

25th November 2024



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email: admin@cilips.org.uk

Shona Robinson MSP
Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government
Scottish Government
St Andrew's House
Regent Road
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

Dear Cabinet Secretary,

The Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals in Scotland ([CILIPS](https://www.cilips.org.uk)) is the leading professional body for librarians in Scotland and our members work in all sectors, including many in public and school libraries.

You may recall that we wrote to you last year and we thank you for your response. However, the situation for both public and school libraries has worsened and we are again calling for your Government's urgent support in the budget and beyond.

We very much welcome the funding of projects and activities via the School Library and Public Library Improvement Funds yet we believe that these services need additional urgent support in what is becoming a huge risk for the future of our sector. We have written to every councillor where cuts are proposed but the need for national support and intervention is clear.

In recent weeks, we have seen a level of suggested cuts far more severe than those suffered anytime in Scotland since 2010. These have included:

- Aberdeenshire suggesting the closure of 13 libraries with no clear consultation
- Moray proposing the closure of over 60% of their libraries
- Perth and Kinross as well as Midlothian replacing some branches with community operated (which do not meet the statutory requirement in our view) or online models (which research proves is far from an adequate replacement)
- North Ayrshire planning to close 40% of their libraries

This is on top of various other closures in the past two years, with more expected soon, despite library provision being a legal requirement. Additionally, school libraries have seen continued loss of staffing and resources as well as significant de-professionalisation. We hope you agree this is not sustainable.

Our [extensive evidence bank](#) shows the many reasons to support libraries. Libraries in Scotland are used by millions and are the most popular service local government provides, having seen both usage and demand increase in the past decade for what is often the only remaining non-clinical, non-commercial space left where a community can have equitable access to books, IT and other resources as well as learn new skills and access vital support. They support environmental sustainability, help tackle misinformation and prevent social isolation. Every £1 invested in libraries generates a £6 return in social capital, and they save NHS Scotland an estimated £3.2m a year.

School librarians provide essential support to curriculum delivery and research indicates that children who can use a school library have higher attainment and confidence. With over 1 in 4 adults in Scotland facing challenges related to reading, writing and numbers, reducing their earning potential by approximately 7.1% compared with having a basic level of literacy, the support of school librarians at a young age is vital. The fact that nearly 1 in 10 Scottish children do not have a book of their own at home makes their access to staffed school libraries even more crucial.

Librarians are experts in matters of media and information literacy, ethics, and censorship, and with the rise of [book banning requests](#) it is vital that school librarians are in place in schools to provide their expertise.

We completely recognise that setting the budget for this year will be extremely challenging, even with the promise of additional funds made by the UK Government. However, we are asking you and your colleagues to find a way to:

- Provide the funding required so local authorities can avert this crisis in library services and avoid mass closures.
- Hold councils to account when they are not meeting their statutory obligations to provide library services and be clear on what is expected of them to do this.
- Build on the foundations of the recent national strategies for public and school libraries and ensure these vital sectors can have a long-term vision.

We hope you agree on the huge and irreplaceable value of libraries in Scotland. If Scotland is serious about eradicating child poverty, growing the economy, tackling the climate emergency, and ensuring high quality and sustainable public services then a strong public and school library network is essential.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours Sincerely



Sean McNamara

Director, CILIP Scotland