IMPACT REPORT

Participant Outcomes and Progression Following the VENI Visitor Economy Programme at PGL Bawdsey Manor, March 2026



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Impact Report for the VENI Visitor Economy Programme at PGL Bawdsey Manor, March 2026

"I'm absolutely loving it here at PGL. It's really good…the course is amazing."

The VENI Visitor Economy Programme was delivered in partnership with PGL Bawdsey Manor and Woodbridge Jobcentre 9th to 13th March 2026. The five day course combined the industry-recognised WorldHost Principles of Customer Service qualification with practical employability support, including CV development, interview preparation and direct employer engagement.

Participants had the opportunity to visit PGL Bawdsey Manor, meet members of the PGL team, gain first-hand insight into the workplace and understand the variety of roles available across the organisation. The programme concluded with applications through PGL's VIP recruitment route and Microsoft Teams interviews, providing participants with a direct pathway into employment.

Follow-up interviews were conducted approximately four months after programme completion with participants, PGL and the Department for Work and Pensions. The findings demonstrate positive employment and progression outcomes, with four participants successfully progressing through PGL's recruitment process and receiving job offers. Three participants had secured employment by the point of follow-up, including one who had started work at PGL.

Note: Participant quotes are in **orange**, DWP and PGL Bawdsey quotes are in **blue.**

Key Outcomes

"It was definitely through the course. I don't think PGL had ever really crossed my mind before."

- **Eight** participants took part in the programme.
- Attendance and engagement **remained strong** throughout the five days.
- **Four** participants successfully progressed through PGL's recruitment process and received job offers.
- **One** participant had started work at PGL by the point of follow-up.
- **Two** further participants secured employment in teaching and on a golf course with other employers following the course.
- Participants cited increased confidence, improved interview skills and a better understanding of employer expectations as a consequence of completing the course.
- Participants valued the opportunity to experience a real workplace before deciding whether it was the right career pathway for them.

- Employer and Jobcentre staff described the programme as an effective way of connecting candidates with genuine employment opportunities.

Bringing Employers and Jobseekers Together

"For me, that's really important... people seeing first-hand what we're like, where we are and what the work is actually like." – Dave Jury, PGL Bawdsey Manor

A clear theme of both participant and stakeholder interviews was the value of bringing jobseekers and employers together in a real working environment.

Rather than simply hearing about opportunities within the visitor economy, participants visited PGL Bawdsey Manor, met staff and gained a realistic understanding of the organisation, its expectations and the range of roles available.

Dave Jury from PGL explained that allowing participants to experience the workplace before applying benefited both the employer and prospective employees. Visiting the site enabled participants to decide whether they could genuinely see themselves working there while giving PGL an opportunity to identify motivated candidates who understood the realities of the role.

One participant reflected:

"It opened your eyes to a lot of stuff that they actually do that you don't realise."

Another explained that the programme had introduced him to a career he had never previously considered.

"It was definitely through the course. I don't think PGL had ever really crossed my mind before."

Participant Perspectives

"My confidence levels before the course weren't the best."

When discussing the things they found most useful about the course, participants often cited interview preparation, teamwork, communication and opportunities to build confidence.

One participant reflected that the course had helped him understand both the recruitment process and the expectations of the role.

"It explained what to expect... now I know what to look for."

Another explained that participating in group discussions had significantly improved his confidence.

"Being able to speak openly in a group... hearing other people's stories... was really helpful."

Participants also spoke warmly about the delivery team.

"Really, really friendly... encouraging."

Another commented that the programme was:

"Really well put together... they were all helpful."

While not every participant ultimately pursued employment with PGL Bawdsey, several reflected that the programme had strengthened their confidence, broadened their understanding of employment opportunities and helped them think differently about how their existing skills could transfer into future careers.

A note on facilities: One of the participants mentioned that because some of the course was held at the job centre, they were unable to use the toilets in the building and had to leave the building to use toilets, they would prefer to have more accessible toilets in future.

Employer and DWP Perspectives

"The proof is in the pudding. People vote with their feet. If something's good, they'll turn up. If it's not, they won't."
– Matt Graham, Department for Work and Pensions

Both PGL Bawdsey Manor and the Department for Work and Pensions reflected positively on the programme, noting its high levels of participant engagement and strong attendance throughout the course.

Matt also praised the course leaders for their ability to engage participants with very different backgrounds, confidence levels and previous experiences.

"They know how to hold a room, they know how to communicate, they know how to balance... we've had some difficult characters... but they made it so they still engaged."
– Matt Graham, Department for Work and Pensions

From the employer's perspective, Dave Jury explained that giving participants the opportunity to visit the workplace before applying helped both candidates and PGL make informed recruitment decisions.

"If somebody comes away saying, 'Actually, I don't think PGL's for me,' that's okay. I'd rather they find that out now than after they've started."
– Dave Jury, PGL Bawdsey Manor

Dave also reflected on the wider benefits of employment within the visitor economy, noting that:

"There are plenty of jobs around and they're good jobs that people can find satisfying and rewarding."
– Dave Jury, PGL Bawdsey Manor

Drawing on his experience of supporting new staff, he observed that:

"People do grow in confidence and by the end of the season they're quite a different person to the start of the season."
– Dave Jury, PGL Bawdsey Manor

Four participants successfully progressed through PGL's recruitment process and received job offers. While only one participant had started work at the time of follow-up, subsequent starts were delayed by practical factors including DBS checks, identification requirements

and the timing of seasonal recruitment. Rather than reflecting shortcomings in participants' employability, these experiences highlighted practical improvements for future delivery. Dave Jury suggested running the programme earlier in the year, alongside earlier checks of identification requirements, to maximise the time available to complete pre-employment checks and reduce avoidable delays to successful candidates starting work.

Together, these findings suggest the programme successfully prepared participants to meet the expectations of a major employer while demonstrating the value of close partnership working between employers, training providers and the Department for Work and Pensions. By combining practical employer engagement with high-quality delivery and realistic insight into careers in the visitor economy, the course helped participants build confidence, make informed career choices and move closer towards employment.

Case Study: Callum

Before joining the programme, Callum had never considered a career with PGL. The opportunity to visit Bawdsey Manor and meet the team gave him a new perspective on the sector and the range of careers it could offer.

"Yeah, I'm absolutely loving it here at PGL. It's really good. And yeah, the course is amazing."

Callum described how taking part in the programme not only helped him secure employment, but also introduced him to a career path he had never previously considered.

"Ever since joining it and giving it a go, I've learned that it's a whole new career aspect. I didn't even realise that I could do."

He also reflected on the importance of learning alongside other participants, explaining that the group environment had helped him build confidence and prepare for work.

"I think being in a group setting really helped me as well, because my confidence levels before the course weren't the best. But being able to speak openly in a group about professional understandings, it was quite helpful to me. Hearing other people's stories as well was really good."

Having successfully joined PGL as a Housekeeper, Callum spoke enthusiastically about both the role and the unique setting at Bawdsey Manor.

"It's absolutely amazing. It's so beautiful. The views every day are breathtaking, honestly."

While enjoying his current role, Callum also spoke positively about the opportunities for progression within the organisation alongside his own longer-term ambitions.

"I don't think I'll spend my whole life being a housekeeper here... but there is room for developing at PGL, like being a housekeeping specialist, and then working up to manager."

Callum's experience demonstrates how practical employer engagement, workplace visits and supportive group learning can broaden career aspirations, build confidence and provide a clear pathway into employment.

Conclusions

Evidence gathered from participants, PGL and the Department for Work and Pensions suggests the VENI Visitor Economy Programme at PGL Bawdsey Manor successfully combined practical employability support with direct employer engagement.

Four participants successfully progressed through PGL's recruitment process and received job offers, while three participants had secured employment by the point of follow-up. Participants consistently highlighted increased confidence, stronger interview skills and a clearer understanding of employer expectations, while employer and Jobcentre staff described the programme as an effective way of connecting motivated candidates with genuine employment opportunities.

The programme appears particularly effective because it combines:

- Certified customer service training
- Practical employability support
- Direct employer engagement
- Workplace visits and real-world insight
- Interview preparation and recruitment support
- Confidence building
- Strong partnership working between VENI, PGL and the Department for Work and Pensions
- A partnership with PGL Bawdsey Manor that enabled participants to experience a real workplace before applying, helping both candidates and the employer make informed recruitment decisions.

Overall, findings suggest the VENI Visitor Economy Programme at PGL Bawdsey Manor supported participants to make informed career decisions, develop transferable employability skills and gain valuable experience of a real workplace.

"Without that course, I probably wouldn't have gotten so far with the interview process as I did."