Wellbeing and Scottish public libraries

How libraries contribute to social, cultural, economic and health wellbeing
Wellbeing and Scottish Libraries

This document celebrates the impact libraries have on people's wellbeing.

It outlines the many ways libraries contribute to social, cultural, economic and health wellbeing.

The quotes from library users show how people's lives are improved by the simple power of:

- welcoming and free spaces
- interaction with staff
- reading
- learning new skills
- digital inclusion
- group activities

Social Wellbeing
Cultural Wellbeing
Economic Wellbeing
Health Wellbeing
Wellbeing and Scottish Libraries

Scottish libraries are social spaces, physical and virtual, where people learn, share, participate and create; where everyone is equal and everyone is welcome; and where improving our shared wellbeing is at the heart of the service.

“...an invaluable - and possibly unquantifiable - community service.”

“She was first in the queue with her new iPad. We helped her to reinstall the eBook app and she was off. She was dancing with excitement at being able to access her audio books again, saying we do not know the difference this makes to her life.”

6.3 times more visits to public libraries than attendance at the men's Scottish Premiership matches

2,074
All the physical books borrowed from Scottish public libraries in one year, laid down end to end, would go up Ben Nevis 2074 times
Social Wellbeing: People, places & participation

Reading Together

Reading groups are supported by all 32 public library services

[Group bibliotherapy] is about gaining confidence even though it's not what you think you're there to do, but that's what's happening.

Your value to me as a place to just hang out is priceless. When you are lonely and broke the library is there for you.

Over 23m visits in one year to nearly 550 library service points and mobile libraries

Free and Welcoming Space

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Knowledgeable and Friendly Staff

Friendly, helpful staff. The library has a lovely atmosphere and I could sit in there for hours.

Taking Part

Activities and adventures whatever your age: clubs, crafts and chat

The Bookbug sessions are brilliant and make a real difference to my daughter and I, both socially and for her reading, singing and numbers.

Bookbug Sessions

Bookbug aims to inspire a love of stories, songs and rhymes from birth.

27,000 sessions

23 million visits
Cultural Wellbeing: Communities and creativity

**Reading for Pleasure**

64% said that the library had helped them develop an interest or hobby during lockdown (Carnegie UK Trust, 2020)

"Reading makes me happy, reading makes me sleep well but I can’t buy a book every week as I read over 50 books a year."

"Since I started reading all the local history books I feel more at home here, even though this is where I was born."

**A Sense of Place**

Languages, communities and histories

"It’s a place where I feel connected with other people in the community, with a shared interest and enthusiasm about books and stories - it’s my place in the community."

"Makes me think more creatively."

9-year-old reader

Be inspired by words, music, art, tech and the space to play and create

**Creativity for All**

"Wonderful couple of hours. Made friends and Christmas gifts. Best time I’ve had in years. Thanks so much."

**Print and Electronic**

14+ million print books borrowed and 4 million electronic downloads from Scottish public libraries

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Economic Wellbeing: Skills, support and savings

Reading for Learning and Literacy

The brain develops fastest between the ages of zero and three. Because of this, it's important to foster literacy during the early stages of life.

(TRA, 2021)

“Thank you all so much for help in locating books for me during my studies... The library is a terrific resource for students and you are all so obliging.”

“It’s helped by helping me to spell and learn new words and what they mean.” 9-year-old reader

“I am now working as a result of passing exams (the mobiles provided many of the books for my course). I am financially better off as a result of working.”

Money Saved

Libraries save you money!

It’s a great space to apply for jobs, write articles or emails and simply browse the internet.

“I don’t have wi-fi at home... If it wasn’t for the Learning Centre, I wouldn’t be able to look for jobs as well as sign on.”

Over 1.7m computer hours used, in addition to free wi-fi access

Free Internet Access & Support

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Health Wellbeing: Self-management and signposting

### Reading for Wellbeing

- **68%** less stress in 6 minutes
- Reading for just **6 minutes** a day can reduce stress levels by **68%**
  
  **(Telegraph, 2009)**

  > For me a library was and is now one of my essential life services. My local library does some amazing things for new mums, school children, and older groups.

  > Reading extensively maintains my health and well-being and learning.

### Feeling Better

- **59%** of young people said that reading during lockdown makes them feel better
  
  **(NLT, 2020)**

  > I read more and that has a fantastic impact on making me worry less. Reading reduces my stress levels and helps me relax.

  > If I hadn’t accessed this service (Macmillan) I would still feel anxious and alone. Having the service in the library helped me relax and talk more freely in my comfort zone.

### NHS Savings

- **£3.2m** annually as a result of people using public libraries
  
  **(SLIC, 2020)**

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**NHS Scotland saves £3.2m** as a result of people using public libraries

**59%** felt better

**68%** less stress in 6 minutes

**£3.2m** saved
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Library usage is associated with higher life satisfaction, higher happiness and a higher sense of purpose in life.

(ACE, 2015)

"So many things to do and see and try and so much friendly help. What a welcoming place!"

Find out why #LibrariesAreEssential

scottishlibraries.org
cilips.org.uk

1.9 x

More public library visits than there are to the top 10 free visitor attractions in Scotland combined

Supporting document and list of sources available from scottishlibraries.org