IMPACT REPORT

VENI Preparing for a Job in the Visitor Economy 12 Day Programme

Newmarket

June–July 2026



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Impact Report for the VENI Skills Bootcamp in Newmarket, June – July 2026

"A brilliant opportunity came for me after the Newmarket course."

The VENI Preparing for a Job in the Visitor Economy programme was delivered at the National Horse Racing Museum in Newmarket between 15 June and 2 July 2026. Delivered as a 12-day Skills Bootcamp over three weeks, the programme was designed to prepare participants for employment within the visitor economy, while building confidence, employability skills and understanding of the breadth of opportunities available within the sector.

The programme combined customer service and employability learning with CV development, mock interviews, local employer engagement and exploration of Newmarket's visitor economy. Participants visited local businesses and organisations, explored Newmarket's equine heritage, undertook work experience and met employers for interviews on the final day. The programme also included green skills and carbon literacy activity, mobility support and opportunities to explore further training with West Suffolk College.

The final week placed a particular emphasis on practical experience, with three days allocated to preparing for, undertaking and reflecting on a half-day work placement, followed by employer interviews and course completion.

Follow-up interviews with participants, which form the basis of this report, took place around three months after the course and explored employment progression alongside the broader impacts on confidence, employability and career thinking. Employment outcomes will continue to be tracked through to the six-month Milestone 3 follow-up point, and this report therefore provides an emerging picture of those outcomes.

All quotations in **orange** are from participants.

Key Outcomes

- 10 participants took part in the Newmarket programme.
- Attendance over three weeks was 96%
- 50% of participants have so far progressed into employment, with further employment outcomes continuing to be tracked through to the six-month Milestone 3 follow-up point.
- One participant progressed directly from taking part in the Newmarket programme to paid work supporting the delivery of subsequent VENI programmes.
- Participants described improvements in CVs, interview preparation and confidence, with practical interview activity particularly valued.
- For some participants, the programme also provided an important opportunity to rebuild routine and social confidence after time away from work.
- Local visits, work experience and employer engagement provided practical exposure to Newmarket's visitor economy and helped participants understand opportunities within their local area.

From Participant to Paid Employment

One of the strongest individual outcomes to emerge at the three-month follow-up was from a participant who had moved from taking part in the Newmarket programme to supporting VENI delivery herself.

She had been out of work for a relatively short period when she joined the Newmarket programme but described how quickly she had lost some of the routine associated with employment:

"It was good in respect of getting me back out into a nice routine, back out of the house, getting somewhere at a certain time again because when you haven't been in work... it's surprising how quickly you can fall out with routines."

Being part of a group also helped her readjust to being around people she did not know:

"It was great to get back into that... meeting people again, getting that environment with strangers at first and finding yourself back into that environment is always, I think, really helpful."

During the Newmarket programme she had an interview with Andrew Wheeler. This subsequently led to an opportunity to work on VENI delivery:

"A brilliant opportunity came for me after the Newmarket course."

By the time of follow-up, she had already supported a subsequent VENI programme in Felixstowe and was working on another in Stowmarket:

"I'm on my second one at the moment... I've done one in Felixstowe and I'm now doing the one in Stowmarket."

Her experience as both participant and member of the delivery team has reinforced her view of the value of confidence and interview preparation within the programme:

"Practice makes perfect and giving them the tools to help improve themselves that way... it was really beneficial."

Building Confidence and Employability Skills

Practical employability support was one of the strongest themes to emerge from participant interviews. Participants entered the programme with different backgrounds and levels of experience, but CV development and interview preparation were widely seen as useful.

One participant described the CV learning as particularly helpful:

"The presentation of CV... the look of a CV."

He also found the work around "presentation [and] interview techniques" useful despite already having experience of speaking in front of people.

Another participant, who felt some of the wider job-search content covered things she already knew, nevertheless singled out interview practice as valuable:

"There was the interviewing techniques when we were mocking the interviews in a group that actually was useful."

She particularly valued: ***"practicing STAR as well."***

A participant who was still looking for work at follow-up similarly identified CV writing and interview preparation as the most useful elements:

“I see how to write CV and about interview. I get many information.”

The participant who subsequently moved into VENI employment described making significant changes to her own CV following the programme:

“I completely redid my CV after his presentation on it and his expertise. I think that was a great benefit.”

Rebuilding Routine, Confidence and Social Connection

For participants who had spent time out of work, returning to a structured programme provided an opportunity to rebuild routine, interact with other people and regain confidence in a working and learning environment.

The participant who subsequently joined VENI’s delivery team described this as one of the most useful aspects of her own experience. Looking back after moving into work, she also observed similar changes among participants she was now supporting:

“I think for building confidence, especially with some of the attendees... it was really beneficial.”

Another participant also valued the social dimension particularly strongly, describing the course positively and saying:

“I like [the] social side as well.”

She remained interested in further learning and activities that combined gaining skills with opportunities to meet people.

These outcomes are also important when considering progression towards employment. For participants who have spent longer outside the workplace, rebuilding routine and confidence around other people can be an important step towards feeling ready to return to work.

Understanding the Visitor Economy and Newmarket

The Newmarket programme made extensive use of the local area. Participants explored the National Horse Racing Museum, Newmarket’s equine economy and local heritage, met local businesses and employers and undertook work experience

For one participant with an existing customer-service background, this felt surprisingly new:

“My background was customer service and even here I learned a lot and lot of hospitality things and many more economy. We had visited so many places. It was very good. It was very informative.”

She was not actively seeking work at the time of follow-up because her three-year-old son was only attending childcare for a limited number of hours. However, she said she would consider work related to what she had learned once her childcare circumstances changed.

Another participant had joined partly because her work coach told her the programme would offer an opportunity to meet local businesses. She was considering self-employment in social media management and was interested in developing contacts and understanding the local economy.

She described her own work experience at Newmarket Town Hall positively. Although the reception work itself was already familiar to her, she valued meeting staff and learning more about the organisation:

"Everyone [was] lovely... I had nice chat with both of the ladies in Town Hall and found out a lot."

Learning from Newmarket

Feedback from participants identified several areas of learning that could help strengthen future delivery in Newmarket and elsewhere.

Different starting points may require greater flexibility

Participants came to the programme with different levels of previous employment experience and confidence in job searching. For some, support with CVs and interviews provided important new skills. Others were already familiar with much of this content.

One experienced participant explained:

"Most of the things I've been taught, I've already knew, used, applied."

She did, however, find the practical interview work useful, particularly the opportunity to practise interview techniques and use the STAR approach. In contrast, another participant identified learning how to write a CV and prepare for an interview as among the most useful things he had gained.

The same was true of work experience. One participant described her placement at Newmarket Town Hall as "amazing", particularly valuing the opportunity to meet people and learn more about the organisation, although the reception work itself was already familiar to her. Feedback suggested that work experience may be most useful when placements take account of participants' previous experience as well as their interests and future plans.

This suggests there may be value in allowing some flexibility within employability sessions and work experience to reflect participants' different starting points. Those who already have a strong CV or considerable interview experience could, for example, spend more time on individual applications, interview practice or other areas relevant to their own job search.

Understanding support needs before the programme

Several participants also raised the impact on the wider group when one participant required a high level of individual support. Participants recognised that VENI staff had worked hard to manage the situation. One commented:

"The guys running the course did a pretty admirable job."

Their feedback instead raised questions about whether the participant's support needs could have been identified before the programme began. Another participant, who has since gone on to support VENI delivery herself, reflected on the importance of:

"Just making sure that the abilities of each individual are assessed before."

The participant requiring additional support herself described the programme positively, valued the opportunity to spend time with other people and was interested in further learning.

The learning from Newmarket is therefore not about excluding participants who may need additional support, but about identifying those needs earlier. Better information at referral stage could help VENI

plan appropriate support, including one-to-one support where necessary, and help ensure that all participants are able to get the most from the programme.

Using AI within job search

One participant suggested including some practical guidance on using AI within job searching. She had previously undertaken AI training and had informally shown other participants how it could be used to support applications.

She emphasised using AI as a starting point rather than simply submitting AI-generated material:

"Run it through the AI and then kind of rewrite it in your own words, make it you again. But it's still a tool to help you build the foundations."

This was raised by one participant rather than across the wider group, but it provides a useful suggestion for future delivery. A short practical introduction could show participants how AI can support CVs and applications while retaining their own experience and voice.

Recommendations

Learning from the Newmarket programme suggests that future delivery could:

- Retain the strong focus on practical employability support, particularly CV development, interview preparation and opportunities to practise interview techniques.
- Allow some flexibility within employability sessions and work experience to reflect different starting points, including opportunities for participants with more employment experience to focus on individual applications or more advanced interview preparation, and matching placements as closely as possible to what each participant would benefit from gaining.
- Work with referral partners to identify additional support needs before the programme begins, so that appropriate support can be planned where required.
- Consider introducing practical guidance on using AI within job searching, showing participants how it can support CVs and applications while retaining their own experience and voice.

Conclusion

Early evidence from the Newmarket programme indicates strong engagement and positive progression into employment, alongside wider gains in confidence and employability.

Attendance was 96% across the programme and five of the ten participants have so far progressed into employment. With employment outcomes continuing to be tracked through to the six-month Milestone 3 point, the current 50% employment rate represents a positive early outcome, with the potential for further progression to be captured.

Participants described practical benefits from CV development, interview preparation and opportunities to practise interview techniques, alongside increased confidence and readiness for work. For some, the programme also helped rebuild routine and social confidence after time away from employment.

The local Newmarket focus, work experience and employer engagement added a practical dimension, helping participants explore local opportunities and make connections with employers. One

participant progressed directly into paid work supporting subsequent VENI programmes, providing a particularly clear example of progression following the course.

Participant feedback also identified useful learning for future delivery, particularly around responding to different starting points, matching work experience to individual needs and understanding additional support needs before the programme begins.

Overall, the early findings show both tangible employment outcomes and meaningful distance travelled. With half of the cohort already in employment, continued follow-up to the six-month Milestone 3 point will provide a fuller picture of participants' longer-term progression.

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