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## **PUPILS TAKE OVER SLALEY HALL**

Imagine a visit to the North East Hotel of the Year.... Do you think of class, tradition and top class service by experienced hoteliers? Well what would you think if you entered the resort only to find an adolescent concierge welcome you through the doors and a teenage boy greet you at reception? How about if you found out your meals were being prepared by a group of college students – and if the whole place was being run by a 15 year old manager!?

Well that's exactly what happened today at De Vere Slaley Hall in Northumberland when pupils from the North East's schools and colleges took over the rural retreat during a work experience event with a difference.

The hotel contacted TWEBLO consortium member Education Business Connections (EBC) of Sunderland to offer the opportunity to school to take part in the event. EBC contacted schools they had worked with on their award winning programme Exploring Tourism and earlier programmes designed to improve young people's interests in, and understanding of, the opportunities open to them in the hospitality, leisure, travel and tourism sector. Exploring Tourism won the Tourism Ambassador of the Year Award in the prestigious ONE NorthEast sponsored North East Tourism Awards.

Sarah Nicklin from Education Business Connections, said: "To gain hands on experience working in one of the region's most prestigious hotels is a fantastic opportunity for these students. Slaley Hall clearly recognises the potential of the region's youngsters and has been very proactive in offering its support to the schools and colleges in the area."

Slaley Hall, the 1000 acre estate in Hexham, is eager to strengthen its ties with the local community and keen to demonstrate the many career opportunities available in the hospitality industry.

In order to illustrate these prospects, the hotel opened its doors today to some of the most promising leisure and hospitality students from around the region. Twenty one youngsters in total from Houghton Kepier Sports College, Kenton School in Newcastle, Hebburn Comprehensive and St Thomas More in Blaydon received top tips about the industry and learnt from some of the best people in the business.

During the event, students donned their kitchen whites and helped the head chef prepare meals from the hotel's delicious menus. They learnt about the hotel's concierge and reception service and took over some house keeping responsibilities. They also spent part of the day with general manager, Andrew Coney and discovered what the real boss gets up to.

Emma Curran, 16 from Kenton School in Newcastle said that the event had given the students a fantastic insight into the leisure and tourism industry. She said: "It's been brilliant to work in such a great hotel and the experience will certainly help me when I come to researching career options later in the year."

General manager Andrew Coney added: "Here at Slaley Hall we feel we can complement many of the great leisure and tourism courses on offer by providing invaluable work experience for some of the region's leading students. Having won Hotel of The Year at the North East Tourism Awards, we're keen to support local communities and we'd like nothing more than to contribute to the success of students in the region - just so long as they don't take my job!"

For more information on Slaley Hall visit [www.devere.co.uk/deluxe/slaley-hall/](http://www.devere.co.uk/deluxe/slaley-hall/)

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