Torbay Belonging Strategy

A Strategy to Help Children Maintain Their School Place.

TORBAY COUNCIL

Contents

Version control

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Introduction

'I feel a bit left in the dark in regards to (her) education. I feel let down by (the school) and I feel (she) has just been forgotten. She's expressed that people never listen or believe her and that it's too late for her now. Myself and her social worker have expressed it's never to late and (she) is eager to get back to school as a constant question from (her) is 'When can I go back to school?''

Parent of an excluded child – Torquay 2023

Including all Torbay's children in education is a moral and social imperative. Failings in the current systems and work are captured in the Local Area Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Inspection Report of 5th January 2022.

Data suggests that:

- ***The rate of exclusion and suspensions of pupils from school is too high.***
- ***Children and Young People with SEND are disproportionately excluded from schools.***
- ***Variability in the strength of school provision means that some pupils go through the system without their needs being properly understood or met.*** (SEND) Inspection Report

This strategy document is being coproduced to create a shared and collective response to support children and young people to maintain their school places by recognising and meeting need. It is essential as stated in Torbay's Local Area Written Statement of Action (Milestone 13D) '**Develop an area wide exclusions strategy, building on the Local Inclusion Plan**'.

The strategy is guided by the co-produced vision for SEND within the Local Area;

- **SEND is everybody's business** - embedding the vision and values into the practice of everyone who works with children and families from 0-25
- **Identify and respond to needs early** - in ways that values lived experience and expertise and offers personalised care and support.
- **Deliver in the right place at the right time** - always asking 'so what difference are we making in the life of children or young people'

It is also intended to support in meeting the Local Area Pledges to Children, Young People, and their Families. These pledges have been co-produced with Torbay's children and young people and are cornerstones of our ways of working across the partnership.

Pledge 1 – Be Honest - We will tell you the truth, we will listen and work with you to plan and explain what is possible and why things may need to change or happen.

Pledge 2 – Show You We Care - We will listen carefully and ensure that we build a plan of support around your aspirations, hopes and goals.

Pledge 3 – Be Thoughtful - We will treat you as the expert, build our professional knowledge of your needs and what is available to help you.

Pledge 4 – Be Fair - We will treat you and your family with respect.

Pledge 5 - Be Kind - We will listen carefully and ask you how you want to receive your support.

Pledge 6 - Be Friendly - We will take time to find out lots about you, we will celebrate with you when things go well and help you when things are difficult.

What Do We Know?

Both mobility (between schools) and suspension or exclusion have a significant negative effect on a child's performance (Hattie 2018). This work showed that the predicted effect equates to 6 months of lost progress.

Even so, the DfE (Department for Education) supports the use of suspension and permanent exclusion '*when warranted.*' Both have significant and long-lasting negative impacts on children and communities. Suspended children are overrepresented in school movement and experience delays in having needs met as the next school seeks to develop relationships and support offers.

> *'Exclusionary school discipline……negatively impacts relationships, school belonging, and academic achievement (Jacobsen, 2020; Lacoe & Steinberg, (2019; Noltemeyer et al., 2015).*

Torbay Local Area believes that 'when warranted' as in the DfE guidance (Suspension and Permanent Exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England.) requires a range of interventions to have been offered before suspension or exclusion. Some behaviour policies are not relationally based and risk poor co working with parents to avoid removal from the school site or roll

Who Is at Risk of Exclusion and Suspension?

The latest data on the Local Authority Interactive Tool (LAIT) shows that Torbay continues to exclude and suspend children at a greater rate than comparable local authorities. This leads to the following position against 152 local authorities in England.

	Exclusion	Suspension	>1 Suspension
Primary	151st	148th	147th
Secondary	124th	113th	104th
Overall	145th	140th	

Some specific groups are also more at risk of exclusion or suspension than others. In Torbay, data for 2021/22 suggests that these are children:

1. With a social worker
2. For whom the school receives Pupil Premium Funding
3. Who have been identified as being at risk of criminal exploitation
4. In years 2 and 8.
5. With a primary need of SEMH at SEN Support.
6. Living in the most disadvantaged parts of the TQ1 postcode area.

What Do We Need to Change?

As a local area, Torbay uses suspension and exclusion more than regional and national norms.

The table to the right shows the number of suspensions and exclusions in area and then the reduction necessary to be at the regional and national average rates.

As Torbay has seen a 50% increase in suspension in Autumn Term 2022, it is likely that the reduction necessary will increase.

2020/21	Torbay	Regional	National
Primary Suspensions	214	66	109
Primary Exclusions	6	5	5
Secondary Suspensions	1577	8	191
Secondary Exclusions	28	11	11

To achieve this, we will need to understand the reasons why children, families, schools, and partners are not able to avoid suspension and exclusion. We will then need to support each other to address any identified gaps in, shared culture, belonging, external and internal provision and expectations of each other.

Existing Work

School Behaviour Policies

The Local Area has conducted a review of schools' behaviour policies across Torbay. This has shown there to be a wide variety in content, and that some need to be developed to meet the expectations in guidance from the Department for Education. Where we have found gaps, we will support the school concerned to address these.

The most recent DfE guidance expects that parents, children, and families understand behaviour policies. To support this, we will work together to check understanding before the policy is needed and again at the point where schools, children and families are using the policy.

It is especially important that families can support their children and schools in ensuring good behaviour is recognised, modelled, and rewarded. All partners will work to ensure they recognise and record when things are going well.

Equally, all partners will work with children and families to recognise when behaviour is not good. We will then work together to share expectations and address any unmet needs.

Torbay's Panel Processes.

Torbay has a range of panels that sit regularly to ensure children and young people are known to services and are having appropriate provision and support.

Panel	Decisions made	Impact
Pupil Placement Panel (Every 2 weeks in term time)	Fair Access decisions Reintegration from Alternative Provision Oversight of pupil movement and managed moves.	All children of compulsory school age to have a school place offered.
Medical Placement Panel (Every 2 weeks in term time)	Multi agency review of referrals to make sure children with medical needs have education suitable to their condition.	All children have a suitable offer
Torbay Secondary At Risk of Exclusion Panel (Every 2 weeks in term time) **Paignton and Brixham, and Torquay Primary At Risk of Exclusion Panels (Monthly)**	Multi agency review of referrals from schools to make sure children who are at risk of exclusion have appropriate muti agency support to maintain the place. Children are referred if they have had multiple suspensions or current interventions aren't reducing risk.	All referred children have a review of their support needs and partners are supported and challenged to minimise exclusion.
SEND panel (weekly)	Decisions to issue Decisions to assess	Multi agency decision making

	Decision to add specificity/QA Tracking of EHCP's moving in and out Tracking of cared for children moving areas	Number of children going through statutory assessment Next steps meetings offered Alerting new LA's of a move or tracking consultations and inter LA recoupment
SEND funding panel (weekly)	Element 3 funding for new plans Element 3 funding increases Additions to specialist placement funding	Provision for children and young people Impact on budget and child/YP support
Barton Enhanced Resource Provision panel (termly)	Decisions on priority children for SALT provision at Barton	Access to specialist provision for SALT
Specialist Education Provision panels (January and May)	Decisions on allocating specialist placements	Access to specialist provisions Tribunal and appeal rate
IPOP – Independent Placement Overview Panel	Joint funding decisions on education and social care funded panel	Joint decision making and collaborative working,
ATR – Access to Resources	None	Contributions to decision making across the partnership for children with SEND.

Priority Areas for Improvement

There are many, complex individual elements to securing fewer suspensions and exclusions of children and young people in Torbay. Torbay Local Area will prioritise the following:

1. Establishing a shared culture and offer across all schools

1.1 We will commit to understand and listen to the needs of our children and families, working relationally to reduce suspension and exclusion. We will use a strengths-based approach that recognises successes and builds on these.

1.2 We will co-produce a graduated response to childrens' needs and ensure this is consistently delivered across the local area.

1.3 We will be clear about what Primary and Secondary schools determine to be the level of concern in behaviour, as defined by the co-produced Behaviour Thresholds document. We will use this to determine decision making and our partnership response to support a child at risk of exclusion.

1.4 We will recognise that much, but not all, poor behaviour indicates unmet needs or underdeveloped skills. We will work across agencies and in partnership with families to identify the need and plan together to meet it.

1.5 We will draw from the existing good practice across Torbay's agencies in creating and sharing common behaviour expectations for all staff. We will use family and childrens' voices to help us identify the best practice.

1.6 We will work together to ensure there is a planned pathway back to mainstream education for all excluded children where their needs allow. This will include identifying the next school with 12 weeks of the exclusion and working with that school and partners to prepare the transition. During this 12 week period the child will have appropriate education provision that assesses their strengths and challenges to inform the identification.

1.7 We will create enhanced provision for children with a primary need in the category of Social, Emotional or Mental Health including using expertise for outreach. This provision will maintain these children in mainstream schools whilst also creating opportunities for staff training and wider sharing of best practice.

1.8 We will review the Provisions' and our PRU's access criteria to ensure children can receive this support at the most appropriate point. This will include short term interventions.

1.9 We will promote and engage with the Autism in Schools project to better understand and meet the needs of these children through workforce development and provision planning.

2. Allocating sufficient resource across families and partners to understand and meet need before statutory intervention is required.

2.1 We will work with schools and the family hub model to create programmes at SEN Support that span geographic areas to make best use of resources and expertise.

2.2 All partners will plan for resourced interventions proactively to make them available as soon as need is identified. This will include an Early Help offer that has explicit thresholds for attendance and inclusion.

3. Embedding multi agency pathways to ensure that we are maximising joint working.

3.1 We will create a single directory of pathways within and between services, easily accessible to all and showing timescales and target outcomes, through the review of our published local offer.

3.2 Where possible, we will seek to prioritise children at risk of exclusion on waiting lists for all partner services.

4. Training and Professional Development

4.1 Working with the family hubs model and with schools we will develop our families' knowledge and skills to support their children and young people.

4.2 Through the delivery of our SEND workforce plan all partnership staff will work tirelessly to meet the needs of our children and young people when identified. This will target enhancing skills across frontline staff to support early identification and understanding of needs.

5. Quality Assurance and Performance Information

5.1 We will create a clear inclusion framework and dashboard. We will use this to recognise good practice and address less inclusive practice.

5.2 We will use quality assurance mechanisms to review exclusion information provided to governors and trustees to inform their reviews. We will take themes from this to inform workforce development and multi-agency response.

5.3 We will develop a system whereby Local Authority Officers are able to access the evidence for all exclusion review meetings, including Independent Review Panels before the meeting. This will allow officers to learn from the practice across the system and support panels in their work.

Annex A - Definitions

The recent advice to headteachers on **behaviour** states:

> *Schools should be clear about which behaviours are permitted and prohibited; the values, attitudes, and beliefs they promote and the social norms and routines that should be encouraged throughout the school community*

This creates an opportunity to develop shared values and social norms, co-produced with families and partners, whilst also creating a challenge to all to reflect those that already exist in the communities we live in and serve.

School **exclusion and suspension** are easily defined as they describe processes that are tightly prescribed in DfE guidance.

> *This government supports headteachers in using suspension and permanent exclusion as a sanction when warranted as part of creating a calm, safe, and supportive environment in which pupils can learn and thrive.*
>
> *A pupil may be suspended for one or more fixed periods (up to a maximum of 45 school days in a single academic year), or permanently excluded*

Inclusion is less clearly defined but the following analysis is useful:

> *Inclusion involves organisational practices that ensure that the backgrounds of different groups or individuals are culturally and socially accepted, welcomed, and equally treated. For individuals within an organisation, inclusion is a sense of belonging based on respect and being valued (GDP 2017).*
>
> *Inclusive leaders must challenge biases, whilst being aware of their own unconscious biases. They must take responsibility for inclusion and hold all employees accountable for inclusion in the workplace (ENEI 2017).*
>
> *For inclusion to work, organisations must create an atmosphere that espouses supportive energy and commitment. Individuals must be engaged and valued (GDP 2017). (from Defining and Measuring Inclusion 2017)*

This opens questions of diversity, bias, and accountability for all involved in supporting families, children, and young people.

These questions need to be considered alongside the following paragraphs from the SEND Code of Practice.

Where a child or young person has SEN but does not have an EHC plan they ***must*** *be educated in a mainstream setting except in specific circumstances.*

In practical situations in everyday settings, the best early years settings, schools and colleges do what is necessary to enable children and young people to develop, learn, participate and achieve the best possible outcomes irrespective of whether that is through reasonable adjustments for a disabled child or young person or special educational provision for a child or young person with SEN.

Annex B - Relational Working

Torbay Children's Services and Local Area has adopted Relational Practice, a strength-based approach that recognises that building a positive relationship with children and their families when they need support is important, so all can be healthy, happy, and safe.

We understand that life can sometimes be hard and what happens to us can affect how we think, feel, and behave. We know that how we work with children and families to talk about this and the ways in which we support them are important.

We recognise that listening to children and their families and working 'with' rather than doing things 'for' or 'to' is the best way we can help support. This means our practitioners will focus on building positive relationships through respectful communication, collaboration and shared decision making to help create positive change. This will be particularly important at times such as reintegration from suspension when we will consciously use relational practice to ensure the return to school is successful.

The benefits of working restoratively include:

- **Respectful conversations to truly understand everyone's life events**
- **Encourages families to become more self-sufficient**
- **Listens to the voices of children, so we hear their wishes and feelings and where possible act upon them**
- **Addresses conflict and seeks to repair harm when things go wrong**
- **Trauma informed practice allow safe conversations to take place**
- **Inclusive practice promotes working together with children, young people, and families, so they feel respected, listened to, and heard**
- **Open and honest conversations to build relationships and manage expectations**
- **Networking to promote successful multi agency working that encourages the building, maintaining, and repairing of all relationships**
- **Addressing, reducing, and preventing harmful behaviour to keep everyone safe**
- **Local, shared decision making and co-planning that leads to better outcomes for children and families**

Annex C - Key Documents and Guidance

Torbay Written Statement of Action

Local Area SEND Inspection Report (ofsted.gov.uk)

SEND code of practice: 0 to 25 years - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Behaviour in Schools guidance (publishing.service.gov.uk)

Suspension and Permanent Exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England, including pupil movement (publishing.service.gov.uk)

Index for Inclusion - Ainscow and Booth

Defining and Measuring Inclusion (publishing.service.gov.uk)

Hattie effect size list - 256 Influences Related To Achievement (visible-learning.org)

School exclusions: a literature review on the continued disproportionate exclusions of certain children (publishing.service.gov.uk)

Lost at School – Dr Ross Greene – ISBN - 1501101498

Lost and Found: Unlocking Collaboration and Compassion to Help Our Most Vulnerable, Misunderstood Students (and All the Rest) – Dr Ross Greene – ISBN - 1119813573

Annex E – Torbay's Behaviour Thresholds

These thresholds are a guide for schools when considering action and support available for children who are struggling in school.

Schools are encouraged to make use of the following support:

1. Primary Risk of Exclusion Panel – meetings of senior staff each month to provide an opportunity for schools to discuss children at risk of exclusion or whose needs schools are struggling with.
2. Secondary Risk of Exclusion Panel – a fortnightly meeting as for Primary Peer groups.
3. Risk of Exclusion Case Conferences for immediate concerns that need addressing between panels.
4. Primary Outreach from Mayfield School.

Development of Child or Young Person - Behaviour Thresholds - Level 1

	Description of Behaviour	School Role	Examples of Opportunities for External Support
Emotional and Social	• Models pro-social behaviour. • Ability to self-regulate. • Demonstrates appropriate responses to situations and other peoples' actions. • Able to co-operate with others in a range of contexts. • Understands/can identify their own feelings.	• Schools should offer a secure and safe environment with consistent rules, routines and expectations. • All staff should be expected to demonstrate emotional intelligence and act as positive role models. • A positive whole school culture should encourage openness. • Schools should provide opportunities for emotional support for all staff. • Classroom organisation should encourage both co-operative and independent learning. • Staff should use TiP, SEAL/THRIVE strategies to promote a positive school ethos. • All staff to demonstrate positive relationships with children, parents/ carers and colleagues.	• Central training on ACE's, Trauma Informed Practice, Restorative Practice, Emotional Intelligence/ SEAL, THRIVE etc. is available for whole school community. • Good communication with all children's services & health ensuring support for vulnerable children.
Self-esteem & relationships	• Demonstrates positive relationships based upon mutual trust and respect. • Has a positive self-image. • Demonstrates a certain degree of self-confidence.	• The school should maintain and encourage open communication between home and school. Focus on the positive whenever possible. • Promote good attendance – 'Every School Day Matters' • Engage children in self-assessment tools to inform future provision and needs • Ensure effective communication of behaviour policy to whole school community. • Ensure consistent use of Behaviour Policy. • Effective classroom management should make good use of rewards and sanctions.	• Family Learning Opportunities • Multi agency professionals available to provide expertise in schools.
Behaviour	• Demonstrates appropriate behaviour in school for the majority of the time. • Able to amend behaviour to conform to school's expectations. • Accepts consequences of inappropriate behaviour.	• Ensure positive reinforcement and praise outweighs corrective responses • Ensure behaviour strategies are applied at individual, class and whole school level consistently. • Model and promote high expectations across the whole school. • Effective differentiation of curriculum; academic tasks well matched to ability and ability to engage. • Encourage active involvement and participation of all children in class and in the extended offer. • Regularly review and update the policy and respond to current trends or critical incidents. • Consider use of a Home School Agreement. • Consider referral to Children's Services (refer to 'The Child's Journey' document)	• Sharing good practice across classrooms and schools. • Input as required with reference to updating and implementing the behaviour policy. • Family Information Service. (Local Offer)

Behaviour Thresholds - Level 2

	Description of Behaviour	School Role (in addition to the school's role at level 1)	Examples of Opportunities for External Support

Emotional and Social	- Starts to display some impulsive behaviour and a lack of self control.
	- Demonstrate some inappropriate responses to situations.
	- At times, finds it difficult to co-operate with others and maintain positive relationships.
	- Unable to understand their own and others' feelings.
	- Could display signs of withdrawal and isolation from peers.
		- Senior staff/SENCO/DSL should be made aware of the pupil and their needs.
		- Senior management to review and monitor curriculum offered in terms of quality of teaching and appropriateness of the curriculum.
		- Short term adaptations made to accommodate needs e.g., check ins, social group at lunch time, time out at start of day.
		- Intervention from pastoral support worker.
		- Engage parents/ carers in regular dialogue and support home school agreements.
		- Draw up a **Pastoral/Behaviour Support Plan** (BSP) that may include:
		
		   - Individual support programmes of school-based intervention which is monitored and reviewed.
		   - Delivery of small group social skills programmes e.g., circle of friends.
			- Informal discussions with external agencies to consider options/ next steps.
			- Outreach referral with the possibility of working with:
			   - Mayfield School Outreach (KS1 & KS2)
			   - The Early Help Team
			   - Primary Mental Health Worker
			   - Educational Psychologist
			   - Parenting training
			- Accessing school training and advice
			- Family Information Service (Local Offer)
			- Schools Mediation Service

Self-esteem & relationships	- May struggle to develop positive relationships.
	- May have a low self-image.
	- Could be vulnerable to bullying or have a bullying inclination.
	- May display attendance issues or regular lateness.
	- May internally abscond.
		- Effectively promoting peer support systems, e.g., peer mentors, playground friends etc.
		   - Strategies to support the child in taking responsibility for their behaviour and actions.
		   - Appropriate sanctions to inappropriate behaviour, carried out consistently.
		   - Monitoring attendance and liaison with attendance improvement officer.
		   - Consideration of adaptations to curriculum provision and timetable
		   - Seeking external advice/ outreach through referral.
		   - Records and evaluations of all intervention programmes will be needed, and all information should be logged.
			Outreach or Early Help referral with the possibility of working with:
			   - Health services
			   - Family support worker
			   - Young carers
			   - Parenting programmes
			   - School nurse

Behaviour	- Repeated incidents of being unable to conform to school expectations. - Some refusal to participate in learning. - May challenge consequences of inappropriate behaviour. - May have had some internal exclusions.	- Adequate information should be transferred between phases with a transition programme in place for transfer to KS3 or 16+ - Consider referral to Early Help	- Extended opportunities beyond the school day, e.g., holiday clubs etc. - Attendance Improvement Service - External holiday activities such as the HAF provisions.

Behaviour Thresholds - Level 3

	Description of Behaviour	School Role (in addition to the school's role at levels 1 & 2)	Examples of Opportunities for External Support

Emotional and Social	• Frequently acts impulsively and loses control.
	• Displays insecure attachments.
	• May suffer from phobias and other psychological difficulties.
	• May suffer from periods of depression.
	• Struggling to maintain mainstream school placement.
		• Make referrals to appropriate external agencies and act on recommendations. Ideally with consent.
		• Ensure increased dialogue with parents/ carers. Create a parenting contract.
		• Schools should have regular involvement of external agencies. A request for statutory assessment should be made.
		• Consider referral to Children's Services with consent.
		
		• **BSP** identifies an available safe adult attachment figure is available for the child in order to support them during unstructured periods and in lessons if necessary.
		• **BSP** identifies a designated calm are for the child to use to regulate their emotion
		• Ensure key record keeping is in place to provide a trail of evidence e.g., ABC records
			• External Services with the possibility of working with:
			  • Educational Psychologists
			  • Family Support Worker
			  • CAMHS / Forensic CAMHS
			  • External Alternative Provision
			  • School Mediation Service
			  • Vulnerable Pupils Team

Self-esteem & relationships	• Poor relationships due to lack of trust and respect.
	• Negative self-image leading to poor academic and attendance levels.
	• Vulnerable.
	• Regularly challenging and confrontational.
	• Susceptible to risk taking or self-injurious behaviours
		• Organise specialist interventions e.g., anger management, CBT, draw and talk
		• Ensure high level of involvement of specialist pastoral staff e.g.,1-1 THRIVE and small group or 1-1 SEAL.
		• Carry out THRIVE and Family SEAL programmes.
		
		• Implement effective transition programmes between phases and providers.
		• Consider individualised programme of work based on child's interests
			• External Services with the possibility of working with:
			  • Health services (paediatrician)
			  • Parenting courses e.g., Triple P, Nurturing, Family SEAL
			  • Attendance Improvement Officer & parenting contracts
			
			• Safeguarding hub referral coordinators

Behaviour	• Disruptive/ challenging behaviour impacting on safety and /or learning of self and others. • Frequent refusal to participate in learning. • Frequently involved in bullying. • Often unwilling to attend. • Number of fixed term exclusions and possibly at risk of permanent exclusion.	• Consider partnership provision with alternative curriculum providers from QA list maintained by the LA. • Organise individualised programmes e.g., adapted timetables, additional provision outside the classroom, etc. • Consider the appropriateness of a **managed move**. • Bring case for peer support at the relevant Peer Group. Ensure child is on the 'at risk' list. • Consider referral to the Primary Town Hub	• Alternative providers including vocational provision • Behaviour intervention programme training • Burton Academy Assessment placement. (KS3/KS4) • Mayfield School Outreach (KS1 / KS2)

Behaviour Thresholds - Level 4

	Description of Behaviour	School Role (in addition to the school's role at levels 1, 2 & 3)	Examples of Opportunities for External Support
Emotional and Social	• History of failed interventions at levels 2 and 3 resulting in an inability to interact both socially and emotionally on a daily basis. • Unable to maintain school placement.	• Priority referral for an EP assessment • Regular multi-professional meetings (Team Around the Family or Core Group) • Consider completion of Exploitation Toolkit. • If EHC Plan in place – initiate an interim review • Detailed **BSP** in place based upon advice from professionals • Risk assessments in place, shared and regularly updated • Internal alternative provision e.g., Thrive group, Nurture group • 1:1 individualised timetable supported by an available designated safe adult attachment figure (consistent) • Consider initial 6-week, alternative/reduced timetable with plan for reintegration to school	• Partnership agreements with alternative providers. • SEN Team if a child has an EHC Plan – interim statement review. • Early Help Team • Supporting Families Team • Edge of Care Team • Legal intervention e.g., education supervision order, parenting order • Refer to Mayfield Outreach Service • Burton Academy Assessment placement. (KS3/KS4)
Self-esteem & relationships	• Unable to sustain positive relationships. • Displays a high level of vulnerability. • Involved in risk taking and self-injurious behaviours.	• Complete a Readiness for Transition template to look for unmet needs of lagging skills. • Consider the **managed move process** • Refer to Town Hub for placement, peer support and advice.	
Behaviour	• Inability to meet expectation of school on an hourly basis. • Persistently places self and others at serious risk of harm. • At significant risk of permanent exclusion or needs alternative provision.		

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