



## **CILIP Ireland Consultation Response to the Education Library Service Interim Restructuring**

CILIP Ireland represents members of CILIP (the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals) in Northern Ireland. It is the leading professional body for librarians, information specialists and knowledge managers within this jurisdiction. CILIP's vision is a fair and economically prosperous society underpinned by literacy, access to information and the transfer of knowledge.

As our funding comes from member subscriptions and our own commercial activity we are able to act as an independent voice of the profession reflecting the knowledge and expertise within our membership. CILIP is a registered charity, no. 313014 and more information about us can be found at <http://www.cilip.org.uk/about/devolved-nations/cilip-ireland>.

We welcome this consultation process and the opportunity to comment on the interim restructuring of the Education Library Service (ELS). It is crucial that the important role played by ELS is safeguarded because it is a cost effective method of developing, extending and exploiting the material available to educational establishments. We fully support the assertion made in the consultation document that the ELS should be recognised as a key element of school support services in supporting literacy development and school improvement.

While we recognise that difficult choices need to be made as a result of financial pressures, we believe new technologies and electronic resources can offer opportunities to provide services across Northern Ireland. We welcome the fact that online resources have been identified for review in terms of service delivery and support.

The Interim ELS Structure represents a reduction in staffing from 57 (50.05 FTE) to 36 (31.85 FTE) posts. This loss of management and staff expertise is recognised in the risk assessment, however, it does not specify what actions will be taken to reduce or mitigate this risk. We believe some more detail on exactly how this knowledge and expertise will be captured and maintained would be useful.

We advocate that the expertise of professionally trained and skilled library and information staff contributes to successful delivery of high quality library services. There is clear evidence of the contribution to the effectiveness, impact and value of trained and professional School Librarians. We note with concern, however, that this consultation document does not make reference to professionally qualified staff.

As this consultation focuses on interim arrangements for the ELS, CILIP Ireland would wholly endorse a permanent structure incorporating professionally trained staff which safeguards ELS services in the future. This permanent structure would also benefit from a professional library leader with overall responsibility for the management of the ELS.