

Peninsula of Sanctuary: Libraries, Final Project Report

Executive Summary

The Peninsula of Sanctuary project empowered library staff in Devon & Cornwall to improve the welcome for people seeking sanctuary and other new arrivals by raising awareness and building confidence through training, an online forum and a shared resource bank.

We are hugely grateful to SWRLS for providing financial support, to the Partner group for steering the project, to John Vincent for providing expert advice and training, and to everyone who engaged in the activities of the project in whatever way.

Key Achievements



**1st cross
sector
libraries of
sanctuary
project**

Public, Health,
HE, FE, School
and Special
libraries reached



**74 library
staff attended
training**

4 training events
and 3 best
practice
conversations



**100% of
attendees felt
more
confident
about
supporting
new arrivals
after the
training**



**53 library
staff joined
the forum**



**80+ resources
in the
Resource
Bank to
support
libraries**

Recommendations for the future

- Continue to develop the forum and resource bank
- Promote the recorded training materials
- Invest in more training and support, including on accessing relevant library stock
- Get strategic buy-in from organisations, not just passionate individuals

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Introduction and Project Background

The idea for this project arose out of a growing awareness of the Libraries of Sanctuary award (from a CILIP article and a session at the SWRLS AGM 2021). A group of interested librarians from Devon & Cornwall and associated stakeholders started meeting regularly from February 2022 to discuss our shared interest in improving the library welcome for new arrivals, and to explore how we could collaborate across library sectors to do this.

In the summer of 2022, a decision was made to bid for project funding from SWRLS as there was a lack of capacity in the group to take the ideas forward to action, despite a commitment and enthusiasm to do so. A core group emerged to write the project bid and became the Project Partner Group once funding had been secured.

During the period of the project refugee issues changed within the international and local context. At the start of 2022 we were aware of refugees from Afghanistan housed in hotels locally and Local Government commitments to support young people seeking sanctuary. When the conflict in Ukraine started in February 2022 Devon & Cornwall welcomed many Ukrainians. As the project continued the media coverage and local response to people seeking sanctuary arguably became more polarised, with demonstrations and counter-protests at hotels in the counties and the 'stop the boats' narrative. Within this context we witnessed overwhelming support from the library community to welcome new arrivals.

PoS Core Project Group members

Laura Lay - Head of Library & Archives, FX Plus. Laura is the project lead and FX Plus is the administrative hub of the project

Heather Norman-Soderlind – Chair, SWRLS

John Vincent – Trainer and consultant, expert in libraries' role in supporting new arrivals and social inclusion in libraries. Runs [The Network](#)

Kay Ecclestone – Chair, CILIP SW

Kerry Kellaway – Head of Library, Marjon University Plymouth

Sim Taylor – SWRLS Trustee and Dartington College

Colin Bray – Service Development Manager, Libraries Unlimited (until June 2023)

Based on the project [statement of the intent](#), the stated aims of the project in the [grant application form](#) were as follows:

- To improve library services for persons seeking sanctuary and all new arrivals in the South West.
- Achieve Library of Sanctuary status for the partner libraries in Devon and Cornwall
- Share our experiences through this initiative to encourage other libraries in the South West and to other sectors such as museums and archives to improve their services for new arrivals and people seeking sanctuary.

- Work within the framework of the Libraries of Sanctuary ‘Learn, Embed, Share’.

The project funding would be used for two key purposes:

- 1) To provide awareness training for library staff across Cornwall and Devon
- 2) To appoint a Project Coordinator for a 9 month period to work with the core project group in the delivery of **5 workstreams**:
 - i) Set up a series of events to **train** champions. Support the cascade of this training with online learning resources.
 - ii) Collate and share **communications** with the wider library sector. Share relevant initiatives in libraries in Cornwall & Devon, and those happening in other areas to gain ideas and momentum for future developments.
 - iii) Investigate availability of foreign language books and **resources** available in libraries in Cornwall & Devon as a potential resource for sharing.
 - iv) Co-ordinate the design and relevant translation of **promotional materials** for re-use by libraries.
 - v) **Evaluate the impact** of training and initiatives in the partner libraries to develop recommendations for future development. Draft final project report for submission to SWRLs.

Each member of the core project group was aligned to one of these workstreams, to work alongside the Project Coordinator.

Jane Choules was appointed Project Coordinator, working on the project from February to October 2023.

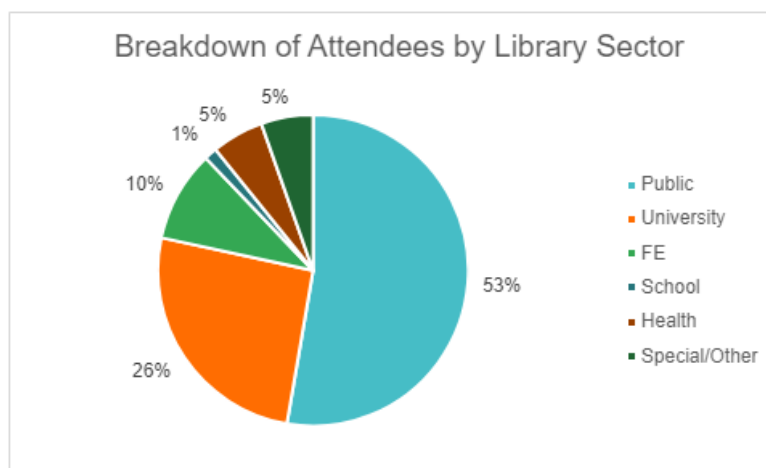
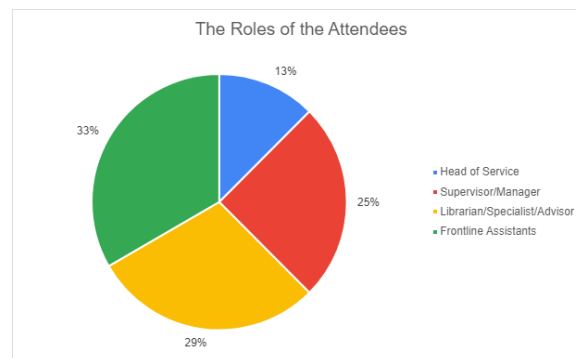
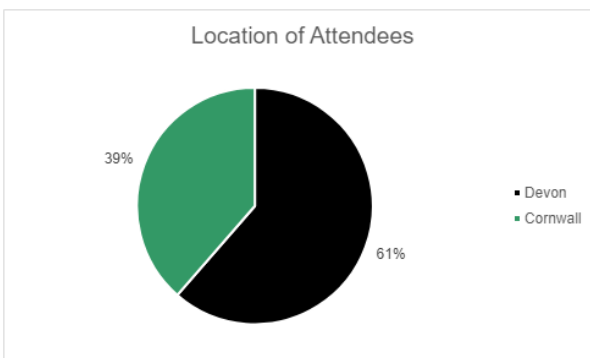
Training

Actions

The training leads worked with John Vincent to create a pilot training session which was delivered on 8th March 2023 to the original stakeholder group. Following feedback and revision, the session was then delivered online on two further occasions in April and in May. The recordings were added to the Forum, to widen participation.

Feedback indicated that attendees would appreciate practical tips and examples for supporting new arrivals. An in-person session was planned for June, but due to low take-up this was cancelled and rescheduled as a hybrid session with a title that clarified that this was a practical session. In consequence the hybrid session, **Working with New Arrivals: Theory into Practice Workshop**, was designed and held in September with 10 attendees in person and 7 online.

In total, the training reached 74 library staff from across Cornwall (39%) & Devon (61%) working in a variety of roles and from all sectors. Data from views of the recordings is not available.



Additionally, three **Best Practice Conversations** were held to highlight the work that is happening in the Peninsula:

- i) Conversation cafe at Exmouth Library with Sim Taylor
- ii) Cornwall Refugee Resource Network with Rae Preston (CRRN)
- iii) Library Work Clubs with ESOL support with Iain Harris (Libraries Unlimited)

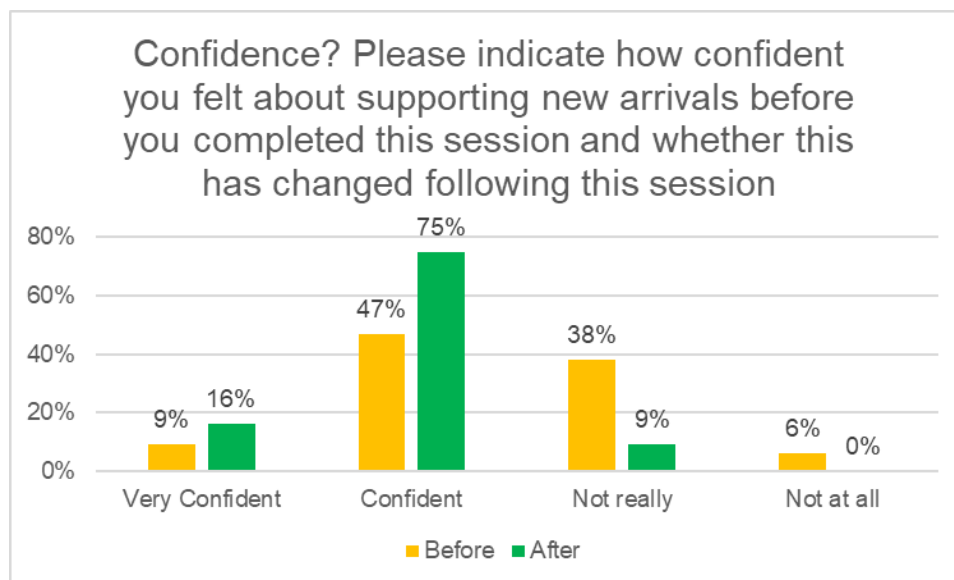
These conversations helped to demonstrate that making a difference is possible for all libraries by starting with small steps. All sessions have been recorded (with permission) and uploaded to the Forum so that Forum members unable to participate live can view them. The training material is available to be used by individuals and, more importantly, to cascade this training within organisations. The training resources section of the Forum was seen as the most useful section of the Forum in the final feedback survey.

Feedback and evaluation of training

An online feedback survey was used to collect data from attendees, with the emphasis on the impact of the training.

Summary of feedback:

1. **The information from this will help me to support new arrivals more effectively** - 55% of respondents Strongly agreed with this statement with a further 35% agreeing.
2. **Confidence? Please indicate how confident you felt about supporting new arrivals before you completed this session and whether this has changed following this session**
Prior to the training, 44% of respondents had little or no confidence in their ability to support new arrivals. After the training, this had reduced to 9% (with no-one responding no confidence) and 75% feeling confident and a further 16% feeling very confident.



- 3. Useful? Please indicate how useful you found this session and how useful you expected it to be before you did it.** Prior to completing the training, all respondents expected the training to be of some use (which is indicative of them attending of their own will rather than being instructed to attend) but everyone found the training to be more useful than they expected with 94% finding it very or mostly useful compared to 63% prior to the event.

Lessons learnt

- The take-up of staff from local authorities or organisations where there was a contact known to the Project Group (or part of the Project Group) was far greater than if there wasn't.
- The take-up of training was greater if the operational management or leadership was enthusiastic.
- The first planned in-person workshop had to be rescheduled due to low registrations. By choosing a different date (September rather than June which also gave a longer lead-in for marketing), changing it to a hybrid event and altering the event title/programme so that it was clearly a different event (Theory into Practice), there were enough to successfully run this event in September.
- Ensuring that the communications reached the correct staff was difficult, despite the best efforts of the coordinator, SWRLS and CILIP-SW (see below). This was particularly where the management of individual libraries was devolved such as the public libraries in Cornwall, the individual centres in Cornwall College and school libraries.
- There was more activity happening in individual public libraries than we were initially aware of, which meant that some of the comments in the first training session implied that it was at the incorrect level (although they also commented that they were reassured that their knowledge was correct!)
- The same evaluation form was used for each session but individually; one form opened and closed for each session would have made analysis far easier.

Recommendations

- Undertake research to establish base knowledge and existing activity
- Further training on the practicalities of working with new arrivals, ideally utilising the current knowledge of participants by including group discussions of what is already in place and what has worked, or not, for them
- Continue to record interviews with practitioners to add to the Forum
- Consider the option of different training sessions aimed at service providers and heads of service and sessions aimed at frontline staff.
- Identify individuals within the Project Group who have known contacts in a sector to better promote the training

Communications

The communications workstream has been a crucial strand of the project, instrumental to achieving the fundamental objectives to raise awareness of and increase confidence in supporting new arrivals in libraries, and to share good practice.

General awareness of the project and related events such as training and drop in good practice conversations have been promoted via SWRLS and CILIP-SW newsletters, blogs, drop-in networking sessions and websites, as well as via social media channels. A positive of the two main communication channels is that SWRLS bulletins are primarily sent to organisations and service providers in the SW whereas CILIP-SW eBulletins go to individuals working in libraries and information services at all levels. A disadvantage is that neither had an option to target just their members who lived and worked in Cornwall and Devon.

The comms team developed a project logo in February 2023 to give the project identity, and this has been consistently used throughout the life of the project. The SWRLS website hosted information under their Projects section with links from News and the Home Page as the occasion warranted. Searching for Peninsula of Sanctuary Libraries retrieves all the relevant posts, and these links were included in appropriate communications.

See Appendix 1 for an early example of written promotional material, 'Join the Peninsula of Sanctuary Forum', including the newly created logo.

We created a project email account peninsulaofsanctuary@gmail.com, which became the key point of contact outside of the project Forum. From the feedback, there was an even split of people hearing about the project from colleagues or managers and via the SWRLS emails – all at 42% of respondents, with 14% finding out via the CILIP-SW eBulletin.

The main route for following the progress of the project has been the Forum, with 100% of respondents using this in addition to SWRLS emails (37%), CILIP-SW eBulletins, Colleagues, Managers and PoS Website (25%) and CILIP-SW social media (12.5%). 75% of respondents chose to receive email notifications from the Forum in order to keep up to date with new posts.

The decision was taken to have only a Twitter (later X) account rather than setting up a variety of social media accounts. Although the Peninsula of Sanctuary only attracted 24 direct followers, tweets were retweeted by SWRLS who have 76 followers & CILIP-SW with 720 followers. CILIP-SW tweets were frequently retweeted by CILIPInfo (29.4K followers) which resulted in 3.2K impressions in September.

The Peninsula of Sanctuary: Libraries Forum

Background

We wanted to provide an informative and safe space for colleagues from libraries across the peninsula to connect, discuss ideas to make libraries more welcoming and accessible for new arrivals and to link in to relevant local and national information. The project aims state that representatives from libraries in the region could act as champions in their own libraries, to raise awareness of the issues and share ideas of how services could be developed.

The Forum was set up to provide this space and was launched in late February 2023. It was promoted to libraries throughout the life of the project via multiple communication channels and at our training events.

The Forum is hosted on the SWRLS Basecamp site. We have fully utilised the flexibility and structure the Basecamp platform provides, setting up a **Resource Bank**; creating a more formal **Announcements** and news section; promoting training and notable events using the **Calendar**; and utilising the **Chat** functionality to encourage informal discussion and sharing of ideas.

The criteria for membership of the Forum were simple - colleagues must work in a library in any sector, the only restriction being that it must be in Devon or Cornwall. Individuals needed to proactively join via our project email address or a Basecamp invitation.

Membership

The Forum has **53** members at the time of writing, including the 7 members of the project group.

Breakdown of Forum members by library sector

Sector	Number	% of Total
Academic HE	17	32%
Academic FE	2	4%
Public	21	40%
Health	3	5.5%
Special	4	7.5%
Other*	6	11%

**Includes 4 project group members without affiliation to a specific library service*

Not all library services in the region are represented despite targeted promotion, however the spread across sectors is good and the overall membership gives us significant reach, particularly as a number of members are representing a whole service, geographical library grouping, or specialist area within their service.

Active Engagement

Active engagement with the Forum in the form of posts and conversations has been minimal, except for a couple of regular contributors and of course numerous posts from core project group members. Various attempts to encourage wider chat and discussion have been tested with little effect e.g. project group members asked open questions on a weekly rota throughout April/May.

Why there has been such a low level of active posting is not clear from the survey evaluation and we have not been able to source any analytics data from the Basecamp platform itself. However, anecdotal evidence from John Vincent and libraries who have been working on Library of Sanctuary status for some time does indicate that these are difficult subjects to discuss in groups and library staff are often wary to post thoughts and comments. It can take significant time to foster an environment where staff feel confident and comfortable enough to openly discuss issues around people seeking asylum and other new arrivals, and on a multi service discussion forum such as this, and particularly within the context of the current narrative from the government and media, this is likely to be even more difficult.

However, it is important to note that 100% of evaluation survey respondents said they would find it useful for the Forum to continue to grow and expand post project, with 62% stating that they would contribute useful information in the future.

Feedback and evaluation

Feedback suggests that the Forum has been used by members to find out about and access training resources, access content on the Resource Bank, and keep up to date with items posted in the Announcements and Chat section.

100% of respondents to the project evaluation survey stated that they kept up with the progress of the project via the Forum. 62% found the Announcements and Calendar sections very or mostly useful, with 50% finding the Resource Bank and Chat sections very or mostly useful. 100% of respondents found all sections at least of some use.

Example comment on the value of the Forum:

I found it all very interesting and informative, gave me lots to think about going forward with my role in the Library.

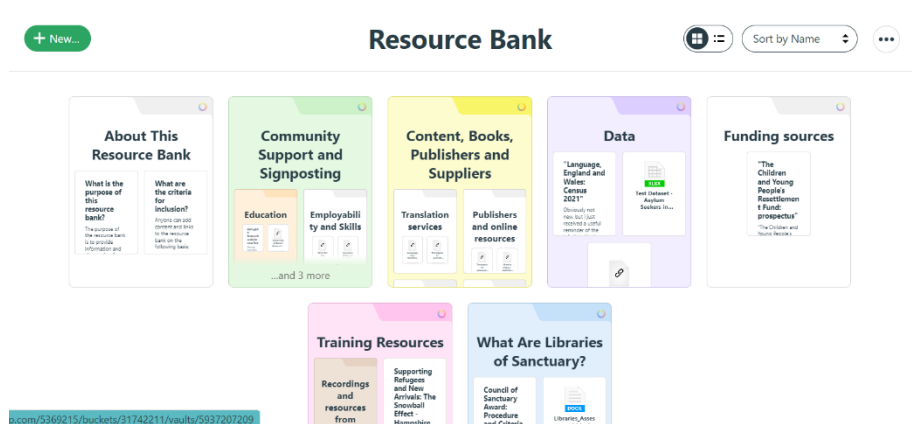
Considering this feedback, it is recommended that the Forum is maintained and developed, with more focus on the calendar of events as a means of highlighting training opportunities for library staff, as well as local and national events and initiatives.

The Resource Bank

A growing and significant repository of information, the Resource Bank was initially created as part of the Resources project workstream and has been actively developed by project group members and other Forum members throughout the life of the project.

The Resource Bank contains a mixture of local information, guidance on national initiatives such as Libraries of Sanctuary, professional guidance such as lists of specialist stock suppliers, and training resources including recordings of the training and good practice drop-in sessions delivered as part of the project.

Screenshot of the Resource Bank homepage



Feedback and evaluation

75% of respondents to the evaluation survey regard the *Training Resources* and *What Are Libraries of Sanctuary?* sections as useful/very useful, with 63% finding all other sections useful/very useful. All sections were rated at least 'of some use', showing the value of the Resource Bank in supporting libraries' work in this area.

Based on the work that has gone into developing this resource to date and the evaluation feedback on its usefulness, it is recommended that it is maintained and hopefully developed further to be made applicable and accessible to the SWRLS region more widely, as part of any future project.

Resources

The focus of the Resources workstream has been the development of the Resource Bank. It was felt by workstream leads that this would be of more value than ascertaining and promoting the availability of foreign language books and resources in the peninsula as a potential resource for sharing, as collections in individual libraries are fluid and are subject to change according to community need. In addition, stock is often spread very thinly and is hard to discover.

However, discussion and feedback from the spring online training sessions did indicate that libraries would welcome information and guidance on where and how to source relevant stock for their libraries. There is an apparent lack of readily available guidance about the specialist supplier market which could impact on libraries' knowledge of available options and the most appropriate supply routes for their needs.

A brief survey was circulated to SWRLS member libraries throughout Devon and Cornwall at the end of September 2023, to gain insight into the challenges libraries face in sourcing and promoting material in relevant foreign languages and where support could most usefully be offered.

The timing of this survey was not ideal as there was limited scope to take forward any actions within the timeframe of this project. However, it was felt worthwhile to start some work in this area, and the key results are included here to raise awareness and hopefully prompt further investigation as part of future work.

The majority of survey respondents were from the HE sector (60%), with 20% from the public library sector. Responses were evenly spread across the peninsula. There was a 42% response rate overall.

Survey results

- 40% of respondents have an online offer as well as a print offer, consisting of ebooks and newspapers in other languages (PressReader was specifically mentioned).
- 80% of respondents rely on staff knowledge and expertise to select relevant stock, 60% use supplier selection/lists and only 20% select stock in liaison with any local communities.
- 80% of respondents allow reservations to be placed on this material, but only 60% allow inter-lending. Most do make titles discoverable via their online catalogue as would be expected, but crucially promotion via displays and promotion to targeted audiences (e.g. at ESOL classes) was highlighted by 60% of respondents.
- When asked about the biggest challenges to effectively providing this material, unsurprisingly 60% of respondents highlighted budgetary restraints, particularly considering apparent low demand in some cases. Interestingly, 40% cited knowing what communities need/knowing what to focus on as their biggest challenge, indicating that there is value in further training and the provision of relevant information to help build skills and knowledge to support this work.

- What support would respondents find most useful, from agencies such as SWRLS or via future project work?

Esol language courses

Lists of suppliers for this content, possible reciprocal sharing schemes

Some resources to help get started

Shared, travelling collections. Recommended book lists

Connections, training

Promotional Materials

Although coordinating the design and relevant translation of promotional materials for re-use by libraries was an original workstream, it became apparent that there wasn't sufficient time in the life of the project to complete this workstream to the extent that had been initially intended.

We consulted with Forum members to ascertain the appetite for some centrally produced promotional material for the Peninsula of Sanctuary but received no take-up. Lessons learnt from work and initiatives in libraries elsewhere who have achieved Libraries of Sanctuary status also indicate that actually, this was too early in the journey of doing this work for most services to be in a position to know what material would be useful to them.

However, we have shared promotional material from elsewhere (including other library services and the Libraries of Sanctuary scheme) in the Resource Bank to inspire and foster ideas, and if this project does lead on to further work supported by SWRLS it would be useful to reconsider this objective at an appropriate juncture in order to visually support the welcome work in libraries with quality promotional material.

Achieve Library of Sanctuary status for the partner libraries in Devon and Cornwall

This was a stated key aim of the project in the bid documentation, however once the project started it quickly became apparent that it was not something that could be achieved for any library in the peninsula within our project timescale. Libraries elsewhere who have achieved this status (e.g. Hampshire Library Service) have usually spent many months and often years developing their services before submitting an application.

Rather, we realised early on that the value of this project, and therefore our priority, was in awareness raising and training. This we have delivered via John Vincent's training and the creation of the Forum and Resource Bank, accessible to a cross-sector network of library staff. As stated elsewhere, there is substantial potential to grow this and expand it to the wider SWRLS region as part of future projects and related work.

As part of the evaluation survey, we asked how many respondents would be applying for Library of Sanctuary status in the future. For most (75%) the answer was maybe, 12% said yes definitely, and 12% said no. 75% of respondents stated that involvement in the project has improved their understanding of the Library of Sanctuary award.

Budget Report

The SWRLS grant has been spent as follows:

Coordinator fees	5428
Training	1566
Training expenses	506
TOTAL	7500

We initially budgeted for translation and design costs, however in consultation with the Forum members it was decided that this was not needed. The project partner group agreed to spend the funds on training and coordinator fees instead.

In addition, we received in-kind support from the following organisations:

Supplier	Type of support
Falmouth Exeter Plus	Professional advice on project group – 30 hrs
Marjon University	Professional advice on project group – 35 hrs
Cornwall College	Professional advice on project group – 15 hrs
Schumacher College	Professional advice on project group – 15 hrs
Libraries Unlimited (Devon)	Professional advice on project group – 18 hrs
CILIP SW	Professional advice on project group – 47 hrs
SWRLS	Professional advice on project group – 12 hrs
	TOTAL in-kind HOURS = 172
CILIP SW	Zoom subscription for meetings & training
SWRLS	Webpage hosting Basecamp hosting for forum and project coordination
Marjon University	Venue for training

Key Lessons Learnt

- Some of the original aims were ambitious and unrealistic and on reflection more research into the process of becoming a Library of Sanctuary would have been useful prior to embarking on the project. However, as the project developed, we realised that our starting point should be developing further ways of creating a warm welcome for new arrivals (and, indeed, everyone), so the focus of the project became that rather than applying for Library of Sanctuary status.
- It was very useful to have CILIP SW, SWRLS, The Network working alongside libraries to bring a wider perspective. The cross-sector nature of the project also provided this perspective, which outweighed the challenges of meeting the needs of different audiences and differing levels of staff capacity in the different sectors.
- Capacity: It was difficult for the core project team based in libraries to find time to work on the project, due to increasing work pressures within the sector. The Project Coordinator role was very successful, it was however, not enough time to complete all the aspirations within the 9 month time period of the project.
- It became clear throughout the life of the project that the project group were individuals involved, and did not always have genuine back up from their colleagues/organisations. For example, in both cases where members of the core project group left their organisation, the involvement of that organisation in the core group stopped.
- The project was too short to make a transformation in library behaviour and support Library of Sanctuary applications, but we did empower people to be confident to make individual changes and hopefully, this has helped kick start something for some libraries.

A good example is Libraries Unlimited, where due to involvement in this project and the subsequent strategic intention of LU to become a Library of Sanctuary, Colin Bray and his team made a successful application to Devon County Council for £45K to fund and grow the library Work Club network with a specific focus on employability for refugees and other new arrivals. This initially involved four libraries with a further three libraries coming on board during September 2023.

We are aware there is likely to be other activity out there that we do not know the detail of. It would be useful to take some time to investigate further.

- We overestimated the level of active user engagement/chat within the Forum and have learnt lessons about how much work and support colleagues need to have confidence to engage in these topics. Any future development of this feature would need ongoing 1-1 liaison with libraries to encourage the activity.
- This was a cross sector project with a cross sector project group at the outset. When Colin Bray left half way through the funded project, Libraries Unlimited were unable to provide us with a replacement and we had no other public library representation on the core group. This was a big loss of perspective for the project.

- Engagement with the public library sector was challenging due to lack of staff capacity, coupled with different structures in different services which made communication difficult and inconsistent. We had excellent engagement from Libraries Unlimited due to having Colin on the group, but this was not replicated in other services.
- The resources identified and the training delivered are not unique to Devon and Cornwall and would equally be applicable across the wider SWRLS area and beyond.
- The Basecamp platform worked well, it is intuitive to use, and it is distinctive and different to what is used every day.

Key Recommendations

- The Forum (and The Resource Bank contained within it) is maintained and developed as a resource for libraries. This will need someone, or a group, dedicated to doing this. As it would be of use beyond Devon and Cornwall, it could become a part of any subsequent, related project and made available to all libraries in the SWRLS area.
- The recordings of training and good practice sessions should continue to be made available and promoted across the peninsula.
- Provide libraries with more support in accessing relevant stock to support new arrivals and refugee/asylum seeker communities. This could take the form of training and awareness raising, as well as information on routes to supply.
- Have a clear brand identity for the Forum and translate this to the SWRLS website and other publicity, whatever the 'Peninsula of Sanctuary' becomes known as in its next iteration.
- The training delivered as part of this project has been extremely valuable and this is due to John Vincent's expertise. Further investment in training across the wider SWRLS area is recommended, ideally taking a hybrid, workshop-type approach as this is what we arrived at and worked well.
- For any future project, offer more targeted promotions and communications, possibly having a nominated person for each sector. Plus consider as wide a range of communications mechanisms as possible, e.g. Facebook to reach individual library Facebook pages.
- Get strategic buy in from partner organisations/library services and commitment at that level to the project. That way, some capacity can officially be allocated, and the project is not wholly dependent on the availability and capacity of enthusiastic individuals.

Appendix 1

Peninsula of Sanctuary

Libraries in Cornwall and Devon working together to create a Peninsula of Sanctuary



Join the Peninsula of Sanctuary Forum

Open to anyone working in a library in Devon or Cornwall

We are a group of cross-sector libraries working together to make a bigger difference to the new arrivals in our region, through the concepts of welcome, safety and inclusion

Benefits

- Access to free training and resources
- Network and share best practice via an Online Forum
- Support with achieving Library of Sanctuary status

Get Involved

- As an individual or as a nominated attendee or 'champion'
- Drop-In online monthly meetings
- Attend training in person or online
- Embed your learning into your service

Contact Us: peninsulaofsanctuary@gmail.com
Find out more: <https://bit.ly/PoSLibraries>



South Western Regional Library Services CIO
A SWRLS funded project