



# ***"Being Human"***

# ***The Bairns Supper Report***

National Care Service consultation with people  
with care experience.

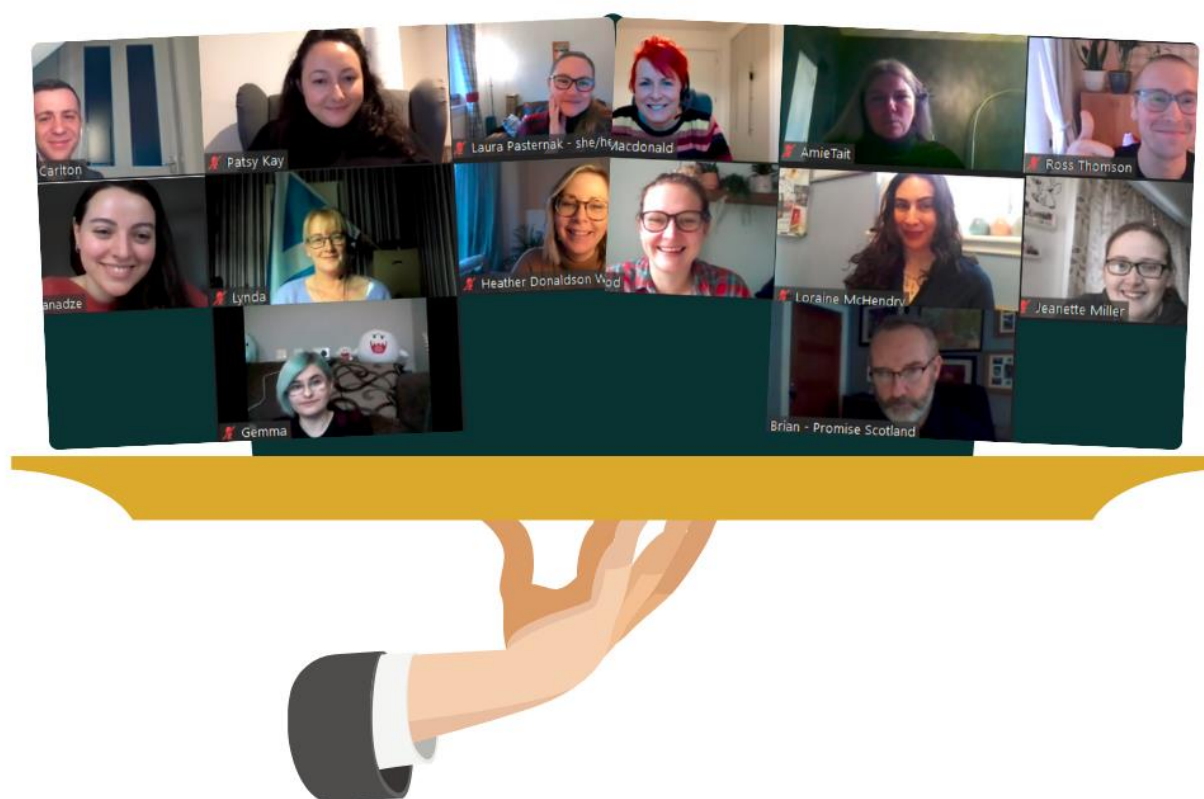
**5th February 2022**



**WHO  
CARES?**  
SCOTLAND

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## Summary of Recommendations<sup>1</sup>

The Scottish Government must:

1. Ensure that the NCS creates opportunities to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of Care Experienced people throughout their lifetime. The NCS must be a named Corporate Parent, and its [Corporate Parenting duties](#) should be applicable to all Care Experienced people regardless of age, to recognise that care experience stays with you after you turn 26.
2. Provide universal access to sustainably funded Independent Advocacy services, available to anyone who requires them across their lifetime, as part of ensuring prevention, early intervention and access to justice; recognising that provision must be tailored to specific groups, including Care Experienced people.
3. Ensure a NCS ends 'postcode lotteries' and enables children and young people to receive the same level of support when moving between Local Authorities.
4. Base services in communities and offer both formal and informal support, with a focus on relationship-based practice, building consistent and trusting relationships with individuals, families, and communities.
5. Improve communication and information-sharing between services. In order to embed equality and human rights for Care Experienced people, the Scottish Government should require better data collection about health, social care and wellbeing outcomes to identify and tackle inequalities.

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<sup>1</sup> Many of the recommendations coming from the Bairns Supper discussions link to our [response](#) to the Scottish Government's National Care Service consultation from November 2021. Please see the link for those recommendations in full.



6. Ensure that the workforce is trauma-informed in all areas of practice. There should be time and resource to connect with families, listen to and include them in decision-making, and tailor support to help families stay together.
7. Ensure services represent all placement types and are inclusive of people who are adopted and who may experience adoption breakdown.

We request that this report is followed up with an accessible response from Ministers showing how the NCS legislation going to the Scottish Parliament advances the findings of both the Independent Care Review and this consultation activity. This will ensure that the participation we carried out is meaningful and closes the feedback loop, in line with the Scottish Government's aim for a rights-based approach to participation.

## Who Are We?

[Who Cares? Scotland](#) (WC?S) is Scotland's only national independent membership organisation for Care Experienced people. Our mission is to secure a lifetime of equality, respect, and love for Care Experienced people in Scotland and we currently have over 3500 members. At the heart of Who Cares? Scotland's work are the rights of Care Experienced people, and the power of their voices to bring about positive change. We provide individual relationship-based Independent Advocacy and a range of participation and connection opportunities for Care Experienced people across Scotland. We work alongside Corporate Parents and various communities to broaden understanding and challenge stigma faced by Care Experienced people. We work with policy makers, leaders, and elected representatives locally and nationally to shape legislation, policy and practice. We do this collaboratively to build on the aspirations of [The Promise](#).



## Our Approach

Following our [response](#) to the Scottish Government's National Care Service (NCS) consultation, we were approached to help create space for people with care experience to share their views on the proposals. We wanted to ensure that the participation activity was meaningful, asked new questions following on from the Independent Care Review, and explored the extent to which a NCS would meet the outcomes and aspirations of [The Promise](#).

To achieve this, alongside our [National Representative Body](#) (NRB), we co-delivered an initial consultation event - '[The Bairns Supper](#)'. The theme was Burns Night and the agenda resembled a Burns Supper menu where the courses were themes for discussion. Scottish Government developed an Outcomes Mapping paper, from which we chose topics as the basis of our questions. WC?S staff worked collaboratively to ensure that the questions were accessible and explored the extent to which a National Care Service can #KeepThePromise.



We introduced the event with an '[Ode tae a NCS](#)', by our Training and Education Coordinator Laurie Goldie. Engaging and creative participatory activities were developed to enable rich discussion in breakout groups in the online space. These were co-facilitated by WC?S staff and NRB members, who were briefed to describe what the NCS proposals were and what The Promise set out in relation to the themes.



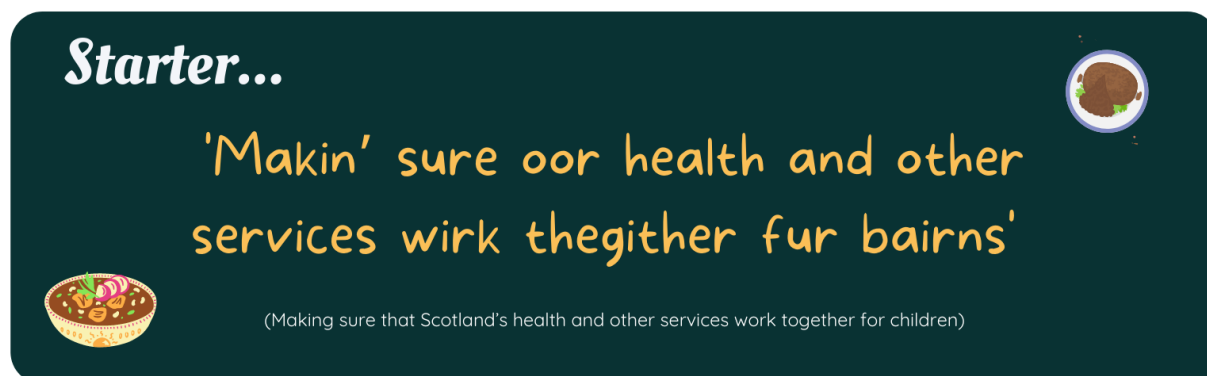
On the day, eight people with care experience attended, alongside partners from the Scottish Government and The Promise. Participants were aged between 19-52, and six Local Authorities were represented. Everyone had left their official care setting, and there was a range of ethnicities and experience of disability. As has been typical of online participation events since the COVID-19 pandemic, there was significant drop-off on the day of the event.





## Discussion

The following section summarises the discussion and associated recommendations under each of our Burns Supper themes. Jamboards were used to capture participants' discussions. This allowed for a more interactive session in the online space, and for participants to contribute in their preferred manner.



Themes of **community**, **early intervention** and **relationships** were common when discussing what the NCS might look like for people with care experience.

Services should be available in local communities, and *“those communities should be involved in the opening and running of the service.”* The immense benefit of being able to access informal support, in welcoming spaces, was discussed at length with reference to community hubs and community cafes. It was felt these could be successfully replicated in communities:

*“Think about new-builds that are community-focussed, you live there cradle to grave. The community is invested in families, taking it back to old community values.”*

It was suggested that having this informal support would mean that it would not be necessary to be allocated a Social Worker to access support; those relationships could be built over time and services would be normalised, reducing stigma. These community-based services would also allow for peer-support networks to be built, further supporting communities, families and individuals.

*“Somewhere people know they can always go, means people don't always have to wait.”*



*“There would be no ‘wrong door,’ any service you engage with should be able to triage it to the right place and offer interim support.”*

Those relationships being built on an informal basis would also allow for a consistency of service. Participants spoke of this building more trust, with professionals working together to address issues before they worsened. This highlighted a need for more integrated systems of health and other services, with information-sharing improved and used in a supportive manner. Co-location of services, potentially in schools may support this:

*“Children in primary should understand mental health, and this should support your physical health too. Schools should be able to provide this support”*

This kind of early intervention alongside informal and community support, would allow children and young people to get the right support at the right time. Community-based support services will be able to recognise when support is needed, and ensure it is available.

## ***Recommendations - For Promis'd Joy!***

- 1.Services should be based in communities and offer both formal and informal support.
- 2.Communication and information-sharing between services should be improved.
- 3.Focus should be on relationship-based practice, with consistent and trusting relationships being built with individuals, families and communities.





## Main course Part 1

### Getting th' richt support at the right time tae keep families th'gither



(Getting the Right Support at the Right Time to Keep Families Together)

Two areas were explored in this discussion: the kinds of support families need to stay together, and the knowledge, values and skills that enable services and professionals to support this.

A prominent theme from this discussion was, put simply, **being human**. Services and professionals should practice in a non-judgemental way and involve families in all decision-making:

*"People should work ... in a way that you are not making any distinction between you and those you are supporting."*

Participants felt that services should be warm and welcoming, and workers should have time to connect with the children, young people, and families they are working with, not solely when things are considered to be in crisis or challenge:

*"People always remember how you make them feel. I remember 3 people when I was young that made me feel human. This is replicated now in how I treat people. Being human."*

The need for a **trauma-informed workforce** was also considered. This would allow for better awareness and understanding of how different life events, for example sibling separation or losing a family member, can have an impact on the child:

*"Trauma-informed education is not in social work courses! Why not?"*

This concept led to recognition of the need for trauma-informed support for professionals; workers need the skills and tools to be able to look after themselves and avoid burnout. There was a feeling that professionals needed permission to not only be human, but to look after themselves so they can work for others.



Cushioned by workers **being human** and **trauma-informed**, the need for **tailored support** for families and their unique circumstances was highlighted. It was suggested that lessons could be learned from the third sector to support statutory services to achieve this:

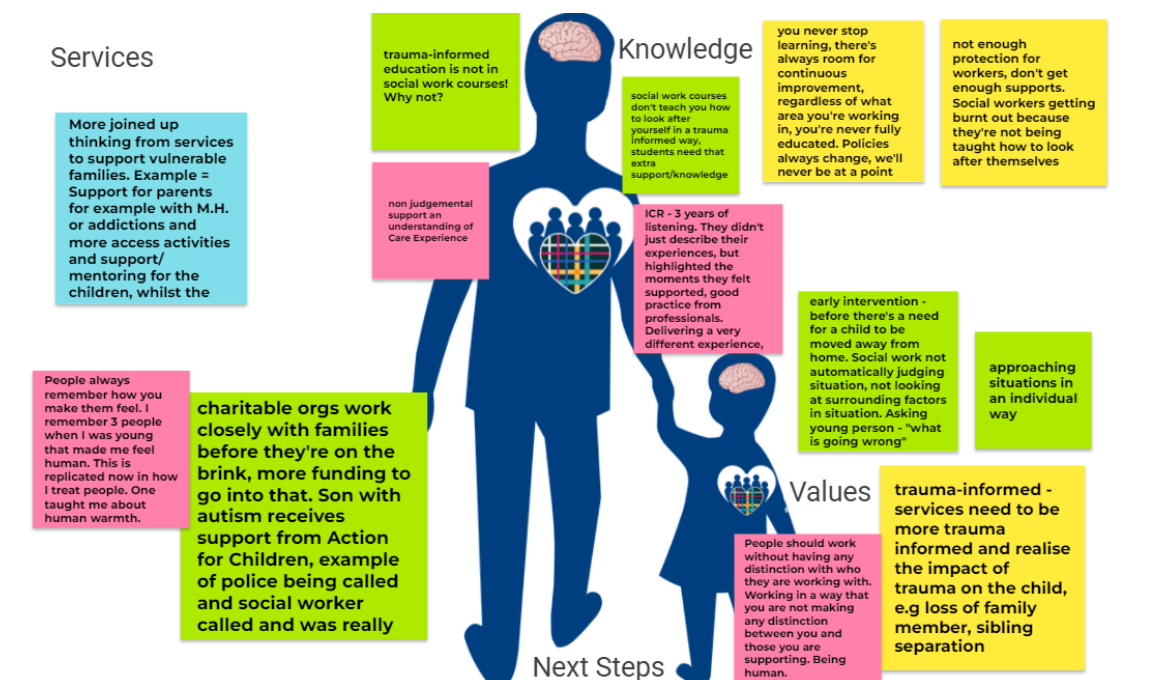
*“They [3<sup>rd</sup> sector organisations] put a lot of work into building relationships and really listening and understanding the situation. How can a parent discuss their barriers if they face stigma from services? Services to work closer with charitable organisations to change approach”*

The participants recognised that support needs vary greatly between families, and that the whole family should benefit from this tailored support.

For example, parents may need support with their own health, and therefore activities and mentoring for children should allow space for parents to gain the valuable time they need to access the right support.

Some families need more practical help; access to food, support with utilities and connection to the internet can allow for the family to remain comfortable and strong as a family unit.

Figure 1: Jamboard discussion during Main Course Part 1



## Recommendation - *An'Fellow-Mortal*

1. The workforce should be trauma-informed in all their practice; they should have time and resource to connect with families, listen to them and include them in decision-making, and tailor support to help families stay together.

## Main Course Part 2

This part of the discussion allowed for consideration of how access to Independent Advocacy might support a NCS, improving early intervention, preventative support, and access to justice. This activity looked at what has worked well, what could improve and the opportunities for the future.

Through discussion, participants highlighted that having access to Independent Advocacy had allowed them to speak up, when they felt unable to otherwise:

*“When I was younger and didn't feel comfortable speaking up at big meetings...when there was lots of people round the table. My advocate helped speak up for me”*

Participants spoke about often being in professional-dominated spaces and feeling unable to express themselves. Advocacy was seen as a positive mechanism to allow them to realise their right to have their voice heard (UNCRC Article 12). It also helped them to know their rights and build confidence to voice their opinion and ensure it had been considered.

The most prominent barriers to gaining effective Independent Advocacy related to a lack of availability, poor understanding of Independent Advocacy services, and eligibility criteria. Some participants told us they didn't know that Independent Advocacy was an option for them, it had not been promoted to them, or they were unable to access it due to their age or care placement:

*“When we look at CE, your whole childhood and adulthood is affected.”*

*“It's important to ensure that Independent Advocacy is still accessible for children and young people who were adopted.”*



One professional noted that we have created an environment in which Local Authority contracts determine the availability of Independent Advocacy, and that to allow for Advocacy Workers to do their job, we need to work to make this universal and truly independent.

Figure 2: Jamboard Discussion during Main Course Part 2



The most prominent themes of the Independent Advocacy discussion related to increasing access and availability, ensuring true independence, and increasing choice:

*"Advocacy in its purest form is so powerful and empowering for children and young people. Using a rights-based approach is so powerful. There are lots of opportunities."*

*"From a Care Experienced perspective, it could have offered a lot of support if done right, for a young person to nominate an advocate of their choosing"*

Independent Advocacy can allow a child or young person access to a consistent relationship, where they feel supported to explore and understand their options and voice their opinion. This addresses the power imbalance present in their relationships with other professionals involved in decision-making.

## Recommendation - *Liberty Regain'd*

1. A NCS must provide universal access to sustainably funded Independent Advocacy services, available to all those that require it across their lifetime, as part of ensuring prevention, early intervention and access to justice for individuals who receive care; recognising that provision of independent advocacy must be tailored to different needs of specific groups, including Care Experienced people.





This 'course' allowed for 'blue sky thinking'; what would transition through services look like for people with care experience, if there were no limits on resources?

Participants told us that [Corporate Parents](#) need to be more aware of their roles and responsibilities in relation to people with care experience, for example teaching life skills, which other children may turn to family networks for.

Again, the importance of **relationships** was a predominant theme throughout this discussion. Participants told us that these should be consistent, and not taken away when you turn a certain age or move on from where you live. Participants told us they wanted to be able to keep in touch with the people that matter to them. These relationships support you to find yourself as you move toward adulthood:

*"Being consistent with relationships, young people should know they are allowed to have relationships with people and they should never be taken away from them [like when moving out of residential]"*

One participant also explained that they felt let down when they could no longer stay with their adoptive family at the age of 16:

*"There was no option of support or to re-enter care as I had 'aged out'. It puts you in a vulnerable position...Needs to be added layer of support for when adoptions break down."*

The importance of having good support wherever you move to was discussed. Participants wanted to be able to move between Local Authorities and receive the same level of care and support.



Participants were clear that a NCS should allow for the end of 'postcode lotteries,' calling for a:

*"More nationalised strategy, where people can move beyond their LA and access the same support and get good follow-on support regardless of where they move to."*

Finally, the most prevalent theme throughout the discussion in breakout groups related to **lifelong support**. The participants called for the removal of 'artificial' age caps:

*"You don't turn 18 and suddenly your whole family changes."*

Within this, the importance of continued support with employment, education, mental health, finance, and housing was highlighted as imperative to ensuring that children and young people are supported to move successfully into adulthood:

*"Trauma doesn't leave you when you become an adult...Age limits on services (up to 26) to get all the support you could need, it's impossible"*

The groups discussed that when things go wrong, many children and young people return to family networks, and they believe that this should also be an option for children and young people with care experience:

*"Corporate parents should not give cut off age, that's not parenting"*

## **Recommendations - *Now's the Day and Now's the hour***

1. A NCS should ensure the end of 'postcode lotteries' and children and young people should be able to move between Local Authorities and receive the same level of support.
2. Support should be lifelong, recognising that care experience doesn't leave you when you turn 26, and neither does your family.



## Final Reflections

Following the main discussions, officials from Scottish Government and The Promise offered their reflections following hearing the views of participants.

**Scottish Government colleagues** reflected that the conversations were “sobering” and suggested that the discussion acted as a “driver” in that whilst anything is possible, *“there are things that can be actioned now”*. They recognised that there is too much disparity across Local Authorities, which results in excellent service in one area, whereas need is unmet in others. They echoed the importance of doing what works best for people, ensuring that *“all Care Experienced people and their whole family have a say in the services they need”* and that *“a NCS is a good opportunity to do that”*.

**The Promise colleagues** reflected that on the anniversary of The Promise, The Bairns Supper was a timely reminder of how important it is that these conversations continue to happen and continue to enable Care Experienced voices to be heard *“to explore and explain to policy-makers how to operationalise care”*. They recognised that our people with care experience have *“done the heavy lifting for three years, sharing your experiences and your views. The balance now needs to shift and be focussed on what people need to deliver change for you.”*

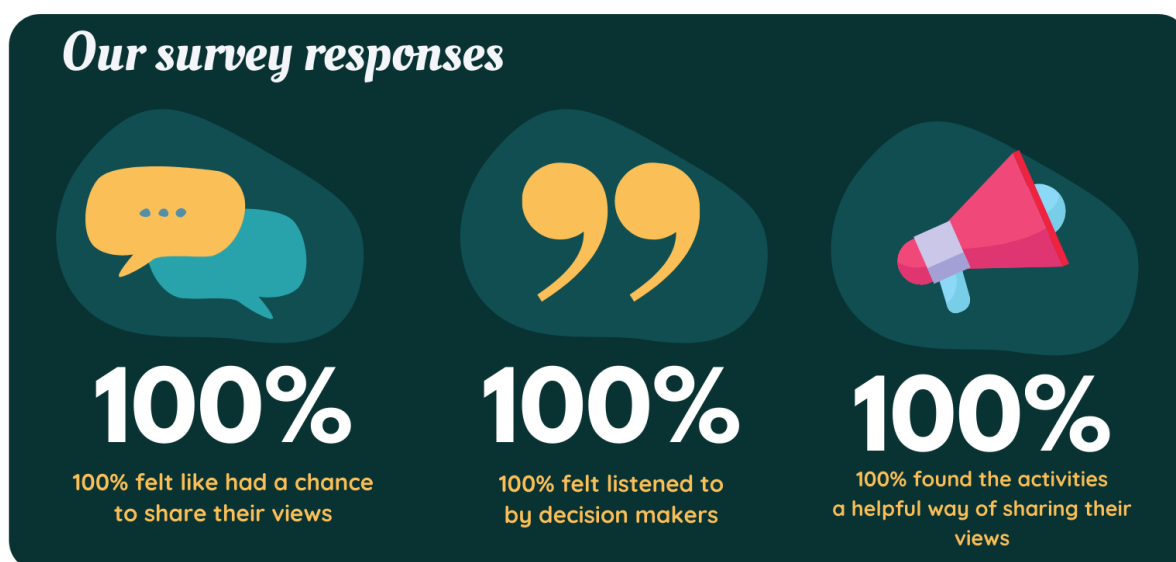
We also discussed the importance of proactive inclusion of Care Experienced people in consultation around the NCS, as a group whose rights are most at risk and who experience inequality, prejudice and discrimination. One participant asked why care experience is not a protected characteristic under Equality law. We hope to explore this question further with the Scottish Government in due course, in relation to Scotland’s Human Rights Bill, the socio-economic duty in Scotland, and the Public Sector Equality Duty Review.





## Learning and Next Steps

We spoke to several participants of the Bairn's Supper about their experience via an online survey and a debrief/reflection session. They told us they would use words such as **hopeful** and **interesting** to sum up their experience and included the strong theme of the day and the Scots poem as particular highlights.



Evaluation of this event also allowed us to capture some important learning to take forward, including having NRB reps as co-facilitators, and factors to bear in mind when delivering influencing events in virtual spaces. Participants lastly told us what they wanted to see happen next, one using the metaphor of growing seed, another of the importance of a feedback loop with government:

*"We need to know where the seed [from today] is going to grow and how it grows. What does the care service look like? Let's continue to be involved and have a solid feedback loop."*

*"[I would like to see] feedback from ministers from discussions and to make sure they listen to all our views today"*

In addition to this short-term project proposal, we want to work with the Scottish Government to ensure that, going forward, the Care Experienced population of all ages have an equal opportunity to meaningfully participate in and co-design many aspects of the NCS.



The Scottish Government must design the NCS in a way that is driven by the lived experience of Care Experienced people and other groups that experience inequality and discrimination, with co-design on a statutory footing.

Care Experienced people's views must be heard by Scottish Ministers who are their Corporate Parents as defined by the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. We can also share our learning with the Scottish Government about how Independent Advocacy can help the NCS to create better outcomes for people using social care services.

We therefore request that this report is followed up with an accessible response from Ministers showing how the National Care Service plans and legislation going to the Scottish Parliament takes into account the findings of both the Independent Care Review and this consultation activity. This will ensure that the participation carried out is meaningful and closes the feedback loop, in line with the Scottish Government's aim for a rights-based approach to participation.

Should you wish to discuss the contents of this report, or require this report in an alternative format, please contact:

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