Contextual Safeguarding:
Neighbourhood Assessment Framework

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Contextual Safeguarding Neighbourhood Assessment Framework

Background

Contextual Safeguarding (CS) is an approach to safeguarding that supports practitioners to recognise and respond to the harm young people experience outside of the home.[1] This Neighbourhood Assessment toolkit has been developed by The University of Bedfordshire with Hackney Children and Families Services to support practitioners to consider how to assess and develop responses to risk in neighbourhoods. This document forms part of a neighbourhood assessment toolkit which includes a suite of different methods for assessing harm, which are required for completing this assessment framework. The resources in this document should be used as a framework for completing the assessment.

Neighbourhoods have been identified as sites in which young people can experience and/or be safeguarded from abuse and violence. From experiences of child sexual exploitation in fast food restaurants, criminal exploitation in parks, serious youth violence on transport routes to exposure to drug use and dealing in vulnerable adult's homes. While agencies already work to keep young people safe outside of the home, such as neighbourhood safety and the police, the primary focus of this work is crime prevention as opposed to child welfare. Research suggests that there are a number of ways that young people can be safeguarded from harm in neighbourhood spaces – from 'designing-out' opportunities for abuse to occur and creating opportunities for community guardians.

As such it is critical that when young people experience abuse and violence and this is in some way associated to locations outside the home, such as a park, street, stairwell, business – that the neighbourhood itself features within the process of assessment and intervention. If we want to address the factors that cause abuse, or provide an opportunity for abuse to occur, then these factors needs to be identified explored and addressed – neighbourhood assessments is one way to achieve this.

The toolkit includes:

- Guidance for carrying out a Contextual Safeguarding Neighbourhood Assessment
- Appendix A: Summary page: Contextual Assessment Framework Template
- Appendix B: Example framework
- Appendix C: Blank Contextual Assessment framework
- Appendix D: Example report headings

Neighbourhood Assessment

This guidance outlines the process of carrying out a neighbourhood assessment and how to use the neighbourhood assessment framework. The neighbourhood assessment toolkit consists of two parts – the neighbourhood assessment framework (included in this guidance) and the assessment tools. The assessment framework can be used to collate information relating to the neighbourhood. The assessment methods are tools to gather that information, examples of which can be found as part of the neighbourhood assessment toolkit on the Contextual Safeguarding Network. These methods include:

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[1] Visit www.contextualsafeguarding.org.uk for more information.

- Residents survey
- Business survey
- Stakeholder engagement
- Neighbourhood observations (with video)

In addition to these methods, other partners may hold information that can supplement your assessment. It is important that while conducting the assessment information is gathered from relevant sources such as:

- Children's social care records for young people who spend time in the neighbourhood
- Police data
- Health information
- Schools within the area
- Any relevant stakeholders (see stakeholder engagement)

The methods in the assessment toolkit are guides only. They should be amended and supplemented with other assessment methods as required

Assessment process

This toolkit is the result of two neighbourhood assessments which were completed in Hackney. The first neighbourhood assessment was conducted as the result of screening completed by the children's social care analyst. The second assessment was conducted following a referral from the probation service following concerns related to a specific young person and their neighbouring estate.

The school assessment process has been developed between the University of Bedfordshire and Hackney Children and Families Service. As such, the process outlined here relates to the approach developed by them and should be adapted for individual local authorities. Figure 1 is a simplified version of the assessment process.
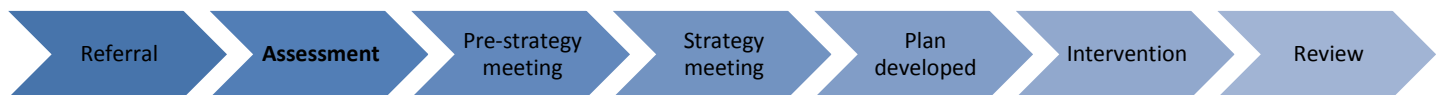
Referral → **Assessment** → Pre-strategy meeting → Strategy meeting → Plan developed → Intervention → Review

Figure 1: neighbourhood assessment process

Neighbourhood assessment framework

Before starting the assessment it is important to consider who the key stakeholders are within and around the neighbourhood to develop a plan for how to use each assessment method. The assessment guidance in this toolkit may help you consider this. Once you have started to use the assessment tool, use the assessment framework to collate the information from the assessment. The guidance is broken into three parts:

- Appendix A: a summary page, this should be completed at the end of the assessment.
- Appendix B: an example template.
- Appendix C: a blank template for detailed assessment notes.

Throughout the assessment use Appendix C to gather detailed notes. Notes should be separated depending on the context – individual, home, peers, schools, neighbourhood. The first column should include information on risks/ vulnerabilities/ strengths. Appendix B provides examples of some of the types of issues that relate to different contexts. Additional rows can be added when required. It is likely that the 'neighbourhood' row may include the bulk of information and some information may be repeated across different contexts.

'Structures and systems' can be used to document any challenges within the safeguarding system itself that do not directly relate to a specific context. For example, cross-border working or delays in referral process may be best noted in the 'structures and systems' field.

'Data source' is for noting where the information came from. This might be residents survey; or the name of a specific stakeholder or meeting. If multiple practitioners are completing the framework it may be helpful to include initials alongside the information as it is entered in case there are queries. 'Capacity to safeguard' and 'Gaps in knowledge' should be completed throughout the process of the assessment. Once you have identified 'gaps in knowledge' this should be used to inform subsequent assessment methods or people to contact.

Once the initial assessment is completed, the summary page (Appendix A) should be filled-in with information taken from the more detailed assessment (Appendix C). 'Identified interplay between these above factors' are any factors that may be barriers or exasperate factors in different contexts. For example, domestic violence in the home may be a factor that impacts young people within the neighbourhood or bereavement within a school may impact a peer group. The 'Context weighting decision' are any notes relating to the contexts or factors that most require an intervention.

Assessment report

Upon completing the assessment consideration should be given to emerging themes and the weighting of each context. For example, upon completing the assessment it may be considered that it is a peer group – rather than a neighbourhood – that is in greatest need to intervention. Decision about the influence of context and the weighting of this should be summarised. Using the assessment framework, findings should be summarised within a report format which is appropriate to share with stakeholders. The report should outline the key concerns and findings but does not need to include the level of detail included within the framework.

Appendix D provides an overview of the types of information included within the assessment report. This document was disseminated to all partners prior to the meeting. In Hackney the report was disseminated with invites for the context conference. In some cases the report was hand delivered to partners (such as local businesses) and the assessing social worker explained the preliminary findings and importance of attending the conference. Information was shared within the context of local information sharing protocols. Information relating to individual young people was not shared, rather the discussion focussed on thematic issues.

The assessment should then be used to develop an intervention plan that considers and focuses upon specific concerns relating to the different issues raised. This is likely to require working with different agencies relating to the locations where concerns were raised. For example, if issues about safety in a particular area are raised, this may require working with local police or neighbourhood tasking. In Hackney a Context Conference was held to discuss the findings and develop an action plan. Guidance on carrying out a context conference will be available in early 2019.

We hope you find this guidance useful, if you have used the school assessment toolkit please do get in touch.

Appendix A: Summary page: Contextual Assessment Framework Template

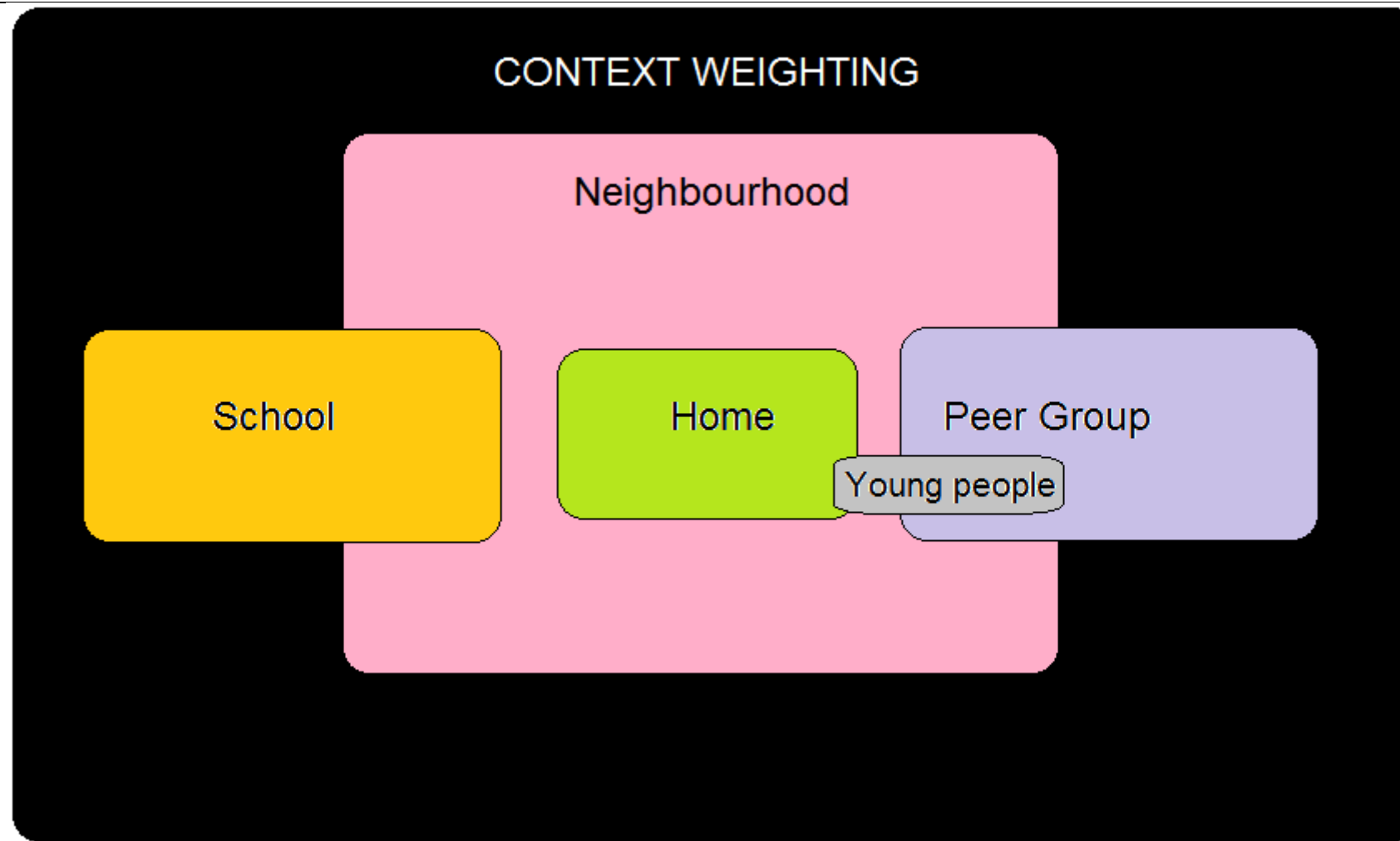| Assessment Number:		Summary of initial concerns that triggered referral:			
		Vulnerability factors (pre-existing factors)	Risk factors (factors directly related to the issue/s in question)	Resilience factors / Strengths	Capacity to safeguard (capacity to safeguard is being undermined in this context and by whom/what)
Individual and contextual factors to consider	Neighbourhood SPECIFIC LOCATION i.e. stairwell, or park, or transport hub				
	School/s In geographical proximity or with students affected by the above context				
	Peer group(s) - who associate in or are connected to the above context				
	Relevant characteristics of behaviours of young people associated to that context				
	Relevant dynamics of families associated to that context				
	System challenges				
Identified interplay between these above factors					
Context-weighting decision					
Summary of contextual concerns that will be addressed through intervention and desired outcomes					

Appendix B: Example Contextual Assessment Framework Template

Assessment Number:		Summary of initial concerns that triggered referral:			
		Vulnerability factors (pre-existing factors)	*Risk factors (factors directly related to the issue/s in question)*	*Resilience factors / Strengths*	*Capacity to safeguard (capacity to safeguard is being undermined in this context and by whom/what)*
Individual and contextual factors to consider	Neighbourhood SPECIFIC LOCATION i.e. stairwell, or park, or transport hub	*(This context is likely to be the most extensive section. The following provides an overview of the thematic issues, under which individual risks, vulnerability and resilience factors should be listed)* **Theme: Substance misuse** • Adults using drugs in the area throughout the day. Particularly around the [shop name] • Large numbers of vulnerable adults converge in the area **Theme: Landscape design** • Poor lighting in areas where children congregate – evidence of broken lighting and overgrown bushes. • Lack of CCTV **Theme: resources** • No substance misuse services in the area • Lack of knowledge by local businesses of youth services or safeguarding contacts **Theme: attitudes to harm** • Young people are aware of harmful attitudes relating to gender and relationships, they see these as unchanging. Awareness of these impact their ability to dress as they wish.	**Theme: Substance misuse** • Young people approached by adults and active recruitment for selling drugs/ criminal exploitation of young people. • Evidence that some vulnerable adults have homes are in use for the selling of drugs. **Theme: Landscape design** • A number of sexual assaults have taken place in the bushes. • Young people and adults appearance of a lack of CCTV with crimes taking place in these areas (theft and violent incidents) **Theme: resources** • Young people report a lack of services for young people and as such spend long periods in areas with adults involved in filming music videos which insight violence "for something to do". **Theme: attitudes to harm** • Harmful norms towards women and girls normalised. Evidence of sexual harassment on the street a 'daily occurrence' – these views go unchallenged. • *For an extensive review of harmful norms see 'peer' context*	• Available extra-curricular and or leisure interests during summer holidays and half term. • Access to a consistent and positive relationship with at least one adult in a community setting – particularly youth providers within the youth centre. • Places for safe socialisation are available • Members of community take a safeguarding role and wish to be actively involved in safeguarding young people. • Some businesses showed a willingness to receive safeguarding training and become community Guardians.	Residents also do not feel empowered to offer a safeguarding response due to the following factors: • No clearly defined signposting detailing which agency residents should go to resolve which difficulties. • A lack of agency compounded by a perception that their views have been marginalised during the redevelopment/ regeneration of the area. • Fear of reprisal or being drawn in to the conflict. • A lack of resource to address substance misuse. • A lack of employability options for young people. Businesses in the area's ability to safeguarding is undermined by: • Lack of knowledge of understanding of safeguarding • Limited contact with professionals and services within the multi-agency partnership • Available resources are not translated into relevant languages for businesses. Young People's capacity to safeguard is undermined by the following factors: • Harm is normalised within some of peer groups and adults in the community. • Some young people consider that there is little ability, agency and capacity to intervene in a way that would be safe for them on an individual level • Other than the youth club provision, young people are unclear about what youth provision is available to them in terms of detached outreach..

	School/s In geographical proximity or with students affected by the above context	**School A** - Students report limited PSHE or SRE provision. The limited input they receive is directed at year 9 and 10 only and focuses on contraception and reproduction only. - No systems in place to flag or track trends in behaviours such as harmful sexual behaviour. - Response to safeguarding issues embedded within mainly with behaviour policies and procedures. For example harmful sexual behaviour viewed only as a behaviour issue in policies. **School B** - Limited partnership working with the partnership - Recent bereavement of a student	**School A** - Use of exclusions/managed moves for young people who have been victimized within school. Both the instigator and victim of sexual assault in once instance were excluded. - Students report sexual harassment and image sharing is 'normal' and a daily occurrence with no response from the school. - Victim-blaming language or stereotyping language in behaviour records – notes regarding a student who was sexually assaulted refer to her 'putting herself at risk by allowing herself to be sexually exploited' **School B** - Normalised attitudes to harmful behaviours such as self-harm, drugs and alcohol misuse, eating disorders etc.	School A - Clear, and used, referral mechanism to raise concerns relating to intra-familial harm - Opportunities for extra-curricular and or leisure interests - The school makes positive use of support network – engaged in multi-agency partnerships **School B** - Access to a positive relationship with at least one adult within the school community - Positive relationships with professionals	**School A** - Limited PSHE or SRE provision – drop-down days or selected year groups only for example - Response to safeguarding issues embedded within mainly with behaviour policies and procedures - Awareness of trends and concerns are not formally recorded or monitored - Referral pathway within and external to school is concerned with individuals but cannot extend to patterns, networks or locations - Victim blaming ideas held by some staff **School B** - Limited partnership working with the partnership - Recent bereavement of a student
	Peer group(s) - who associate in or are connected to the above context	- Members of peer network have been victimized in the community – including by gangs – or bullied within school - Members of the peer network have been missing from home or care - Members of the peer network have a shared recent bereavement – for example of a peer	- History of aggressive or offending behaviour within the peer network including weapon possession and mobile phone theft. - Disclosures made by others about the peer network have been withdrawn due to intimidation and threats - Concerns raised regarding sexualised or sexually harmful behaviour within the peer group - Harmful/Oppressive attitudes towards young women, relationships and consent shared within the peer group - Obsession/ pre-occupation with pornography within the peer group - Evidence of sexual bullying and/or distributing sexually inappropriate images within the peer group on platforms such as Snapchat and through 'bait out' pages - Members of the peer group have witnessed abusive behaviours and not challenged them	- Abusive behaviour has been challenged by some peers - Developmentally appropriate level of sexual knowledge within the peer network - Members of the peer network make positive use of wider support services	- Experiences of abuse or neglect within the peer network - Members of peer network have been victimized in the community – including by gangs – or bullied within school - Members of the peer network have been missing from home or care - Members of the peer network have a shared recent bereavement – for example of a peer
	Relevant characteristics of behaviours of young people associated to that context	Please refer to 'Young People's view and Peer groups' for a detailed narrative around the relevant characteristics of behaviours of young people associated to the context. A number of young people in the area have been excluded from mainstream education and have a reduced school schedule resulting in them spending significant amounts of time out of school in the local	RP has demonstrated increasingly harmful sexual behaviour. Evidence of RP distributing harmful imagery.		RO engages in positive leisure activities and demonstrates leadership qualities in positive contexts.

		area.			
	Relevant dynamics of families associated to that context	There are a number of properties in the location being used for temporary housing. During surveying on 16/06/18 up to 11 school aged children were home on a school day. It is unclear whether these families are out of borough placements or families waiting for new properties. A number of families in the area have experienced historic abuse within the family.	There is a risk that there is not full oversight of children living in temporary accommodation in the location and that they are able to be absent from education without monitoring. This makes these children vulnerable to harm both inside and out of the home context. Concerns that some family members have recruited young people into exploitative situations and criminal activity.	Willingness by several families to engage with services and act as a protective factor.	There is currently capacity to safeguard. Safeguarding capacity is being undermined by the following factor(s): ● Lack of an area based approach to school absence. ● Lack of a thematic approach or consideration to the vulnerabilities of families placed in temporary accommodation in the location. ● Services unable to engage some families or to respond to concerns of criminal activity.
	System challenges	Transport staff in this area do not feel safe enough to intervene or act as protective bystanders. They have no other remedy for harm in adolescence other than contacting the British Transport Police (BTP). Social care systems do not yet allow for context referrals. Schools report lack of information sharing with other local authorities.	**Cases of extra-familial risk are no further actioned due to location of harm rather than level of risk.**		
Identified interplay between these above factors		**[This box should include analysis of the findings, and focus on interplay between the factors above. Below are example themes, under each should be a more detailed description and conclusion based on the assessment]** ● **Young people's voices** ● **Adults in the community and residents** ● **School A** ● **School B** ● **Local Businesses** ● **Community resources (youth centre, health centre, community centre)** ● **Assessment conclusion and findings**			

Context-weighting decision	CONTEXT WEIGHTING

Summary of contextual concerns that will be addressed through intervention and desired outcomes	Behaviour Indicators of Harm	Adult Guardianship	Design/ layout/ structural issues
	• Instances of sexual abuse/violence within school or other context • Young people normalise harm • Young people hold victim-blaming views • Peer recruitment of young people into criminal exploitation at school, in the local area or between students i.e. online • Young people groomed into sexual or criminal exploitation as either victim or instigator at school, through school-based networks or other contexts • Young people carry and use drugs in this context • Context is one in which young people have been intentionally victimised by peers or adults - including the use of coercion or force • Bystanders in the context (peers or adults) actively encourage or normalise the behaviour that has been displayed • In this context young people are exposed to physically violent, highly intrusive behaviours, which may at times appear sadistic in nature	• Staff have normalised the behaviour being displayed or blamed those being harmed for what has happened • Adults with responsibility hold victim-blaming views • Adults with responsibility have failed to identify and/or challenge the behaviours or attitudes which put young people at risk of harm • The behaviour displayed in the context, and the impact on young people, is primarily viewed as a behavioural/criminal issue rather than a matter for safeguarding. • Adults with responsibility are reluctant to engage with partner organisations to address the concerns in this context • Place managers have failed to identify and/or challenge the behaviours or attitudes which put young people at risk of harm • Professionals have limited understanding of the level/prevalence of risk due to inconsistent or unusable recording systems • Bystanders in the community (peers or adults) actively encourage or normalise the behaviour that has been displayed	• Policies and procedures which govern the context insufficiently guide the response required to address the issues • School or multi-agency professionals have limited understanding of the level/prevalence of risk due to inconsistent or unusable recording systems • There is an absence of policies or procedures to guide practice responses to the context

Appendix C: Detailed assessment information

Background information to build assessment: Record of data sources by context (Detailed – team members to initial inputs)

	Identified /risk/strength/vulnerability	Data source	Capacity to safeguard – whose capacity is being undermined by this issue and by who?	Gaps in knowledge/queries
Neighbourhood SPECIFIC LOCATION i.e. stairwell, or park, or transport hub	•			

	Identified /risk/strength/vulnerability	Data source	Capacity to safeguard – whose capacity is being undermined by this issue and by who?	Gaps in knowledge/queries
School/s In geographical proximity or with students affected by the above context			▪	
	•			

	Identified /risk/strength/vulnerability	Data source	Capacity to safeguard – whose capacity is being undermined by this issue and by who?	Gaps in knowledge/queries
Peer group(s) - who associate in or are connected to the above context				

	•		
	•		

	Identified /risk/strength/vulnerability	Data source	Capacity to safeguard – whose capacity is being undermined by this issue and by who?	Gaps in knowledge/queries
Relevant characteristics of behaviours of young people associated to that context			▪	
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	Identified /risk/strength/vulnerability	Data source and practitioner present	Capacity to safeguard – whose capacity is being undermined by this issue and by who?	Gaps in knowledge/queries
Relevant dynamics of families associated to that context			▪	

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	Identified /risk/strength/vulnerability	Data source and practitioner present	Capacity to safeguard – whose capacity is being undermined by this issue and by who?	Gaps in knowledge/queries
Structures and systems			▪	
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Example report Content

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