out to a evangelical pomposity.

The thing I notice is that if people we employ as paid workers or volunteers have not previously worked for a spiritual organisation, then more often than not, their move to work or volunteer with us is symbolic of a life change for them……a metaphor for the fact that they are shifting in their lives. Which means that I now expect anybody who works or volunteers in a spiritual organisation to have a 12 month induction period as opposed to a half day induction….Probably in cloisters, in enclosed religious groups, the wise abbess or abbot is very aware that the newbies are going through a process of identity shift which will throw up many issues. How you understand those issues will depend on how you understand psychology.

Recognition that arriving in the town, or at a cross-road in one’s own spiritual path, could leave some people in need of support and guidance was part of the stimulus leading to the establishment of the Pilgrim Reception centre.

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| **A Reception Centre for Glastonbury ‘Pilgrims’**The idea of a reception centre to help visitors drawn to Glastonbury has been around for a number of years, alongside a broader vision of establishing a centre of transformation in Glastonbury.We were told we had to have a place to receive the pilgrims. In the days of the Abbey there was always a monk at the Abbey gate. Pilgrims knocked on the gate, and he opened and said – ‘How can we help you’ and he would tell you what you could get as a pilgrim by coming to Glastonbury…..The Pilgrim Reception Centre was to be set up as the monk at the gate. It took a while to turn this idea into a reality, but in 2008 the local ‘Glaston Group’ established the first Pilgrim Reception Centre in Church Lane. Over the next few years, it had to move several times because of lack of funding and suitable premises, but in 2010 it was taken on as part of the newly established Glaston Centre (a not-for-profit Compan). In 2018 it became part of the newly createdGlastonbury Information Centre in Magdalene Street alongside the Glastonbury Tourist Information Centre. From this very visible location, and with the support of a team of volunteers, the Centre provides practical information and spiritual support to visitors and local residents.*For more information about the Pilgirms Reception Centre, see*https://www.unitythroughdiversity.org/ |

As well as a team of volunteers available to provide information and support for those arriving (or living) in the town, the Pilgrim Reception Centre also provides information on its website about spiritual crises, their causes and symptoms, together with advice on self-care and where to get support.

It's well known that on a spiritual journey, whether physical or metaphorical, that a pilgrim may encounter 'perils and pitfalls'. In Jerusalem they have coined the phrase 'The Jerusalem Effect' to describe the malaise experienced by some of their pilgrim visitors and the Glastonbury community has noticed its own version of this, calling it 'A Glastonbury Experience'.  One of the stages in the experience is known as ‘spiritual crisis’  and can be described as a turbulent period of deep spiritual opening and transformation and during this time, we come to question the world around us, our own selves and our beliefs (taken from (<https://www.unitythroughdiversity.org/spiritual-crisis.html>)

The webpage includes a helpful distinction between a spiritual crisis and psychotic break, taken from the work of Stanslav Grof, founder of the spiritual emergency network.

There *is* a difference between a spiritual crisis and a true psychotic break. People who are in spiritual crisis are still very lucid and have a sense of their own inner processes. Typically, they realise that the changes in their experiential world are due to the changes they are experiencing within and are not the cause of external events. The person afflicted by a true psychosis lacks the insight that the condition has something to do with their own psyche (Grof & Grof, 1990, The Stormy Search for the Self. pp. 43-44).

If understood, and where necessary supported appropriately, a spiritual crisis can be deeply transformative, offering the possibility of breakthrough rather than breakdown. (taken from (<https://www.unitythroughdiversity.org/spiritual-crisis.html>)

The Glaston Centre has also built a team now working with the Spiritual Crisis Network and has established a group in Somerset based in Glastonbury.

The Glastonbury energy (described earlier) was seen by several of those interviewed contributing to any emotional or spiritual turmoil that is being experienced. This could also be particularly powerful to those newly arrived in the town.

For me – healing emotional and physical is one of the most important thing that needs to happen – it’s the thing people come to Glastonbury for. Almost all have a Glastonbury experience – whether its immediate or a couple of years down the line -if they hang out in the energy it will take them down – it took me down several times.

One person felt that the town’s culture and spiritual activities could also encourage people to be more open, and an acceptance – or even indulgence -of emotional and spiritual crises that people in mainstream culture or mainstream organisation might ignore or push through.

If they were put in a mainstream organisation they would struggle, the pace at which some people work, the level at which they get stressed. I think in mainstream organisations you kind of have to get on with it because that’s the predominant dna. But wounds are indulged more in spiritual organisations – and I think they are more tender, up on the surface, and I’m having to learn how to work more effectively in this context.

## Dealing with emotional and spiritual crises

Whatever the causes, having participants in activities, including staff and volunteers who were going through an emotional or spiritual crisis could be very demanding on everyone involved. Different ‘strategies’ for dealing with this were mentioned. One person described the importance of identifying when people were heading towards a crisis in its early stages:

You need to spot it coming, take the person aside and say if you do not stop meditating or fasting you are heading for a brick wall: eat food, exercise, stop meditating. Then you can stop that whole fragmentation process. Once they are in the fragmentation process it’s a long haul to recover; it can take anything from 3 months to several years.

Another reported encouraging people to take care of their needs at the same time as not letting it interfere with the task in hand:

So when something like that comes up we breath, we get present, we move through it, we have agreed thing that we do. Wrap yourself in blanket, or you can ask for someone to hold you. When we agreed this, people stopped asking for it. They knew they could have it all, but I said we will continue to do the task as well. It’s not a therapy group.

Taking care of themselves, for another interviewee, could mean allowing staff and volunteers to not come into work if they felt things getting on top of them.

I had to learn to adapt to the jangle – and I work here where the greatest jangle is - and my concern is, I’m employing these people and I have to warn them (doesn’t help). I warn (the person working in the office) if any day when it feels really shit to come here, don’t come. Because that’s what happens. You walk down and feel – oh my god – and the best thing to do is to turn round and go back – I’ve specifically said to them ‘Do not come here – only come here when it feels right’.

Although an organisation might try to put in place support for those going through a crisis, in the end this often came down to the time and energy of others in the organisation provided out of kindness, rather than as a ‘paid’ role.

I’ve seen and experienced it so many times. [People] need to break down so they can become more of who they are. There aren’t really systems in place – and I don’t know what a system would be like. Different individuals need different things and different approaches to helping them…..I don’t think there is a one fits all solution – there could be more – but again – for us – it’s what people give of from their hearts – not a paid job. People do support one another- there is a lot of love and kindness and now. So a lot of people are very caring and loving – for an individual going through stuff – but it’s not easy.

While most people took the responsibility of looking after those who were experiencing difficulties seriously, it was nevertheless experienced as being draining and tiring at times, and a source of disappointment when someone, having gone through a crisis and received support, then went off to join another organisation.

We can’t rely on people to remain… [you can] spend hours supporting someone and then they suddenly goes ‘I’ve leaving’. It [can] hurt so much – you put so much time and energy into them – and they are so ungrateful. They’ve gone into a Glastonbury experience; they have to disintegrate.

Providing appropriate care at the same time as maintaining the effective functioning of an organisation in the face of staff and volunteers going through spiritual and emotional crises – or having their spiritual path take them off in a different direction - could also be demanding.

The risks are being unable to develop a stable organisation. If you want to get something firmly bedded in then it has to be on a solid foundation and when you have people who are constantly pulling the rug out from underneath you because they’ve suddenly decide to go off to India…. then that they can completely dismantle something you’ve got in the structure. So it’s about preparing, so folks are able to do that. Not depending on them too much and yet at the same time allowing them their input and structure into the organisations – it can prove risky – it is risky.

## Ethics and boundaries

Having potentially vulnerable clientele, staff and volunteers means that ethics and boundaries are very important, particularly to ensure that people are appropriately supported, and not exploited or further damaged. There was some criticism that processes to ensure the safety of participants in some local organisations (but not, of course, in their own) were not always robust as they should be. Only one person specifically mentioned ‘charlatans’ operating in the area, but more than one mentioned the potential for emotional, spiritual, sexual, financial abuse that can happen when organisations lack clear ethical guidelines, or policies and processes for addressing inequalities or handling complaints and redress.

One person felt that there were local organisations who did not have in place some of the basic legal protections required for staff and volunteers, possibly because those running the organisation had little knowledge or understanding of these.

Something I’ve found time and time again –[local organisations] think they are way ahead of the mainstream – they may even demonise the mainstream – the mainstream is terrible, think they are ahead of it. But myself and quite a few others are saying – the mainstream has moved miles since they were in it (if they ever were in it) – and in the mainstream people get looked after much better than you have here….. People aren’t given contracts when they ask for them, they don’t have terms of employment -….. if it was public sector – it just couldn’t happen.

Most challenging is lack of attention to risks, if you don’t have health and safety looked at, if you don’t have insurance in place, if you don’t give people employment contracts, don’t give people breaks. In the public sector there some basic principles and legalities that if you don’t adhere to them, then you are not being responsible. There are very real dangers and potential harm. What I don’t understand is why you wouldn’t want to. I would never just want to comply with the letter of the law but to go beyond this. To treat people like family members. But I find spiritual organisations often underpay -they exploit – from a public sector perspective there’s a level of exploitation.

Similarly, it was felt that organisations often did not have recognised processes through which people could give feedback or complain if they were dissatisfied with the service they received, or about their treatment as a member of staff or volunteer.

No feedback sheets are given, CPD (Continual Professional Development) isn’t considered. Teaching and learning practices are variable, and people either love it or get adversely affected by it – and some walk away. In mainstream education there is more discussion and feedback about what went well or not so well, or why people leave.

Ethical abuse can be obvious (as in financial exploitation or failure to properly take care of staff and volunteers) or subtle, as in the ‘scapegoating’ of those who fail to fit in with ‘accepted’ behaviour. The usual result was described as either someone leaving an organisation voluntarily or being asked to leave. However, this could be challenging if someone had come to Glastonbury to be part of a particular organisation or community, but were then left isolated, unable to draw on the support and friendship previously provided.

[I] literally sat at home for 6 months with no support. When there is collusion – group think- one person is psychically squashed – scape-goated – all the disowned parts go into that person. In Gestalt they would be called the identified patient, the person who does anger for the group. I took the disowned parts of aggression and was pushed out. You will get it wherever you go – but particularly virulent here because of the supercharged energies -and the leaders with spiritual blind spots so you have a shit storm of intensified, magnified distortions going both ways.

Another person felt that those involved in local organisation could have a poor understanding of what constitutes ‘emotional abuse’ particularly when this was related to structural or institutional inequalities related to gender, sexuality, race or even religious orientation that were not recognised. Example of abuses in spiritual organisations (not in Glastonbury) that were mentioned included a leader failing to recognise that staff members becoming sexually involved with participants could constitute sexual abuse ‘because they are both adults’ and a black volunteer having their hair or clothes commented on and touched inappropriately.

Interviewees were not specifically asked about any policies or processes they had in place to address structural inequalities or ethical lapses (a useful topic for further research). One person did mention that recognition of structural inequality (sexism, racism etc) was something that ran throughout the course they ran.

In the course we teach co-presence in which people have to deconstruct the power dynamics – power over and power under. [we] use a set of exercises from a training in power dynamics… In the leadership of the group we have people dedicated to reflective practice and to deconstructing patriarchy… we are consciously watching that in action and trying to deconstruct that.

Another organisation had a code of practice adapted for different groups (staff, volunteers, and participants in activities) that was described as an ‘aspiration rather than a rule. You sign it and you try and live by it’. People breaking the code could be asked to leave, although this was reported to be rare and it was unclear what exactly were the disciplinary processes involved prior to asking someone to leave. One interviewee expressed concern that people could continue to be involved in activities even if had not signed the code, or knowingly broke it.

The question of how ethical lapses and inequalities are dealt with is closely tied into the question of leadership and the style of leadership, addressed in the next section.

# Leadership challenges

Finding and implementing an appropriate leadership style is a challenge for any small and emergent alternative or spiritual organisation. Those setting up such an organisation may hold a strong vision of what they want to achieve, often based on a powerful spiritual experience, but lack experience in management and leadership, or of what constitutes good business and organisational practice. This is not something unique to Glastonbury, but the pressures of Glastonbury life could add additional dimensions to the challenge of taking up a leadership role.

## Manifesting a vision

The leadership task is one of finding a way of leading, and an organisational structure, that both fits with the values and aims of the organisation, at the same time as addressing the practical challenges of establishing a business. For several of those interviewed, this meant tapping into a ‘vision’ of what could be achieved, or a deeper (or higher) level of guidance or inspiration. How this was conceived, and how people accessed this, depended on the spiritual tradition or beliefs that they were working with. One of those interviewed likened this to the monastic tradition:

At its height, the Abbey was a very successful business, operating many farms and being a major source of wealth in the area. At the heart of the abbey were the monks, praying regularly, but also combining this with earthly practical experience to make a successful business. It also required many other people to be involved, with practical skills: farmers, vintners, lay brothers. But the Abbott was the central pivot – everything was centrally controlled.

Like the Abbey, a successful organisation, or community, needs those who have a vision together with others with practical skills, people who also share - or want to support – the vision. It also needs resources, money, equipment, and premises. Similarly, in Glastonbury there are those who have a vision of what can be achieved, and many with practical skills - accountants, therapists, managers - but at its heart, any spiritual organisation has to have divine inspiration.

One person described ways in which Glastonbury itself – and those who had previously established successful spiritual activities in the town – could be a source of inspiration

Feeling guided – it’s a lot about - if it’s a spiritual organisation - then tuning in. In my case [this is tuning in] to the company of Glastonbury: all those people who have been part of Glastonbury and making it what it is and who have passed over, who are part of that consciousness stream.to be able to tap in.

For another, it was the landscape and the Goddess energies present in this:

[The goddess has] always been in Glastonbury – she is the land – the central goddess is the land, and the nature and the culture – so we are intimately connected to the lands, the hills, and the land arising above sea level – and she is present in the forms and the shapes of the lands – and she is the central inspiring sources of everything we do.

In practice, as another person noted, manifesting the initial vision could be very challenging

I struggled along because from the very first days of being a volunteer, I totally believed in the organisation and everything it represents. The original vision is a great vision. It involves a lot of people and it feels as if it is a blessing to be able to work towards that.

## Flexibility and adaptation

The challenge in manifesting a vision lies, in part, because this requires constant adaptation to the practicalities of turning this into physical form, and the opportunities that present themselves. Three people commented specifically on any planning or strategy development had to be loose and flexible, enabling them to be responsive to different circumstances as they arose.

[The organisation] operates on spiritual principles but we go with the flow. We don’t like to design a five-year plan, but we go with the flow and when that runs out, then we depart from that and look at what’s happening. Whatever is flowing – that’s where we will flow.

I know how it happened – it unfolded – the next things to do has arisen and we respond to opportunity and we do the next thing. It’s not – a decisions taken by [the members of the organisation]: any-one who is a regular part of the [the organisation] can come and talk about things, then decisions are taken by me – because I’m the one who takes responsibility.

One of the key things we look for is to be able to respond to whatever Glastonbury is presenting itself at the moment. We are able to identify different sectors of people who come in. Maybe we get a lot of Americans, and then cut things according to what the Americans would like. We are constantly looking at what the flavour of things is, what are the needs? And identifying what we can do to fill that need within the town.

In the midst of this, as one person noted, it was important to keep everything in balance, particularly between the vision, or spiritual heart of the organisation, and the practicalities of day to day life.

I think some spiritual organisations can have – and we have had – ups and downs – and you lose the heart – or it becomes too body or too head. It’s about recognising where the organisation is and are all three in balance - which they never are – and it’s a case of responding.

There was also balance to be struck between having one clear vision of what was to be achieved, and being open to the diversity of belief and views of those coming into an organisation– an issue not unlike the one described by the interviewee from the Abbey Trust (in section 3).

All that stuff which happens in any community – in churches, synagogues – you have the person in the centre – the cleric or the leader – trying to keep the broad church inside a particular church. So for me the big issues will be because we encourage diversity – [how] we embrace different perspectives and be happy when people move on from us. We are different to many spiritual groups that are selling a particular message and want to build numbers. We don’t want to. We want to build a person-centred approach to spirituality and wellbeing. That said – we will always have newbies who are highly opinionated about what a belief should be and how it should be conducted.

This could also require clarity, both around the underpinning vision and aims, but also in the boundaries needed: the ability to not attempt to fulfil everyone’s expectations.

I didn’t have good boundaries – floppy boundaries – let me accommodate you. One of the tests here is about clarity, having clear boundaries – what’s mine, what’s yours and the place of experience teaches you that here – it’s very simple when you’ve seen them….People say - we should do this – are you going to do that?  I turn it round – I learned to give it back – that’s a good idea, fantastic – make it happen. People know now that if you have an idea, I’ll ask you to make it happen.

Nevertheless, it is also important to keep a sense of continuity and stability. Several people noted the difficulty of maintaining stability when surrounded by a mobile and often transient community, with many spiritual choices available, and where people can be prone to the kind of spiritual and emotional crises described in the previous chapter.

Its natural when you are managing an organisation and you are aware of the flaws and faults but it is important to be building the structure all the time so that people can come and go – and people do come and go – most important to know that they come and go. While they are here you value them for what their talents are, but you must always be aware that you are trying to build something more, building a structure and the structure is more than the people. The structure is composed of the processes and it should be possible to replace the people – whether they are paid or volunteers – that other people can go into that function when they depart. As they will.

It takes someone strong to hold that and ensure that things are kept stable rather than…Quite a lot of organisations that get messed about endlessly by people coming in and saying I’ll do that’ and there isn’t the strength in the organisation. They are so relieved that someone has come to supposedly manage it. There can be complete chaos if there is no one there, and the person supposedly managing it all is as chaotic as the rest of them then nobody knows where they are.

This could also mean being clear about, and taking hard decisions about, who to involve and retain, and when to let go of people (staff or volunteers) if they appeared to be taking the organisation in the wrong direction or getting in the way of addressing its vision. However, without clear contracts, or processes in place for letting people go, or through which they could lodge a complaint, this can lead to malpractice. There are certainly stories circulating in Glastonbury and mentioned by those interviewed, of people feeling aggrieved at the way they had been pushed out of a job or organisation, often without a clear explanation why, or at very short notice.

## Becoming a leader

Motivation for taking a leadership role or setting up an ‘alternative’ organisation was mentioned either directly or indirectly by several interviewees. Two described themselves as ‘rebels’, enjoying operating outside of the mainstream. Another reported enjoying the excitement of ‘being on the edge’ and of being challenged, which they saw as part of their spiritual journey.

I’m always putting myself on the edge of my comfort – because I don’t need to do any of this – I don’t need to earn money – that’s the thing -I think I’m a self-development and spiritual growth junky.

Three mentioned being ‘called’ to do what they were doing by Glastonbury itself or because they held a vision (had been guided towards) what was required of them and their organisation. Successfully meeting this call could be deeply fulfilling in terms of fulfilling their life purpose, and for some, something that might not have been possible anywhere other than in Glastonbury.

We are trying to manifest things – the satisfaction in life comes from manifesting dreams – if you are going with the flow you don’t know what the outcome will be, but manifesting physical things is very satisfying. I was into magic and mysticism – but this is all magic – the manifestation – these are the best years of my life I’ve put into Glastonbury and its very satisfying that all of this has happened. I think that physical manifestation is what I like. I get playful with co-created spirituality.

It’s just my path – and the service. When I’m with (the participants) I get these moments when I’m really quite tearful – ‘cos they [participants in an activity] have all done something so beautiful or challenging – and I look at them and say that’s why I’m here, why I’m on this earth – it’s the growth – supporting the potential and empowerment of others which is a theme – throughout my whole life.

Taking up a leadership role could be a big challenge, particularly for those unused to being in this position. In a small community, stepping forward in a leadership role can also trigger unhelpful and sometimes challenging responses from other people, both within their own organisation or elsewhere in the community.

In my time – there been opposition from individuals to new ideas, not from everybody – jealousy, competition, envy, resistance without finding anything out – just don’t like the look or sound of you – fear based stuff – less than there used to be –[it’s] a very intense experience of being attacked and trolled.

One person talked about a major schism having taken place in their organisation, something that is quite a frequent experience both in established religious and newer spiritual organisations. This can be particularly devastating when the organisation is located within in a small community, where the schism can ripple out from the organisation itself. Those in leadership roles can be very dependent on long term friendships for support, and sometimes for help in running the organisation itself. When conflicts or schisms arise, this can risk the loss of both friendships and trusted colleagues.

On the upside, it was also noted that opposition and criticism can quickly dissipate once an activity has become successful, particularly where this is clearly benefiting others in the community.

At first there was lots of hostility but then, the shop keepers and cafes all benefited from the 100’s of people coming into town. People say the town comes alive, it’s so colourful, people are so nice, it’s so lovely and my bank balance goes up like that – win win really. Attitudes changed within the town, but not within certain individuals - but that’s just individuals.

However, it was perhaps sensitivity to this difficulty in being a visible ‘leader’ in the town that had led at least three of those interviewed to report that they operated to a large extent ‘behind the scenes’, not seeking to take up a visible leadership role. One noted, however, that ‘it would be noticed if I disappeared’.

## Finding the right model of leadership

Several of those interviewed reported seeking an alternative model of leadership, more egalitarian in ‘structure’ than the one they perceived to be present in most ‘mainstream’ organisations. Two people indicated a reluctance to take up a strong leadership role, in part because they were hoping to establish a less hierarchical model of organisation.

I wanted everyone to be equal – I wanted to be in a group of equals – I denied – someone said you just have to accept that you are leader – I don’t want to be a leader – leadership is a role.

I am reticent in exerting authority and I like to build community and consensus.

However, the denial of leadership was seen to create its own problems

In the 80s there was the tyranny of structurelessness: we talked about having no leaders and no structure. But there is a tyranny that replaces that that as we well know.

One of the interviewees noted that there are newer, flatter models of structure and less hierarchical leadership styles being developed even in large mainstream organisations, although those who had been out of the ‘mainstream’ for a long time might be unfamiliar with these.

There is a patriarchal dominator hierarchy and I’m into teal organisations: you move beyond dominator hierarchy. Not a culture that says ‘ I’m in charge‘. You can be a leader without that.

For those coming into the town more recently, the lack of more awareness of more progressive styles of leadership could come as a surprise.

What’s happening in Glastonbury is people like me are coming in – and others – who have been successful in the mainstream, and are still in the mainstream – and anyone who has been in the mainstream in recent years in the last 5 years or so, has that reaction.

## Letting go of leadership

As well as letting other people go, leaders also have to face up to the point at which they, themselves, have to relinquish their organisation – and dream – to others to take forward. This is another challenge, with multiple dimensions, however ready someone might feel to make this transition.

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| **Handing over leadership**A lot of what I’m dealing with is handing things on – I’m getting older and will die soon – I don’t have a problem with letting go but there are unforeseen challenges in letting go. The question is how and when. I thought I had released it completely, but actually, each year for me there is more to let go of, that I hadn’t realised – there are more layers of letting go. On the one hand, I’m happy with it going in a new direction, but then I find things – philosophical things – that I disagree with.The challenge of letting go is finding the people who can take something on. I realise that I know how to create an organisation, event, a something – it has many layers and is magically woven together. Very few people know how to do that. When I look at esoteric books there are none that talk about that. Finding people or a person who knows - who will take responsibility, who has the capacity to be responsible…..but I realised that I don’t have to worry about it because the people are already born – they are already awake, and its not up to me how [the divine force] will find them, or how they will find this. And at the same time I want to hold something open for someone to step into – letting go and knowing I’m not in charge, and keeping my eyes open for who might come. Because the people already exist, they are already awake – I don’t have to wake them up. Even if all that we did here crumbled, they are there in other places in the world. |

## Avoiding the pitfalls of spiritual leadership

There was a general recognition that poor leadership behaviour could harm an organisation and those who were involved in it. Two people talked about the dangers of the kind of charismatic leadership found in many faith and spiritual organisations, which have given some alternative and ‘new spiritual movement’ organisations a bad name. Charisma had its advantages, as one interviewee ruefully noted

It’s a quandary for a spiritual organisation that wants to be successful – to use charisma, and chanting and the mass hypnosis or group dances – to use all those strategies to build a Charley Manson type team….100% integrity but not a recipe for success – because what people want in a spiritual or political organisation is someone who gives the appearance of certainty……How can it be successful if you are self-reflective and honest – it’s not what people want – they want status and goodies of one kind of another.

However, charismatic leadership can shade into narcissism and eventual emotional, spiritual or sexual abuse of ‘followers’ and all manner of ethical issues (widely reported in the literature on new religious movements [[8]](#footnote-8)). These arise, two people noted, when a leader fails to acknowledge their ‘shadow’ or unresolved and unconscious issues.

Whenever anyone is standing up and doing something – then there is a massive shadow which is almost the opposite of what they are doing. All the leaders here haven’t cured themselves of these shadows so these things grow with ….the adulation of the followers – feeds their power and gifts, but whatever is distorted grows exponentially as well.

Narcissism, as one person suggested, can be accompanied by ‘gaslighting’ (manipulating someone by psychological means into doubting their own sanity).

When someone else has been rude and totally inappropriate and then tells me to go look at myself when I’ve said please don’t talk to me like that – because there’s a lot of gaslighting going on around this.

This could be particularly difficult in spiritual organisations where the kind of constraints that are usually built into a mainstream organisation are lacking.

The silencing of people – I’ve experienced it in all the organisations I’ve been part of - drama queens and kings– they do marvellous things, but their level of control is quite extraordinary – more than in mainstream because there is more processes and safety in mainstream.

This indicated a need for two things: leaders to have worked (psychologically or otherwise) to recognise their unconscious material, and leaders that have people around them who are willing, and able, to tell them when they are behaving inappropriately. Two people specifically mentioned the importance of the second of these in their personal experience.

I want people to have spiritual practice and who have been in psychotherapy for an extended period so they have enjoyment of catching their own shadows at work – response to a shadow appearing – its ‘Ooh – that’s interesting’ . I don’t want to hang out with people in denial. As the leader of our project I need, and have, people who are happy to tell me when I’m off on one. It means they are giving me attention and also because it speeds my process.

[When] I was in charge you could say anything so long as you are not disrespectful – we didn’t tolerate disrespect… but in terms of asking questions, and wanting to know why, and challenging and what I would call constructive dissent -I welcomed it – it keeps you alive, keeps you checking, keeps you re-examining and feedback loops

This is where the availability of support was particularly important, as discussed in the next section.

# Resources and support

One of the central reasons for conducting this research project was in order to find out what resources people use – and whether any additional resources were required - to help in the development of flourishing organisations and businesses in Glastonbury. Interviewees were asked to say something about what they had learned, in terms of the spiritual resources or life experience that had helped them cope with the challenges they had faced in setting up or working in a local spiritual or alternative organisation and what additional support might be helpful. The answers to this question fell broadly into two groups – the personal qualities (and skills) of the individuals themselves, and external sources of support that had been or would be helpful. These included informal support, including support from other local organisations, and rather less often, more formal support (consultation, training etc)

## Personal qualities

Most interviewees were able to report on some experience from the past, their spiritual practices or skills that they had been able to draw on in dealing with the challenges that faced them. Several of these revolved around having patience, flexibility and the ability to ‘roll with’ whatever opportunities and challenges presented themselves.

Patience and the ability to communicate – to talk through with people, get feedback, respond appropriately – hear what people are saying – its constant feedback to strengthen and build on but being aware that what is being given to the organisation at that time is exactly what it needs, but also being flexible but yet keeping your eye on the bigger vision. Like conducting an orchestra – of seven-year olds.

Various spiritual practices or beliefs were mentioned as an important resource by three of those interviewed. Keeping sight of being in the service of a broader ‘vision’ rather than getting lost in day to day details were mentioned, and an ability to listen to inner guidance or intuition.

As soon as we offer something to the universe - that’s what the flow is – there has to be an element of service in it. Service is the key thing for engaging with co-creative spirituality. As soon as you put out service without anything transactional going on, you just put out service and suddenly the universe starts to respond, and the flow begins to happen. When you try to gain…..you have to give money away and be casual about giving it away, give it away for pleasure – and laugh as you give away – and you don’t care what is happens. You do it for the pleasure of it – and the universe, the mystery does give you back to you.

As well as their personal spiritual practices, several people mentioned their life experience as having prepared them for their current role. Two people brought their experience of establishing spiritual organisations, or bringing spirituality into mainstream organisations, outside of Glastonbury. Two people mentioned their experience of being in business elsewhere. At the other end of the spectrum, one reported the importance of their ‘hippy’ experience.

Yes – it comes from my own personal experience. You have to be so strong. In my hippy days, you could be evicted at the drop of a hat. You had to be strong to cope with the communal living, and highly tolerant. That’s one of the things I like about Glastonbury: you have to be highly tolerant.

Having gone through their own spiritual or emotional crises were mentioned by four people, helping them to empathise with and support others going through similar experiences.

I can talk about spiritual emergency from when I couldn’t function very well because of my mystical experiences

An ability to be self-reflective and good at self-management, and aware of one’s shadow were seen to be important, with several mentioning the difficult journey they had had in arriving at this place.

I’ve learned that I can respond and overcome them with a positive result – so I don’t run away from the challenges as much as I might have done 20 years ago – I’ve learned how vital it is to work with as a peer group – that – the more of us that are doing it together then the better the result – being open, and being able to see problems ahead and look at how we can address them now to stop the rot setting – communication, delegation.

 Another mentioned the importance of leaders modelling appropriate behaviour, such as being honest about limitations, at the same time as not burdening others with their own emotional difficulties.

Our whole culture is one in which the leaders and teachers model appropriate disclosure. [We] won’t let anyone teach unless they have appropriate disclosure. We consciously use appropriate disclosure not to hijack the theme but to deconstruct the power dynamics. So our students are used to a culture of being honest about yourself. We’ve built it in, and people who don’t like it gravitate away. In fact, it’s probably the thing I’m most proud of in our culture. People do appropriate disclosure in a way that’s not shameful or grovelling, but just part of the conversation. I’ve just had a row and I didn’t handle it very well, and just so you know that I screw up every now and again. Let’s just put that down as a basic premise and then get on.

## External support

External support could come in various forms, but most often in having trusted ‘others’ (usually friends, or mentors inside or outside of their organisation) to talk to and receive honest but caring feedback.

Always checking in with other people, peers, talking things through – sometimes it is a case of looking very deeply within and asking, am I coming from an ego standpoint of what I want – and not hearing what they want – which is vital – otherwise you start to turn into some kind of little dictator

Overall, interviewees came over as self-reliant, or very reliant on friends and colleagues – possibly even resistant to the idea that help might be available from an external source or be more formally organised. In part, noted one person, this was because people in Glastonbury were not aware of the resources that are available elsewhere. Another suggested that this was shared with spiritual and faith organisations elsewhere, which do not readily turn to formal sources for organisational support, although may use external support for individual support and supervision.

 Spiritual organisations I’ve worked in are reluctant to do that [seek consultancy] although they are really good at getting in supervisors and supervision.

Three people had in the past brought in external consultants to help with a particular issue, although in tow cases this was before they came to Glastonbury. One person had brought in an external mediator when faced with conflict within their own organisation and continued to work with them on other issues. It had been important to find someone outside of Glastonbury itself:

Within the town, everyone knows somebody who knows somebody and people cannot keep their mouths shut on the whole – they’ll say something (me included) – so its like – who within the town would I have talked to – they are going to be people I trust –it has to be people I know love me and care about me – it could be someone completely outside.

Another emphasised the importance of trust, which could work against turning to a more formal and external consultant.

Do people look outside for help? They do if they trust you. I’ve lived here long enough now, I’ve managed to offer enough and be of service enough to be trusted. They are quite suspicious of people in mainstream – unless you build personal trust – and have something about you that they can relate to….[about another person who provides consultancy help] they’ve been here long enough to build up relationships – people come to them quite spontaneously: people met them, got to know them, it was spontaneous. Its not like setting up a service.

Four of the people interviewed were already providing mentoring or consultancy support to local individuals and organisations, in one form or another, either informally, as part of their organisational role, or more formally as a paid for one to one service consultancy service. One provided a combination of personal and organisational support (and had at one time established a group activity) but now concentrated on developing podcasts, blogs and a regular radio show[[9]](#footnote-9)., while another had built a peer support structure into the network they had developed.

Another has been providing personal mentorship to individuals seeking to set up new projects – or resolve difficulties in existing ones – for many years, practical business experience with an appreciation of the importance of vision or personal guidance when establishing a spiritual enterprise:

The process of mentoring is about finding out what inspires them about the project and helping them concentrate on it – drawing out of them the inspiration that the divine has given them which they may not even have focused on. So if you like, I’m working as the servant of the divine to help the person they’ve already inspired to find out what it is. But it isn’t one person, it’s a whole series of people all the way along and gradually the inspiration comes into being. It only happens when the time is right, when the right people have been inspired.

Two of the interviewees had developed and were running courses designed to help people – local and from outside the area – build up their professional mentoring and leadership skills, potentially contributing to creating a new generation of leaders, spiritual mentors and entrepreneurs in the town.

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| **Diploma in Practical Spirituality & Wellness**This course is described as the first UK qualification integrating spirituality and healthcare to be on the Ofqual Register, the government overseer of qualifications. It is designed to both strengthen participant’s own personal and spiritual exploration and growth as well as enabling them to practice as spiritual Health Mentors/Coaches, or progress towards other related qualifications in psychotherapy, counselling, healthcare chaplaincy and theology.  The course is run by the Spiritual Companions Trust at a number of different locations around the UK, including Glastonbury (where the Trust is based). When delivered in Glastonbury, it attracts participants from other parts of the UK, many of whom wtay in local accommodation during it’s 8 weekend workshops. Over 500 people have taken the course so far, with several new courses planned for 2021. *For more information see* <https://spiritualcompanions.org/> |

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| **Leadership course**The Goddess Luminary wheel is two year leadership course, run at the Goddess centre. It describes itself as co-creating:…a new leadership paradigm and practice that explicitly holds Goddess at its centre while recognising this work involves both women and men called to serve…..It draws on and transcends existing male dominated cutting edge leadership theories and practices. .The 9 weekend workshops of the course take place in Glastonbury (although during COVID have been run online). There are currently 31 participants taking part in its second round, with another round starting in Autumn 2021. Around 45% of participants come from outside the area (with 10% from overseas) so this will usually require a stay in local accommodation. Many of the participants (32%) are already in responsible positions in mainstream organisations (including a charity CEO, university and FE lecturers, a telecommunications project manager, an IT specialist, a senior NHS nurse and small business owner). However, others (35%) are using the course to make the transition to setting up their own businesses, in many cases in Glastonbury. The course is therefore an important source of support to wealth and job generators in the town.*For more information see* <https://goddesstempleteachings.co.uk/goddessluminary/> |

## Support from other local organisations

One interesting area (on which there was some debate) was how far local organisations could or should work more closely together to share their experience and provide support to one another. Three of those interviewed were strongly in favour of this.

I think I’d like to see a way forward that there be better communication and dialogue between all the various organisations – something that links us up – there are so many of us in Glastonbury. Sometimes it’s very easy to work on our isolation, something that would link us all together.

There was a sense from two of those interviewed, that there had been more mutual support and collaboration between alternative and spiritual organisations in earlier times:

When I came in ‘85 there was a smallish group of maybe 2-300 alternative people all in different parts but very spiritually coherent group – all knew each other, all caring about Glastonbury as a whole – as they started to say we need this and we need that, various entities started because these people were spiritually inspired at the spiritual end of the spectrum. [But} not always very good with material things -so the things started could be a bit of a mess….Today, hardly anyone shares the vision of the place as one coherent whole – they passionately care about their aspect…During the fragmentation process, the individual components feel very weak and threatened, they say – I don’t want that lot taking me over – I am me. And I’m not sure I even want to be part of that lot down the road and it becomes more and more centred on themselves.

However, after a period of fragmentation, there was a sense that things were beginning to become a little more coherent again.

There comes a magical moment when they [local organisations] are very well run and they begin to be self-confident and they say, well this is running perfectly I wonder what the others are doing, and they begin to reach out and I think we are just at that moment now….The organisations are competently run and they begin to say, what is this thing that we seem to be part of.

Spiritual organisations can help each other – I’m seeing a bit more progression in that – it’s happening a bit more organically. Organisations opening up to the Glaston Centre – then we can get some kind of central resource pool.

This had certainly taken place, to some extent, with the Town Council and Chamber of Commerce now working more closely with various alternative businesses, a relationship that was reported to have been difficult in the past. One marked sign of this was the collaboration between the Tourist Office and Glaston Centre in providing one, unified, visitor centre. One of the by-words of the Glaston Centre (represented by their Glastonbury candle and a Glastonbury anthem written by one of the interviewees) was ‘Unity in Diversity’.

People are very afraid of letting out the secrets of their organisation which is understandable – keep your powder dry – but at the same time, a bit more openness and togetherness would be – that’s where the unity in diversity comes in – more support towards the organisation to be able to do that.

There were others, however, who were sceptical that greater mutual support and cohesion could be achieved, in part because previous attempts to generate this kind of collaboration had not be particularly successful:

No one was talking about the same thing – blind people with elephant – no unanimity of perspective at all. When we were doing the sanctuary project, interfaith project – [we’d] get someone to talk about their thing or sit in silent. Trying to get into shared language and transferable skills.

We had several gatherings – but then Christians would quote from the bible, the Muslims from the Koran, and it was boring – dead religions, not alive. The only thing we could do in common was light a candle and sit around it – and this was not interesting.

 I always resisted – it won’t do us any good. The idea of having a little parliament – [it will] all founder horribly.

## New sources of support

Interviewees were asked about additional resources and support might be helpful – either to themselves, or to someone trying to do something similar. Various suggestions were made. Not surprisingly, these often reflect the challenges that interviewees themselves had experienced. Several people mentioned books, courses or inspiring individuals that they had found helpful in the past, that others might find useful, although there were several areas in which people felt that the right kind of information or support was just not available. One person, for example, who had experienced the potential conflict around use of heritage property noted that there was nothing they were aware of that had been written yet on this topic and thought that something on this would be helpful for people in their position. Another person would have liked to see guidance on how to set up and run a writers’ group, something that they had found quite challenging.

Having more by way of ‘business’ type advice and support was mentioned by three interviewees as being helpful for other people seeking to set up a business locally. Two people mentioned that there were already resources readily available from local colleges or the local council. Other examples of sources of advice include information for those setting up a new business provided by central government[[10]](#footnote-10), government funded organisations[[11]](#footnote-11), professional bodies and trade associations [[12]](#footnote-12). However, the values and language of such advice may not always chime with those of people setting up alternative businesses, which is why a list of resources tailored specifically to those involved in spiritual and alternative businesses is now available on the Glaston Centre website[[13]](#footnote-13).

One area that emerged in several of the interviews was having more information and guidance on how to manage and facilitate successful groups and meetings. There was a sense that this could be particularly challenging in Glastonbury where there was such a wide mix of voices and opinions, which could sometimes be very forcibly held and expressed.

Dealing with difficult people, your evangelical – someone who dominates the group – what if that person is the leaders – two problems – the leader dominating the group or the saboteur – the stag – the person who wants to be the leader – or maybe they have a really good point.

Normal human interaction challenges – ensuring no one hogs all the time, keeping everyone happy because you want them to come back next time

I’d love to learn how to get people to the point when they walk into a meeting where they are expecting to learn something and their expecting to change their minds. I go to a meeting wanting to learn about something – wanting to find out about something – but my experience is that almost everyone who goes to a meeting, they are locked into themselves so much that they are just observing themselves interacting in the meeting and a lot of the dissatisfaction is about how they went to the meeting and they hadn’t been heard, what someone said, or someone spoke too long and all the little internal dialogues

Two people mentioned resources that they had found helped them with ‘tricky’ group situations. This partly involved specific spiritual, meditative, or self-management – practices that enabled them to ‘hold’ the space effectively.

I learned it through practice – spiritual practice – once you’ve got the central channel going you can sit for hours and hours – holding that in group is a way transmission – that central channel plugs you in into what they call the macro cosmic orbit – this is the micro cosmic orbit very much following the acupuncture.

We get crystal clear methodology for teaching that: the basic skills of dealing with groups. They must have a practice to be still and quiet themselves, then open their energy field and hold the space, be able hold themselves and if necessary to Tonglen practice – the basic Tibetan meditation practice - a practice a lot of us do. It’s the Tibetan name for generic practice for empathically compassionately feeling the distress of another and absorbing it then radiating a blessing to them. breathing in negativity, breathing out compassion – people need to learn if they are going to hold groups – you have to be prepared to feel it.

The basic shtook is to self-manage your own endocrinal system be aware of the mirroring that goes on with the group, and here’s the strategies for doing it – 95% of the efficacy of it is in the preparation – you need to train your nervous system to be in a centred grounded state to be able to manage it for when you are in a group so when you walk into the room.

More practical resources that might be helpful in this area included John Heron’s facilitator’s handbook[[14]](#footnote-14), Gaie House’s Little Red Book of Groups[[15]](#footnote-15) and whole body listening[[16]](#footnote-16). However, one person observed that theory alone was not enough:

In a group there will be a saboteur, a pleaser, all that. I got to the point when I went – it’s about human relationship with people. Stuff happens – that’s what I mean about people need to have done therapy – and this is a trigger to look at how you manage relationships. So when you are in the room –and a troublemaker emerges, the facilitator stops being a human being and having a relationship, shield goes up, clip board opens and mind goes – transference and counter transference – right – It’s good to use in reflection afterwards, but in the moment – bit of knowledge is a dangerous thing because in the moment– a human being that I have to engage with. Which is why the preparation is important.

One person felt that it would also be useful to have a mediation service available in the town, to help in the resolution of conflicts either within or between organisations. They mentioned a book they had read some years ago on mediation in conflict situations:

People who went int war situations or when gangs were fighting each other: they hold the space – go in and do a thing, let everyone say what they want to say – emote –some sort of organisation which sounded really good – knew what they were doing, how to hold bigger groups that are in dispute. That would be very useful for us at a community. None of us knows quite how to do this and take it all the way through –

So – in some ways – would be good for the town –[given] all these different factions: a community gathering. People can be so hostile towards one another, from no knowledge. And so many people love living here [it’s the] best place in the world. So why is all this shit going on that doesn’t need to be there?

Another person wanted to know more about how to create a non-hierarchical organisational structure. Another thought it would be useful to have something about narcissism in organisations (and leaders). Another felt it was important for people to have training in structural inequalities and power dynamics (racism, sexism etc). Although not specifically mentioned as a new resource, the need for guidance on basic organisational hygiene factors (policies on health and safety, data protection, staff recruitment and support) was indicated as an ‘unmet need’ for some local organisations.

Two people felt that it would be useful to have more opportunities to be available locally for people look at group dynamics, unconscious processes and issues around transference and counter transference. Closely related to this was the idea of having more on self-reflection:

[There’s] not a great deal of reflective practice for spiritual organisations. But I want people to do talk therapy for a while or be in a group where they learn to be transparent to themselves – people need hand holding into reflective practice.

Another mentioned a useful resource on managing boundaries.[[17]](#footnote-17)

Although several people mentioned the challenge of people going through major life crises and breakdowns, this did not seem to be an area that was seen to be requiring outside help, although one person did mention the spiritual crisis network as being a useful resource, and the Volunteer England for support on working with volunteers.

In practice, there were already, or had been in the past, several opportunities for people to learn some of the skills mentioned above: managing groups or leadership styles that were appropriate for alternative and spiritual organisations. One of these was a book by local consultant and author Barry Taylor on how to run a spiritual inspired project[[18]](#footnote-18) now available on the Glaston Centre website, and the two courses mentioned in the previous section.

One thought expressed by two people, was that there probably was some useful guidance available from other (and older) spiritual and faith organisations. For example, one person thought:

Some of the monastic orders must have some good guidelines on how to maintain deep democracy. There was [also] a roman catholic priest who used to go round monasteries which were having problems. There might be some literature on how to sort out monastic communities where things have gone apeshit.

# Conclusions and further steps

The initial aim of undertaking this research project was to find out what were some of the typical (and no so typical) challenges that people faced when setting up and running an alternative or spiritual organisation in Glastonbury, and what might be helpful in dealing with these challenges. This felt to be an important question at a time when this kind of organisation is an increasingly important element in the Glastonbury economy.

The nine people interviewed all had some involvement in organisations that are currently making a significant contribution to the economy and culture of the town. As the interviewees indicated, there are spiritual and alternative organisations in the town that not only provide a source of employment, but also contribute to attracting of the thousands of people to the town each year, many of whom support other local businesses, including B and B’s, cafes and food shops. Several of the organisations represented also provide opportunities for volunteering or run training opportunities that enable local people to develop new skills and take up new professional and entrepreneurial roles.

The present research project was small – only 9 people interviewed, representing only a small proportion of the overall alternative and spiritual organisations in the town. However, it does indicate that, as well as providing significant opportunities to those wishing to set up an organisation, this is not without its risks, both to those developing and working in the organisations, but also those using their services. Groups, organisations, and businesses can ‘come and go’ with interest in a new activity or idea arising and disappearing quite quickly. The alternative ‘market’ in the town, whether in terms of shops, healers or workshops and events, has become quite saturated, which makes finding – and keeping involved - customers, participants in activities, and volunteers difficult. It can take considerable ingenuity and entrepreneurial skills to find a particular ‘niche’, as well as the usual skills required to establish and build up a business.

Those interviewed were all involved in organisations which were relatively soundly established and successful, and in several cases this success came from attracting participants from outside of Glastonbury, drawing on the unique character or resources in the town to do so. This had usually taken some years to achieve, and most of those interviewed reported on having been able to draw on their spiritual practices, or past experience, to see them through more challenging and sometimes painful moments along the way.

One theme that came across through many of the interviews was the fact that Glastonbury can attract some quite vulnerable people, whether as tourists, participants in activities, or as permanent settlers in the town. One view was that the very decision to move to the town or choose to work or volunteer for a spiritual organisation, can often be an indication that someone has recently gone through, or was currently in the midst of a spiritual or emotional crisis. Others thought that the energy of the town created a situation in which some kind of spiritual or emotional crisis became more likely.

Support for people in this position is available in various ways – whether through the volunteers at the Pilgrim Reception Centre, the regular health services, the many healers working in the town, or through the kindness and informal support provided by friends and colleagues. Nevertheless, it was unclear how far there was a general discussion, or availability of knowledge, of how best to support someone going through a crisis. For example, it is unclear how many people would recognise when someone is at risk of serious breakdown and should take a step back from their spiritual practices or take better care of themselves. Similarly, it is unclear how many businesses would, as another indicated, allow their staff to take a day off when they felt they were becoming overwhelmed? This would be a potential useful topic for further research, both to explore the extent that this is a problem and go into the strategies found most helpful in dealing with this issue in more depth.

Having a vulnerable clientele, staff and volunteers, makes it particularly important to ensure that there are good organisational practices in place: including employment practices around hiring and firing staff, supporting staff and volunteer wellbeing, or processes through which people can make a complaint if they feel that the service they have received is inadequate or their employment rights have been violated. The research suggests that many of those running some local organisations could sometimes be unfamiliar with their legal responsibilities, or of the factors that contribute to structural inequalities and lead to the risk of racial, religious, sexual and gender abuse. Again, finding out how far this is the actual case would be another useful topic for further research.

There was some interest in finding new sources of support for some of the more challenging aspects of living and working in Glastonbury. Advice in how to manage or facilitate groups, particularly with such as diverse local population, was mentioned, as well the possibility of having support – or even a local mediation service – to help when inter or intra group conflicts arose. There was some interest in having more information and support in dealing with the unconscious processes that can derail a spiritual organisation if not effectively addressed. More and better help for those starting up in business was mentioned, as well as help in finding an appropriate organisational structure (and leadership style) that was less hierarchical that the perceived norm in mainstream organisations.

How far such sources of support would actually be used was not entirely clear. Only three of those interviewed mentioned having turned to external support when dealing with a particular challenge, as most reported relying primarily on others in their organisation, friends and a few trusted advisors and mentors in the town. One person suggested that this might be due to people’s lack of knowledge of the kind of support that might be available elsewhere or having an unrealistic view of this. Cost could also be factor, hiring a business or emotional support consultant could be expensive. However, there are also many resources available, including books and online courses resources that are either free or at relatively low cost. Not many people appeared to know about or have access to resources of this kind.

It might require some kind of external intervention to encourage people to look for support of this kind. This could include a collation of resources in an accessible place. There is a now growing list of resources, for example, on the Glaston Centre website, and it could be possible, given additional resources, to have a section of the Avalon library dedicated to books on subjects such as building a spiritual business, leadership skills, or group facilitation.

Another possible idea is to begin to create and provide resources – such as a support network set of workshops, to see whether this attracts attendance. One of the interviewees had tried this for a while; something that had begun successfully but dwindled over time. Inviting in external speakers on subjects chosen by participants could be one way of keeping this fresh, but external funding might be required to cover the cost of these, rather than expecting it to be covered by local contributions.

The Findhorn Foundation created a new market for its activities when it developed a series of events and conferences that brought together people from both mainstream and alternative organisations and professions, on topics such as leadership, sustainability and supporting individuals, teams and organisation. For many, Glastonbury would also be an attractive location for events of this kind. One such event, the Glastonbury Academic Research Symposium, held in 2011, was very successful in attracting a number of academics and participants, with plans developed for a more permanent research centre, something which has yet to be developed[[19]](#footnote-19). Further workshops, symposia or a permanent research and resource centre could provide an opportunity for some of those with experience locally (like some of those interviewed) to share their experience with others, as well as attracting people from outside Glastonbury, with similar interests, to bring their expertise to those living and working in the town.

1. New Age is used to describe spiritual or non-scientific activities such as meditation, astrology, and alternative medicine, or people who are connected with such activities: Collins Dictionary on-line. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. A new religious movement (NRM), also known as a new religion or an alternative spirituality, is a religious or spiritual group that has modern origins but is peripheral to its society's dominant religious culture; Wikipedia [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Bowman M (2015) Christianity, Plurality and Vernacular Religion in Early 20th Century Glastonbury, a sign of things to come, in Methuen C et al, (2015) *Christianity and Religious Plurality*, published by the Ecclesiastic History Society by Boyden Press, Suffolk and Rochester New York [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Bowman M (XXXX) ‘*Helping Glastonbury to come into its own’: Practical Spirituality, Materiality and Community Cohesion in Glastonbury* [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Bowman ( 2015 ) notes around 40% of the Glastonbury high street was occupied by ‘alternative’ shops. At the time of writing this report September 2020), alternative shops occupied more than 50% of the Glastonbury High st, if cafes, pubs and take away food outlets are excluded from the count. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Bowman M (XXXX) ‘*Helping Glastonbury to come into its own’: Practical Spirituality, Materiality and Community Cohesion in Glastonbury* [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. See NCVO 2018 Briefing note: Impactful volunteering: understanding the impact of volunteering on volunteers. <https://www.ncvo.org.uk/images/documents/policy_and_research/Impactful-volunteering-understanding-the-impact-of-volunteering-on-volunteers.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Jacobs J (2007) Abuse in New Religious Movements: Challenges for the Sociology of Religion, chapter in Bromley D (2007) Teaching New Religious Movements, Oxford University Press [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. <https://embodiedsoulawakening.com> [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. E.g. Setting up in business – government guidance <https://www.gov.uk/browse/business/setting-up> and where to get financial support <https://www.gov.uk/business-finance-support/better-business-finance> [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. E.g. The Money Advice Service: <https://www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk/en/articles/thinking-of-starting-up-in-business> [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. E.g. advice for new gift or book shop owners from The Giftware Association <https://www.ga-uk.org> and The Book sellers Association: <https://www.booksellers.org.uk/> [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. <https://www.glastoncentre.org/resources-for-spiritual-and-faith-organisations.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. John Heron (1999) The Complete Facilitator's Handbook,: Volume 1 [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Gaie Houston,( 1990)The Red Book of Groups: And How to Lead Them Better [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. https://www.socialthinking.com/Products/whole-body-listening-poster [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Charles Whitfield (1993) Boundaries and Relationships: Knowing, Protecting, and Enjoying the Self [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Barry Taylor: creating spiritually inspired projects: <https://www.glastoncentre.org/uploads/2/1/6/2/21628956/creating_spiritually_inspired_projects_by_barry_taylor.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. https://www.glastoncentre.org/glastonbury-academic-research-symposium.html [↑](#footnote-ref-19)