

## South Ayrshire Council – Consultation response from CILIP in Scotland

The Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals in Scotland (CILIPS)<sup>i</sup> is the country's professional membership body for library and information staff. Our charitable mission is to support the principle of equality of access to information, ideas and works of imagination as fundamental elements of Scotland's economy, democracy and culture.

We welcome the opportunity to comment on your 2018 budget proposals and we understand the very difficult choices being faced by South Ayrshire Council because of significant financial pressure. However, we would like to highlight our deep concerns over the proposal to remove all school librarians and school library assistant posts in the area.

The school libraries and their staff across South Ayrshire are an essential resource. The library staff work in tandem with teachers towards educational and curriculum outcomes as seen in the Literacy across Learning programme, timetabled library sessions, the development of resources to support research and referencing and much more. They carry out a vast range of work such as demonstrably improving literacy levels, arranging author visits, working with staff and pupils to achieve the LGBT charter, supporting safe social media use, promoting World Book Day and book festivals, running book clubs, reading challenges and awards and supporting key government initiatives. This vital work is impossible without a dedicated school librarian in every school.

Last year, following a meeting with CILIPS, the Deputy First Minister John Swinney announced that a National Strategy for School Libraries would be developed, and this will include national guidance for service provision to help deliver consistency across the country. The Strategy will be agreed and published later this year, ahead of the new academic year<sup>ii</sup> and we strongly urge South Ayrshire Council to wait for this to be published before making any decisions.

Recent reports and PISA rankings have highlighted the falling literacy rates in Scotland's schools over recent years<sup>iii</sup> and a body of impact studies highlight the contribution of school librarians to improved attainment and achievement<sup>iv</sup>. The proposal to remove these posts runs counter to national initiatives aiming to support and enhance literacy. This will inevitably lead to a poorer educational experience for pupils.

Reading for pleasure has been proven to be more important to a child's educational achievement than their family's wealth or social class<sup>v</sup>. School librarians nurture this, in partnership with teaching staff, via author visits, participation in national reading awards and events such as Book Week Scotland. Professional librarians support and develop a whole school reading culture.

School libraries are a safe and supportive learning environment where all pupils have equal access to learning resources and information for educational purposes. Pupils can be guided by the excellent standards set by classroom teachers in collaboration with professional library staff.

We firmly believe that school libraries should be open every day and staffed by a professionally trained librarian. Therefore, we urge you to reconsider the proposals in relation to making cuts to school library services in the area.

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<sup>i</sup> [www.cilips.org.uk](http://www.cilips.org.uk)

<sup>ii</sup> <https://scottishlibraries.org/about-us/news/chair-appointed-to-lead-school-library-strategy/>

<sup>iii</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-39856284>

<sup>iv</sup> <https://scottishlibraries.org/media/1211/impact-of-school-libraries-on-learning-2013.pdf>

<sup>v</sup> Sullivan, A. and Brown, M. (2013) [Social inequalities in cognitive scores at age 16: The role of reading.](#)