IMPACT REPORT

Participant Outcomes and Progression Following the VENI Visitor Economy Programme in Felixstowe, July 2026



Tara Wheeler | July 2026

Impact Report for VENI Welcome to the Visitor Economy Programme in Felixstowe, July 2026

"It sort of built everyone's confidence."

The VENI Welcome to the Visitor Economy programme was delivered at Felixstowe Library between 20 and 23 July 2026. Nine participants took part in the four-day programme, completing the **VENI Principles of Customer Service and Local Context** course while exploring the visitor economy through employer engagement, guided visits around Felixstowe and practical employability activities. The programme combined confidence building, CV development, interview preparation and career planning with opportunities to view Felixstowe through a visitor's perspective, meet local employers and organisations, and discover the wide range of careers available across the visitor economy. Participants received VENI certificates and badges on successful completion of the course.

Follow-up interviews were completed within days of the programme ending, providing valuable insight into participants' immediate experiences and early progression.

Participant quotes are in **orange**.

Key Outcomes

- **Nine** participants took part in the course
- **92%** attendance across the four-day programme (eight participants attending every session and one participant attending the opening day before illness prevented further participation).
- **Increased awareness** of the breadth of the visitor economy and the wide range of careers and volunteering opportunities it offers.
- Participants reported increased confidence in job searching, interview preparation and CV development from taking part in the course.
- **Two participants** had already pursued volunteering positions with Landguard Fort within days of completing the programme.
- Positive feedback on the supportive learning environment created by the VENI delivery team.
- **A former VENI participant** worked as a paid support tutor on the course, using their local knowledge and volunteering experience to support the next cohort and strengthen links with local visitor economy organisations.

Opening Up Opportunities in the Visitor Economy

One of the strongest themes to emerge from participant interviews the week after the course finished was a broader understanding of what the visitor economy involves. Several participants described entering the course with a narrow view of the sector before discovering the diversity of careers available.

"It definitely did make me consider options in the visitor economy more than I did previously."

One participant reflected that she had not previously associated businesses such as cafés and bars with the visitor economy and finished the course feeling more informed about the range of opportunities available.

For another, the course inspired a new hope about their career direction. Having previously worked in nursing and social care, he explained that the visit to the local museum rekindled a long-standing interest in history and heritage**.** Within days of completing the programme, he had arranged to meet with staff at Landguard Fort to discuss volunteering opportunities, recognising that the role aligned closely with both his interests and experience.

"It has opened up that new perspective for me."

Another participant has already begun volunteering at Landguard following introductions made during the course the previous week.

A particularly distinctive feature of the Felixstowe programme was the involvement of a former VENI participant who had completed the Newmarket course and subsequently secured paid employment with Eastern Education Group as a VENI support tutor. Drawing on their own volunteering work, they helped organise the museum visit, supported participants, and introduced learners to volunteering opportunities within the local visitor economy. The fact that two participants progressed towards volunteering at Landguard within days of the course demonstrates the value of combining peer support with strong local partnerships.

Building Confidence and Employability

"It's very good for me and my self-esteem and my confidence after what I have to admit has been a difficult year for me."

Alongside introducing participants to new career opportunities, the programme strengthened confidence, motivation and practical employability skills. Participants consistently highlighted the CV workshops, interview preparation and employer feedback as some of the most valuable aspects of the four days.

One participant cited the CV sessions as particularly helpful, explaining that they had improved his understanding of how to present his skills and experience when applying for practical, hands-on roles. Another valued the opportunity to receive

interview feedback directly from employers while seeing how employability skills could be applied within the visitor economy.

For one participant, who described having experienced a particularly difficult year before returning to job searching, the programme arrived at exactly the right time. As well as helping him rediscover an interest in local history through the visit to Landguard Fort, he felt it had given him renewed confidence to take positive next steps.

“Last week couldn't have been more timely for me in that respect.”

Another participant reflected on the supportive group environment, observing that:

"It sort of built everyone's confidence."

Participants frequently described the programme as helping them feel better prepared for interviews, more positive about their prospects and more willing to explore opportunities they had not previously considered.

Participant Experience

Participants spoke warmly about the supportive atmosphere created throughout the four days.

"Julie and Amanda created a very welcoming, safe learning environment. They went out of their way to make us feel valued."

This welcoming approach appeared particularly important in encouraging participants to build confidence, contribute during sessions and engage with employers.

The practical structure of the programme was also widely appreciated. Participants enjoyed exploring Felixstowe, meeting employers and seeing the visitor economy in action rather than simply learning about it in a classroom. Several described the combination of practical visits, group activities and employer engagement as helping them better understand the opportunities available locally.

Overall satisfaction was consistently high:

"It was all good, I've got nothing bad to say about it."

Case Study: Tom

“When we went round the museum last week, of course, it sort of rekindled all my old interests in matters historic.”

Tom joined the programme after a challenging period away from employment. Having previously worked in nursing and social care, he was volunteering in a charity shop while looking for new opportunities.

The programme encouraged him to reconsider his long-standing interest in local history. Following conversations during the museum visit and employer engagement activities, Tom arranged to meet with staff at Landguard to discuss volunteering opportunities.

"***I'm going back to the museum next week because I had a brief chat with the gentleman who oversees the place in the interviews last week. We're going to meet up there next week to discuss me doing some voluntary work, which would be, I think, very beneficial for me.***"

The opportunity represented more than simply volunteering. It offered a chance to reconnect with an area that reflected his skills and interests while rebuilding confidence following a difficult year.

Conclusions

The Felixstowe programme demonstrated how a short, practical employability programme can quickly broaden participants' understanding of the visitor economy while creating meaningful local connections.

Within days of completing the course, participants were already taking positive next steps, including progressing towards volunteering opportunities, strengthening their CVs, applying newly developed interview skills and considering careers they had not previously explored.

The programme's partnership approach was a particular strength. Employer engagement, practical visits and the involvement of a former VENI participant, now employed as a support tutor, created authentic pathways into the local visitor economy and demonstrated the longer-term value of investing in participants beyond a single course.

The evaluation suggests that the combination of practical learning, supportive delivery and strong local partnerships provides an effective model for helping participants build confidence, expand their aspirations and take immediate steps towards employment and volunteering within the visitor economy.

"I would certainly recommend it to any folks in my or similar circumstances, job searching or even if you're not, even if you're in work and perhaps looking to make a move to other things, it would be very beneficial for them too."