

Robertson House
152 Bath Street,
Glasgow G2 2TB
T: 0141 353 5637
email: admin@cilips.org.uk
website: www.cilips.org.uk

Council Leader Elaine Murray
109-115 English St
Dumfries
DG1 2DD

Dear Elaine,

The Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals in Scotland (CILIPS) are the leading professional body for librarians in Scotland and the affiliate of CILIP, the largest body of this type across the UK. We write in response to your current proposals to reduce the 'discretionary' library book budget by 85%.

We fully appreciate that you need to make difficult decisions in the present financial climate. However, we are deeply concerned at the significant amount proposed and the hugely damaging impact this could have.

Reducing the book budget to this level will leave residents in Dumfries and Galloway with a library service that would struggle to meet its requirements. With the book budget already being below the recommended level any further cut to resources would be a short-term saving that would have long-term negative impact. This would place the local community's ability to access an adequate public library service as required by the Local Government Act into substantial doubt.

Studies have shown that around a quarter of Scotland's adults have issues with literacyⁱ and libraries tackle this by promoting access to reading at a community level. There is strong evidence that reading for pleasure can increase empathy, improve relationships with others, reduce the symptoms of depression and improve wellbeing throughout lifeⁱⁱ and the recent National Strategy for public librariesⁱⁱⁱ highlighted the abundance of studies and statistics linking improved literacy to good health, lower levels of crime, social mobility and attainment.

Good quality book stock is essential to achieving all the above. Whilst digital reading methods have become popular in recent years, 80% of the book market remains in print. Recent statistics show that Dumfries and Galloway had 450,000 annual book issues and only just over a tenth of total issues were digital content (48,000). Additionally, the number of print books issued will be likely to fall significantly should there be no new books being purchased.

The proposed cut has the potential to also disadvantage older and more vulnerable people, particularly those who may not have the digital skills to access other types of content and we urge you to ensure that the equalities impact has been fully evaluated.

A public library service, with adequate and evolving book stock, makes an important contribution to reducing inequality and demonstrates the value a local authority places on its community. I would hope that you can take the above information into consideration and we would welcome further discussion on the matter.

Yours Sincerely



Sean McNamara

Head of CILIP in Scotland

ⁱ <https://www2.gov.scot/Resource/Doc/339854/0112382.pdf>

ⁱⁱ

<https://readingagency.org.uk/news/The%20Impact%20of%20Reading%20for%20Pleasure%20and%20Empowerment.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://scottishlibraries.org/media/1133/ambition-opportunity-scotlands-national-public-library-strategy.pdf>