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Dear Dumfries and Galloway Councillors,

The Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals in Scotland (CILIPS) is the leading professional body for librarians in Scotland and our members work in services across all of Scotland, including Dumfries and Galloway. We write this letter as a general response to your current consultation with users of your customer and library services, and in connection with your current service levels and reopening plans.

Firstly, it is important to note that we completely understand that you are facing financial challenges, as all local authorities are, and are required to make difficult choices, and we welcome that you are undertaking community consultation. However, we believe that the survey itself is limited in scope and reach, and would therefore urge you to look at a wider bank of evidence to form decisions.

For example, we would strongly urge you to use library usage from before the pandemic, because library services will once again be essential to communities as they emerge from the impact of the past 18 months. Libraries will never be more important in reconnecting communities, reducing social isolation, supporting health and wellbeing, strengthening economic development and providing access to much needed resources for adults and young people.

Across Scotland, libraries are reopening and serving the communities that desperately need them. However, we are concerned at the level of service available in Dumfries and Galloway. The opening hours of your libraries have been reduced by almost 60% with many libraries open for fewer than 10 hours a week and 2 libraries are not open at all. This follows years of reducing resource budgets and will see the service falling further behind many others in Scotland. As you will know, an appropriately resourced public library service, open and available at the times people need it, demonstrates the value a local authority places on its community, whilst also meeting the requirements of the Local Government Act and Equalities Act.

Libraries [tackle social isolation](#) and support [mental health and wellbeing](#) as evidenced by the Scottish Government. Libraries also play a key role in supporting the current digital strategies in Scotland and [alleviate data poverty](#) by providing free access for people unable to get online at home, delivering substantial social and economic benefits to citizens and communities. Studies have shown that around a quarter of Scotland's adults have [issues with literacy](#) and libraries tackle this by providing adult learning and promoting access to reading at a community level. A physical and fit-for-purpose building with skilled staff, easily accessible by the community, is essential to all the above and this is reinforced by the recently published [National Strategy](#) for Public Libraries.

I would hope that you can take the above information into consideration and appreciate being given the opportunity to respond.

Yours Sincerely



Sean McNamara, Head of CILIP in Scotland