IMPACT REPORT

Participant Outcomes and Progression Following the VENI Visitor Economy Programme in Leiston, October 2025



Tara Wheeler | July 2026

Impact Report for the VENI Welcome to the Visitor Economy Programme, Leiston, October 2025

"Having been out of work for a long time, it was probably ideal timing that I got used to working and communicating with people on the course before my jobs started." – Participant

The VENI Welcome to the Visitor Economy Programme was delivered at Leiston Enterprise Centre from 20th to 23rd October 2025 in partnership with Leiston Jobcentre. Eight participants took part in the four-day programme, achieving 100% attendance throughout. Participants completed the WorldHost Principles of Customer Service qualification alongside practical employability support including confidence building, CV development, interview preparation and direct engagement with local employers. The programme introduced participants to the breadth of opportunities within the visitor economy through employer presentations, workplace visits and a masterclass walkabout with local businesses, while supporting participants to plan their next steps towards employment or further training.

Follow-up research took place eight months after programme completion with participants and the Department for Work and Pensions. Findings demonstrate positive employment and progression outcomes, with two participants securing employment, one as Concierge for a local hotel and one in a combination of roles as an Exam Invigilator, Library Cover Assistant, and most recently, School Minibus Driver. Beyond employment outcomes, the programme appears to have played an important role in rebuilding confidence and supporting participants to successfully return to work after periods of unemployment.

Key Outcomes

- **Eight participants** completed the four-day programme.
- **100% attendance** for all participants on all four days.
- **Two participants** found employment after the course.
- Participants completed the WorldHost Principles of **Customer Service qualification**.
- Participants engaged with **local employers** and organisations including Newton Commercial, Coastal Accessible Transport Services and Britten Pears, alongside a walkabout with local businesses.
- Follow-up evidence demonstrated positive employment outcomes, including participants securing roles in education, library services, and hospitality.
- Participants reported **increased confidence, improved communication** skills and **greater readiness** to return to work.
- The Department for Work and Pensions described participant engagement and attendance as **exceeding expectations**.

Discovering Local Opportunities

One of the programme's defining strengths was its emphasis on introducing participants to employment opportunities within their own local area. Rather than focusing solely on classroom-based employability support, participants explored the visitor economy through presentations from Newton Commercial, Coastal Accessible Transport Services and Britten Pears, alongside a masterclass walkabout meeting local businesses. The programme concluded with employer engagement and action planning to help participants identify realistic next steps towards employment.

By showcasing the breadth of organisations contributing to the visitor economy, participants gained a wider understanding of the range of careers available within East Suffolk, many of which they had not previously considered.

Reflecting on the programme, Matt Graham from the Department for Work and Pensions described the level of engagement as exceeding expectations:

"I said to Andrew, 'We'll be lucky if we get two on board.' … [All eight participants] stuck around… I was pleasantly surprised." - DWP

Building Confidence to Return to Work

“Because he was long term out of work and he was in a bit of a bad state of mind about his age going against him…but the chap [employer] said, no, look, you're exactly what we're after, someone with a bit of life experience” - DWP

A recurring theme throughout the follow-up evidence was the importance of rebuilding confidence before returning to employment.

Rather than focusing exclusively on immediate job outcomes, the programme gave participants an opportunity to rebuild routines, improve communication skills and become more comfortable interacting within a group environment. Team-building activities, confidence-building exercises and practical employability sessions formed an integral part of the four-day programme alongside the WorldHost qualification.

The programme also recognised the practical barriers faced by many participants, including transport challenges, while helping them understand the opportunities available within the local visitor economy.

Department for Work and Pensions Perspective

The Department for Work and Pensions reflected positively on both the programme's delivery and participant engagement.

Matt Graham praised the exceptionally strong attendance throughout the four days and highlighted the programme's ability to connect participants with genuine local employment opportunities through employer engagement and practical insight into the visitor economy.

Follow-up evidence showed that two participants progressed into employment following the course, and Matt highlighted a participant from an Armed Forces background who secured employment as a Concierge at a hotel in Aldeburgh after impressing an employer during the VENI programme's interview sessions. Rather than filling an existing vacancy, the employer

created a new role specifically for him, recognising the value of his confidence, professionalism and life experience.

"He'd never considered hospitality or tourism before... but the employer actually made him a job offer, as a concierge at the hotel, at the Opera Hotel, which was brilliant." - DWP

Case Study: Daniel

Before attending the programme, Daniel had experienced a prolonged period out of work and described feeling uncertain about returning to employment.

Reflecting on his experience, he explained:

"Having been out of work for a long time, it was probably ideal timing that I got used to working and communicating with people on the course before my jobs started." – Participant

Daniel described how the programme eased his transition back into employment by rebuilding his confidence before he returned to work.

"It made it a little less of a shock to suddenly find myself back in a workplace environment again." - Participant

By the time of follow-up, Daniel had successfully returned to employment across three different roles, working as an Exam Invigilator, a Library Cover Assistant at Hollesley Bay and Warren Hill prisons, and a School Minibus Driver.

His experience demonstrates how a relatively short employability programme can support people back into work by helping to rebuild confidence, establish routines and make the transition back into employment feel less daunting.

Conclusions

Evidence gathered from participants and the Department for Work and Pensions suggests the VENI Welcome to the Visitor Economy Programme successfully combined practical employability support with meaningful engagement with local employers and the wider visitor economy.

Eight participants completed the programme with 100% attendance, reflecting exceptionally high levels of engagement throughout the four days. Participant feedback highlighted the value of rebuilding confidence, improving communication skills and gaining a better understanding of local employment opportunities. Follow-up evidence demonstrated positive employment outcomes and progression, while stakeholder feedback highlighted the effectiveness of connecting participants with employers rooted in the East Suffolk economy.

The programme appears particularly effective because it combines:

- Industry-recognised WorldHost customer service training
- Practical employability support
- Confidence building

- Direct engagement with local employers
- Workplace visits and local business insight
- Interview preparation and CV development
- Action planning towards employment or further training
- Strong partnership working between VENI and the Department for Work and Pensions

Overall, the findings suggest the VENI Welcome to the Visitor Economy Programme provided participants with the confidence, practical skills and local knowledge needed to make informed career decisions and successfully return to employment.

"That employer [from the course] really liked somebody and actually made a job for them…I put that as one of our good news stories here actually" - DWP