

The Network Newsletter: tackling social exclusion in libraries, museums, archives and galleries

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The Network's Website is at www.seapn.org.uk and includes information on courses, good practice, specific socially excluded groups, as well as the newsletter archive.

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The Children's Plan ...

The Children's Plan¹ was published at the end of December. This document "aims to make England the best place in the world for children and young people to grow up" [p5] and sets some ambitious targets for 2020.

The Plan is grouped around key targets (parallel to those in "Every Child Matters"):

¹ *The Children's Plan: building brighter futures*. Cm 7280. TSO, 2007. Available to download as a pdf (586 kb) from: http://www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/childrensplan/downloads/The_Childrens_Plan.pdf.

- Happy and healthy
- Safe and sound
- Excellence and equity
- Leadership and collaboration
- Staying on
- On the right track.

The main recommendations under each heading are as follows:

Happy and healthy

- Re-emphasising the role of parents (rather than teachers) in children's upbringing, by, for example, introducing expert parenting advisers into every local authority, and boosting the role of the school-based Parent Support Advisers
 - Creating a new Parents Panel to advise Government
 - Developing intensive help for those families that need it, including increasing the outreach role of Sure Start Children's Centres
 - Increasing the emphasis on personalised learning
 - Boosting funding for safe children's play areas (and publishing a Play Strategy by summer 2008)
 - Reviewing children's health strategies, and reviewing Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
 - Refocusing on child poverty:
 "Poverty blights children's lives, which is why we have committed to halve child poverty by 2010 and eradicate it by 2020. The new joint Department for Children, Schools and Families and Department for Work and Pensions Child Poverty Unit will coordinate work across government to break the cycle of poverty from generation to generation. Poor housing is a particular problem for poor families and tackling it is important to meeting our 2020 goal and so we will:
 - tackle overcrowding, publishing an action plan in 2008; and
 - prioritise children's needs in housing decisions, especially the need to stay close to services like schools." [p7]
- "If we are to eradicate child poverty we need to break the cycle of poverty that passes from generation to generation by:
- tackling the causes of inequalities directly by reducing poverty among children today by lifting family incomes, supporting work and improving the conditions for family life; and
 - improving the prospects for the most disadvantaged children by closing gaps in educational, health and other outcomes, thereby making it less likely that their children will live in poverty." [p35]

Safe and sound

Aims to “help families strike the right balance between keeping children safe and allowing them the freedom they need” [p7]. This involves the completion of the Byron Review of the internet and video games; assessing the impact on children of the commercial world; reviewing home safety; encouraging local authorities to create 20 mph zones; and strengthening the complaints procedure for parents whose children experience bullying; and publishing the Staying Safe Action Plan in early 2008.

Excellence and equity

“We want every young person to achieve their potential and enjoy their time in education.” [p8]

This section of the Plan reemphasises the partnership with parents: “we will set out and consult on a new relationship between parents and schools” [p8]. It also commits to spending “£30 million over the next three years to provide more family learning to help parents and carers develop skills and learn with their children in schools.” [p8]

In addition, the Government will “invest £100 million over three years to:

- extend the offer of up to 15 hours of free early education and childcare to 20,000 2-year-olds in the most disadvantaged communities.” [p8]

There will also be financial boosts to the Every Child a Reader and Every Child Counts programmes; and a “root and branch” review of primary education to ensure that there is:

- “more time for the basics so children achieve a good grounding in reading, writing and mathematics;
- greater flexibility for other subjects;
- time for primary school children to learn a modern foreign language; and
- a smoother transition from play-based learning in the early years into primary school, particularly to help summer-born children who can be at a disadvantage when they enter primary school.” [p9]

The role of the school in promoting community cohesion is again emphasised:

“Citizenship education addresses issues relating to social justice, human rights, community cohesion and global interdependence. The new citizenship programmes of study include a new strand of work examining the key concepts of

identity and diversity and encouraging exploration of what it means to be a citizen in the UK today. This change was supported by the findings of the Review of Citizenship and Diversity in the Curriculum, undertaken by Sir Keith Ajegbo. Taking on board the advice of the Youth Citizenship Commission, we will consider what more needs to be done to improve the teaching of citizenship in our schools ... The London Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2012 offer a great opportunity to motivate more young people, and we will use the hosting of the Games to create an enduring educational and aspirational legacy to accelerate improvements in sport, the arts, language learning, sustainability, and citizenship education.” [p74]

Finally, there will be funding to improve the quality of teaching for children with special educational needs, including “a pilot scheme in which children with dyslexia will receive Reading Recovery support or one-to-one tuition from specialist dyslexia teachers.” [p9]

Leadership and collaboration

“System reform to achieve world class standards and close the gap in educational achievement for disadvantaged children.” [p10], including:

- Investment in the Early Years workforce
- Working towards making teaching a Masters-level profession, widening recruitment and boosting leadership skills
- “To strengthen both diversity and collaboration, we are expecting every secondary school to have specialist, trust or academy status and every school to have a business or university partner, with 230 academies by 2010 on the road to 400.” [p10]
- Look at making schools be part of Behaviour Partnerships mandatory
- “Children who behave poorly and are excluded, those unable to attend a mainstream school and those disengaged from education are a relatively small proportion of pupils. However, they include some of the young people with the worst prospects for success in later life, and most likely to develop problem behaviours. The quality of education they receive is highly variable despite the difference it can make to their prospects. To address this we will:
 - spend £26.5 million over the next three years on piloting new forms of alternative provision which could include using small schools – studio schools – with close links to business and providing a high quality vocational education; and
 - ask local authorities to collect and publish performance data for pupils not on a school roll, to ensure local areas have incentives to improve their performance.” [p11]

Staying on

“By 2015, we want all young people to stay on in education or training to 18 and beyond. And when they leave we want them to have the skills they need to prosper in a high skills economy.” [p12]

On the right track

“... we want a society where young people feel valued and in which their achievements are recognised and celebrated.” [p12]

The Government therefore will:

- invest £160 million over the next two years to improve the quality and range of places for young people to go and things for them to do;
- develop an entitlement for all young people to participate in positive activities which develop their talents including piloting a new offer to take part in cultural activities in and out of school; and
- spend £20 million over the next three years to use Acceptable Behaviour Contracts as a measure to prevent young people engaging in antisocial behaviour and to ensure young people receive support to improve their behaviour at the same time as an Antisocial Behaviour Order.” [pp12-13]

In addition, there will be further reviews of alcohol strategies; reviews of sex and relationships education; and a renewed focus on youth offending.

The Plan reinforces the idea of a cultural/leisure entitlement, including:

“As corporate parents, local authorities should consider how to improve access to positive activities for children in care, including free access to their leisure facilities. Following the Children and Young Persons Bill, we will set out how participation in positive leisure activities should form part of the care plan for all children and young people in care.” [p130]

“As well as sport, central to this entitlement will be participation in cultural activity, which enriches lives and contributes to all five of the Every Child Matters outcomes. We recently announced a major school music programme and will now go further. **We will work towards a position where no matter where they live, or what their background, all children and young people have the opportunities to get involved in top quality cultural opportunities in and out of school.** We will work towards a five hour offer to match that for sport. The aim will be to give young people the chance to develop as:

- informed spectators (through attending top quality theatre and dance performances, world class exhibitions, galleries, museums and heritage sites); and
 - participants and creators (through learning a musical instrument, playing and singing in ensembles, taking part in theatre and dance performances, producing an artwork, making films and media art, or curating an exhibition).” [p130] [*emphasis theirs*]
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Goals for 2020

“The Children’s Plan also sets out goals we have for what we can and should achieve for our children by 2020. These should be aspirational for both children and young people’s educational attainment and for their wider wellbeing. We will consult widely over the next year on whether these goals represent the right national ambitions:

- enhance children and young people’s wellbeing, particularly at key transition points in their lives;
 - every child ready for success in school, with at least 90 per cent developing well across all areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile by age 5;
 - every child ready for secondary school, with at least 90 per cent achieving at or above the expected level in both English and mathematics by age 11;
 - every young person with the skills for adult life and further study, with at least 90 per cent achieving the equivalent of five higher level GCSEs by age 19; and at least 70 per cent achieving the equivalent of two A levels by age 19;
 - parents satisfied with the information and support they receive;
 - all young people participating in positive activities to develop personal and social skills, promote wellbeing and reduce behaviour that puts them at risk;
 - employers satisfied with young people’s readiness for work;
 - child health improved, with the proportion of obese and overweight children reduced to 2000 levels;
 - child poverty halved by 2010 and eradicated by 2020; and
 - significantly reduce by 2020 the number of young offenders receiving a conviction, reprimand, or final warning for a recordable offence for the first time, with a goal to be set in the Youth Crime Action Plan.” [p14]
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The following extracts are of particular interest:

Children in care and on the edge of care

1.29 Children in care are among the most vulnerable children in the country. The White Paper *Care Matters: Time for Change* (2007) set

out how we will improve support for families with children in care and on the edge of care, including new interventions for parents of adolescents who are offending or committing antisocial behaviour. We will require that relatives and friends are considered as potential carers as part of a child's care plan, and expect local authorities to work with birth parents while a child is in care to support an early and safe return home for the child or young person where appropriate.

1.30 We will work with local authorities to ensure that those in care for a significant period of their childhood benefit from additional stability in already disrupted lives by reducing the numbers of children who move placement too often. The Fostering Changes training programme will improve the parenting skills of foster carers, as well as ensuring that the emotional wellbeing of children in care is considered more routinely.

1.31 *Care Matters* also set out how we will improve the quality of 'corporate parenting' for those who are in care by strengthening the voice of the child and the role of the local authority, with a key role for both the Lead Member and the Director of Children's Services. In 2008 we will publish further detail on the implementation of *Care Matters*.

1.32 An estimated 45 per cent of children and young people in care have an identifiable mental health problem. We will monitor, through a new local government National Indicator Set, improvements in the mental health and emotional wellbeing of children in care. We will issue statutory guidance for health services and local authorities setting out how they should improve the health of children in care, including their mental health." [p25]

Unaccompanied asylum seeking children

"1.36 We appreciate the potential vulnerability of unaccompanied children, and the distress they may experience while waiting for a decision on their asylum claim without the support of a family. Government recognises that unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) are first and foremost children. Many unaccompanied asylum seekers will be supported as children in care by local authorities as, by definition, they enter the country without an adult to take parental responsibility for them and, therefore, the local authority will be responsible for assessing these young people's needs and supporting them to access services. These young people, as children in care, will benefit from the reforms that we are introducing in our Children and Young Persons Bill.

1.37 The Home Office Borders and Immigration Agency will set out their plans for improving support to USAC in their response to their consultation paper *Planning Better Outcomes and Support for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children*. This will set out proposals for strengthening identification and support for trafficked children; and for improving the quality and timeliness of asylum decision making to reduce the uncertainty faced by UASC, so that planning for their care can support their integration or their safe return to their country of origin." [p26]

Disabled children

“1.38 *Aiming high for disabled children: better support for families* set out our strategy for improving the lives of disabled children and their families. Backed by £340 million over the next three years from the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), with additional resources to be announced from the Department of Health (DH), the ambition is for a transformation in services for families with disabled children by 2011 by:

- improved short breaks provision for severely disabled children and their families through new investment and an expectation that all local authorities provide a short break full service offer;
- more accessible childcare, so that disabled children can benefit from early education and parents have improved opportunities to work;
- a Transition Support Programme, which will help disabled young people move into adulthood, with increased opportunities for education, employment and independent living;
- parents’ forums in all areas shaping local services for disabled children; and
- individual budget pilots for families with disabled children.” [p26]

Conclusions

Reading is clearly high on the agenda (although with less emphasis on reading for pleasure than might be hoped for), although the NYR itself is not mentioned. Museums are mentioned once, as part of the move towards a cultural entitlement, but libraries aren’t specifically mentioned at all.

Reactions to the Plan have been mixed – see, for example, the summary² published by *Children & Young People Now*.

The Children and Young Person’s Bill 2007

The Children and Young Persons Bill 2007³ recently had its second reading in Parliament – the Bill is based on the strategy laid out in the *Care matters: time for change* White Paper⁴ which was published earlier in 2007.

² See: <http://www.cypnow.co.uk/bulletins/Daily-Bulletin/inDepth/775240/?DCMP=EMC-DailyBulletin>.

³ See: <http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2007-08/childrenandyoungpersonshl.html>.

⁴ *Care matters: time for change*. Cm 7137. DfES, 2007. Available to download as a pdf from: <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/childrenandyoungpersonsbill/docs/Care%20Matters%20-%20Time%20for%20Change.pdf>.

BAAF and The Fostering Network have produced a briefing⁵, and there is an outline of the key provisions of the Bill on the DCSF website⁶.

Think family ...

The Social Exclusion Task Force has just published its latest report⁷ on improving the life-chances of families at risk.

This document sets out the Government's aims for work with families, and also invites "local authorities, with their partners, to apply to become one of 12–15 Family Pathfinders which will run for three years from April 2008." [p4]

The report then sets out the four key priorities – "services would:

- Have no 'wrong door'
- Look at the whole family
- Build on family strengths
- Provide support tailored to need." [p7]

It goes through each of these points in more detail, linking them to specific recommendations for Government departments and to the Public Service Agreements.

The key message for us is to ensure that we "think family" – that provision for the whole family is built into what we offer, and that we can become part of the "no wrong door" approach by continuing to create easy access to other services.

UK Youth

"UK Youth is the leading national youth work charity supporting over 750,000 young people, helping them to raise their aspirations, realise their potential and have their achievements recognised via non-formal, accredited education programmes and activities."⁸

They publish a range of material to support inclusive work with young people, including, for example:

⁵ *The Fostering Network and British Association of Adoption and Fostering second reading briefing on the Children and Young Persons' Bill*. The Fostering Network/BAAF, 2007. Available to download as a pdf from: http://www.fostering.net/resources/documents/policy/tfn_baaf_cyp_bill.pdf.

⁶ See: <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/childrenandyoungpersonsbill/>.

⁷ *Think family: improving the life chances of families at risk*. SETF, 2008. Available to download as a pdf from: http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/upload/assets/www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/social_exclusion_task_force/think_families/think_family_life_chances_report.pdf.

⁸ Taken from: <http://www.ukyouth.org/>.

- *Boys2Men: running a fatherhood programme*⁹
- *So what is inclusion?* [work with disabled and non-disabled young people]¹⁰
- *Everyday participation*^{11, 12}

The Morgan Inquiry

Just in case you haven't yet seen the announcement of this:

“Baroness Morgan of Huyton, in conjunction with a cross-party panel, is holding an independent inquiry on the future of young adult volunteering between the ages of 18 and 24. The Scout Association (TSA), in conjunction with the All-Party Parliamentary Scouting Group (APPSG), is supporting the Morgan Inquiry.

The Morgan Inquiry aims to produce a report which looks at the real reasons for more young people to volunteer, the barriers that prevent young people from doing so – and to produce a series of practical recommendations for change.

The Inquiry will run from early 2008 for six months concluding in June 2008.”¹³

Evidence should be submitted by **8 February 2008**.¹⁴

Reducing inequalities ...

This new report¹⁵ from the National Children's Bureau looks at some of the issues that can be identified, which help predict a child's likely outcome in terms of social exclusion, and suggests some ways of beginning to address this.

⁹ For further information, see:

<http://www.ukyouth.org/whatwedo/publications/allpublications/boys2men.htm>.

¹⁰ See:

<http://www.ukyouth.org/whatwedo/publications/allpublications/So+What+Is+Inclusion.htm>.

¹¹ See:

<http://www.ukyouth.org/whatwedo/publications/allpublications/everydayparticipation.htm>.

¹² Source: Simon Wallace.

¹³ Taken from: <http://morganinquiry.org.uk/index.html>.

¹⁴ Source: National Youth Agency *Electronic Youth Policy* update 186, 9 January 2008.

¹⁵ Leon Feinstein *et al.* *Reducing inequalities: realising the talents of all*. NCB, 2007 (ISBN-13: 978-1-905818-20-4). Available to download as a pdf from: <http://www.ncb.org.uk/dotpdf/member%20only%20-%20phase%202/REDUweb.pdf>.

“A strategy to reduce inequalities will need to include elements that focus on whole populations, particularly those geographical areas high on the deprivation index; cohorts of children which may cut across geographical boundaries; and individual children whose needs are so persistent and their challenges so multi-layered that a group-level intervention will not be enough.

All must be accessible by multiple doorways, including a universal one ... interventions need to be differentiated to take due account of what the evidence tells us is needed. Hence some groups of children, such as those in public care, asylum seeking children and those from ethnic groups that perform less well than others, may need dedicated attention.” [p59]¹⁶

Quality matters: think family

This new guide¹⁷ from NIACE:

“provides a single reference point for the fundamental building blocks of quality to support all families, especially the most vulnerable families, to receive a good quality learning experience at every family learning and parenting skills session, irrespective of the location or practitioner group. It links all the frameworks and guidelines to a basic set of building blocks of quality that can be used in any setting.”¹⁸

Toy libraries

The NATLL has just published a research report¹⁹ which:

“relates to a study and analysis of the work of toy libraries, of the contribution which they make to securing better outcomes for children and of the support which they offer to parents and to the wider community. The main statutory responsibility for improving child outcomes is vested in local authorities, now rolling out the government’s programme of 3,500 children’s centres. The study was therefore designed to also consider the links and partnership arrangements between toy libraries and children’s centres.” [p1]

¹⁶ Source: The Fostering Network *Newsletter*, December 2007.

¹⁷ Penny Lamb, Clare Meade and Pauline Kershaw (eds). *Quality matters: think family*. NIACE, 2007 £19.95 (ISBN-13: 978-1-86201-352-0). Further information at: <http://www.niace.org.uk/publications/Q/QualityMatters.asp>.

¹⁸ Taken from: <http://www.niace.org.uk/publications/Q/QualityMatters.asp>.

¹⁹ *Toy libraries: their benefits for children, families and communities*. NATLL, 2007 (ISBN-10: 0-9554236-3-5). Available to download as a pdf from: <http://www.natll.org.uk/pdfs/CapacityReportJune07.pdf>.

In addition, NFER has also just published a piece of research²⁰ which looks at the important role that toy libraries fulfil in supporting children's play and development.²¹

Working out of poverty

A new report²² from ippr has found that:

“almost six in ten poor households in the UK (57 per cent) have someone at work, up ten percentage points on a decade ago, according to new analysis presented in this report. For too many families, moving into work has not meant moving out of poverty.

While work is undoubtedly the surest route out of poverty, it is far from an inevitable one. This report uses new analysis to investigate the extent and nature of poverty among working families, with a particular focus on the relationship with low pay.”²³

Intergenerational mobility

You may have seen recent press coverage of the new report²⁴ from the Sutton Trust, which shows that:

“Social mobility in the UK remains at the low level it was for those born in 1970, with recent generations of children's educational outcomes still overwhelmingly tied to their parents' income ...”²⁵

There is also a new pamphlet²⁶ by David Blunkett, published by the think-tank, Progress, which looks at investing in children and young people (and

²⁰ Robat Powell and Nia Seaton. *'A Treasure Chest of Service': the role of toy libraries within play policy in Wales*. NFER, 2007. Also available in Welsh as: Robat Powell and Nia Seaton. *'Trysorfa o Wasanaethau': rôl llyfrgelloedd teganau mewn polisi chwarae yng Nghymru*. Available to download as a pdf from: <http://www.nfer.ac.uk/research-areas/pims-data/summaries/toy-libraries-in-wales.cfm>.

²¹ Source: NFERDirect, December 2007.

²² Graeme Cooke and Kayte Lawton. *Working out of poverty: a study of the low paid and the 'working poor'*. ippr, 2008. Available to download as a pdf (once you have registered on the ippr website) from: <http://www.ippr.org.uk/publicationsandreports/publication.asp?id=581>.

²³ Taken from: <http://www.ippr.org.uk/publicationsandreports/publication.asp?id=581>.

²⁴ Jo Blanden and Stephen Machin. *Recent changes in intergenerational mobility in Britain*. Sutton Trust, 2007. Available to download as a pdf (190 kb) from: <http://www.suttontrust.com/reports/mainreport.pdf>.

²⁵ Taken from: <http://www.suttontrust.com/annualreports.asp>.

education), greater involvement of families (and their encouraging young people to have greater aspirations), and widening workplace learning – what David Blunkett calls “redistributing opportunity”.²⁷

The Primary Review

“Based at the University of Cambridge, supported by Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and directed by Professor Robin Alexander, the Primary Review was launched in October 2006 and will run for two years. It aims to gather evidence from a wide range of sources, sift facts from rhetoric, and stimulate debate about the future of this vital phase of education. The Review will culminate in a report containing recommendations for future policy and practice. The most comprehensive such enquiry since the Plowden Report of 1967, the Primary Review is examining how well the current English system of primary education is doing, how it can be improved and how primary schools should respond to the national and global challenges which lie ahead. Along the way, the Review is assessing the impact of government primary education initiatives of the past 20 years.”²⁸

Four new reports have just been published²⁹, and one in particular focuses on special education needs³⁰. The briefing report³¹ states:

- “There is a higher incidence of identification and support of special needs among boys than girls, both with and without statements.
- Children from professional homes are more likely to receive support than children from manual working class homes, taking into account measured comparabilities in reading, mathematics and social adjustment.
- After controlling for socio-economic disadvantage, gender and year group, it would appear that children from some minority ethnic groups

²⁶ David Blunkett. *The inclusive society? Social mobility in 21st century Britain*. Progress, 2008. Available to download as a pdf from:

http://clients.squareeye.com/uploads/prog/pamph_inclusive.pdf.

²⁷ Source: Children & Young People Now daily bulletin, 8 January 2008.

²⁸ Taken from:

http://www.primaryreview.org.uk/Downloads/Int_Reps/4.Children_development-learning/PR_07-04_RS_2-1a_2-1b_5-1_5-2.pdf.

²⁹ For details, see: <http://www.primaryreview.org.uk/Publications/Interimreports.html>.

³⁰ Harry Daniels and Jill Porter. *Learning needs and difficulties among children of primary school age: definition, identification, provision and issues*. University of Cambridge Faculty of Education (Primary Review Research Survey 5/2), 2007. (ISBN-13: 978-1-906478-11-7). Available to download as a pdf from:

http://www.primaryreview.org.uk/Downloads/Int_Reps/4.Children_development-learning/Primary_Review_5-2_report_Learning_needs_difficulties_071214.pdf.

³¹ See:

http://www.primaryreview.org.uk/Downloads/Int_Reps/4.Children_development-learning/Primary_Review_5-2_briefing_Learning_needs_difficulties_071214.pdf.

are more likely to be identified as having special educational needs; and some groups are more likely to be identified as having particular forms of special need.”

In relation to exclusion and social exclusion, it goes on to say:

“The faltering progress towards inclusion is also reflected in exclusion rates.

- Pupils with special educational needs are more likely to be excluded, particularly during the primary school years. Pupils with behavioural difficulties are most at risk of exclusion.
- Exclusion is likely to slow the formal process of assessment and inevitably exacerbates the child’s difficulties, often exerting a considerable impact on their life after school.
- The primary school has a key role to play in the prevention of social exclusion, and this is reflected in their growing social work responsibilities.”

The briefing concludes:

“There are inequities within the system with respect to gender, class and ethnicity, and as a result of the influence of single-interest lobby groups certain SEN groups are over-represented. All this adds up to an excessive degree of variation in what should be a consistent and equitable system.”

Abbreviations and acronyms

BAAF = British Association for Adoption and Fostering
ippr = Institute for Public Policy Research
NATLL = National Association of Toy and Leisure Libraries
NCB = National Children’s Bureau
NFER = National Foundation for Educational Research
NIACE = National Institute of Adult Continuing Education
NYR = National Year of Reading
TSO = The Stationery Office

This Newsletter was compiled by John Vincent, and all items are written by him, unless otherwise stated. Please send any comments or items for the next issue to:

John Vincent
Wisteria Cottage
Nadderwater
Exeter EX4 2JQ

Tel/fax: 0845 128 4897
E-mail: john@nadder.org.uk

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