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Jonathan McColl
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Dear Jonathan,

CILIP in Scotland (CILIPS) is the Scottish affiliate of the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals. CILIP is the leading professional body for librarians, information specialists and knowledge managers. Many of our members work within local authorities. We are writing to express our concern about the proposed changes to both your public and school library services contained within your current budget proposals.

We note your proposals to reduce opening hours by up to a third and we believe this may affect the local community's ability to access the public library service. A public library service makes an important contribution to national outcomes such as reducing inequality and improving literacy, life chances and healthⁱ. It is essential to the wellbeing of communities, providing a positive experience for local people and demonstrating the value a local authority places on its community.

This is supported by evidence based research carried out by the Scottish Government which concluded that participation in culture is significantly linked to good health and life satisfaction. For example, those who visited a library were almost 20% more likely to report good health than those who had not visited a library in the previous 12 months.ⁱⁱ

Libraries also play a key role in supporting the current digital strategies in Scotlandⁱⁱⁱ and across the UK^{iv} by providing free access for people unable to get online at home. Evidence from Carnegie UK shows that online access delivers substantial social and economic benefits to citizens and communities including improved educational attainment; better job prospects; better access to public services; cheaper goods and products; access to advice, information and knowledge, improved communication with family and friends; and enhanced democratic and civic participation.^v Libraries are also vital to improving literacy in Scotland. Around a quarter of Scotland's adults have issues with literacy^{vi} and libraries tackle this by providing adult learning and promoting access to reading at a community level.

Libraries need to be open at times that the community they serve can access them. We believe the scale of the reduction in opening hours would severely damage the ability to meet community needs.

Professional librarians are skilled practitioners who have the experience and knowledge to plan and deliver services that support national outcomes. We believe the proposed reduction in professional library staff in the public library service could also have a detrimental effect on services.

We are also concerned at the proposals to reduce the current number of professional school librarians. This runs counter to Scottish Government support for school libraries evidenced by initiatives such as the setting up of a new school library strategy^{vii}, to be published by August 2018.

CILIPS maintains that school libraries are valuable for their ability to support teaching and learning and should be the central resource of the school, open every day and staffed by a professionally trained librarian. Information professionals, embedded in the infrastructure of the school and working in partnership with teaching staff can manage resources to support the curriculum and offer a skillset that contributes to raising attainment and closing the attainment gap. A body of impact studies highlights the contribution of professional school librarians to improved attainment and achievement.^{viii}

For us to provide a more detailed response we would like to request some more information. In your proposals you mention the following points:

- Employee costs for Library Services are the second highest in Scotland
- The cost per visitor to our Libraries is the fourth highest in Scotland
- Library opening hours are higher than similar authorities

Can you please provide details of the source of these statistics and which authorities were used as a benchmark for the opening hours comparison?

Your Sincerely



Sean McNamara

CILIP in Scotland

ⁱ <http://scottishlibraries.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Strategy.pdf>

ⁱⁱ <http://www.gov.scot/publications/2013/08/9956>

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2017/03/7843>

^{iv} <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-digital-strategy>

^v <https://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/wp/wp-content/uploads/sites/64/2016/02/pub1455011469.pdf>

^{vi} <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/Doc/339854/0112382.pdf>

^{vii} <http://www.cilips.org.uk/development-school-library-strategy-begin-autumn/>

^{viii} <https://scottishlibraries.org/media/1211/impact-of-school-libraries-on-learning-2013.pdf>