

## Audit of Inequalities Action Plan 2016-21 – November 2020 Update

Action taken to better promote equality of opportunity/good relations	Inequality Identified and Outcome Area(s)	S75 Category	Intended outcome/impact and how this will be measured	In the current service Business Plan (Yes/No)	Status Update
1) Improve accessibility to the Chamber and Official's Boxes within the Chamber	Access to Parliament Buildings (Theme 1a of Audit of Inequalities)	Persons with a disability and persons without	Improved accessibility to Chamber for all Members. Increased capacity for Official's with mobility issues.	No. Alterations have been carried out to facilitate a wheelchair-using MLA. Further improvements will require extensive re-modelling of the chamber. If required (and approved), such works will be included in future Business Plans.	<b>Lead:</b> Head of Building Services <b>Timescale:</b> Keep under review <b>Status:</b> Complete for reporting period
2) Implementation of access audits completed by RNIB, Disability Action and Action on Hearing Loss regarding a programme of works	Access to Parliament Buildings (Theme 1a of Audit of Inequalities)  Access to Services (Theme 1b of Audit of Inequalities)	Persons with a disability and persons without	Improved accessibility to Parliament Buildings for persons with a disability. All works projects are designed and constructed in accordance with Building Regulations and other relevant legislation.	No. All work items within our remit relating to the audits have been completed. Other wider 'estate' issues have been passed to DoF. Further agreed improvements will be included in relevant Business Plan.	<b>Lead:</b> Head of Building Services <b>Timescale:</b> Keep under review <b>Status:</b> Complete for reporting period
3) Investigate options to further improve facilities for wheelchair users	Access to Parliament Buildings (Theme	Persons with a disability and persons without	Improved accessibility to Parliament Buildings for all building users	Included in Business Plan (developed in February 2016).	<b>Lead:</b> Head of Building Services <b>Timescale:</b> Proposals and recommendations were brought to the Assembly Commission in March 2016.

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	1a of Audit of Inequalities)  Access to Services (Theme 1b of Audit of Inequalities)		and specifically for wheelchair users. Improvements to means of escape in the event of an emergency for wheelchair users.		<b>Status: Complete for reporting period</b>  Agreed alterations have taken place to the counters in the Members Bar, the Business Office, Reception and Office Resources.
4) Maintain Action on Hearing Loss Award	Access to Parliament Buildings (Theme 1a of Audit of Inequalities)	Persons with a disability and persons without	Work towards maintaining Action on Hearing Loss 'Louder than Words' accreditation.	Yes	<b>Lead:</b> Environmental Services Manager <b>Timescale:</b> Annually <b>Status: Complete for reporting period</b>
5) Maintain National Autistic Society Autism Award	Access to Parliament Buildings (Theme 1a of Audit of Inequalities)	Persons with a disability and persons without	Work towards maintaining Autism accreditation.	Yes	<b>Lead:</b> Environmental Services Manager <b>Timescale:</b> Annually <b>Status: Complete for reporting period</b>
6) Provision of translation from Irish and Ulster Scots to English to the Speaker and Clerks at the table	Good Relations (Theme 1c of Audit of Inequalities)	Persons of different religious belief Persons of different political opinion Persons of different racial group	That the Speaker/Clerks at Table receive and understand what is being said. Without such a service there could potentially be a breach of Assembly Standing Orders. Measured by exception i.e. Speaker/Clerks at Table advise that no	Yes	<b>Lead:</b> Editor of Debates <b>Timescale:</b> Ongoing <b>Status: Complete for reporting period.</b>  Translation provided as and when required.

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			such service is provided and by recording translation audio channel on SLIQ system.		
7) Ensure Parliament Buildings is welcoming to all sections of society and cultures by reviewing art, artefacts and exhibitions	Good Relations (Theme 1c of Audit of Inequalities)	Persons of different religious belief Persons of different political opinion Persons of different racial group	Review of initiatives on how art and exhibitions might be used in Parliament Buildings	<p>Consideration of new art initiatives to allow opportunities to reflect the wider community within Parliament Buildings.</p> <p>A paper was tabled at the January 2016 Commission meeting updating the Commission on the Speaker's exploration of new art initiatives including working with local schools of art and architecture. Review and operation of current exhibitions policy suspended in the interim.</p>	<p><b>Lead:</b> Engagement  <b>Timescale:</b> Long term direction to be revisited by new Speaker and Commission in 2016/17  <b>Status: Ongoing</b></p> <p>Consultation had previously taken place with the Arts Council and the College of Art to look at proposals for a series of new art initiatives for 2018-19, but the political situation and the associated potential for reputational risk led to a decision not to progress matters until the political situation became clearer. The Assembly returned to normal business in January 2020 and a review of how art, artefacts and exhibitions might be used within Parliament Buildings will be undertaken as part of the work to review and develop the visitor experience and offering in Parliament Buildings under the new Assembly Corporate strategy 2019 to 2023.</p>

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8) Language Policy	Good Relations (Theme 1c of Audit of Inequalities)	Persons of different religious belief Persons of different political opinion Persons of different racial group	The Education Service now provides a programme in Irish to primary and post primary pupils. In 2015, plans were put in place to translate the primary section of the website – this will be available in Feb 2016. Some video resources are also available in Irish.	Yes	<p><b>Lead:</b> Education Manager/ Equality Manager  <b>Timescale:</b> Ongoing  <b>Status: Ongoing</b></p> <p>Work on translating the primary section of the website is well progressed, but was paused to allow for the outworking of changes following the Assembly elections in 2016 and 2017, and then following the 'New Decade, New Approach' (NDNA) agreement. Work on the translation of the primary section is now being finalised by the Education Website partner, CCEA.</p>
			Development of a Language Policy for the Assembly Commission		<p><b>Lead:</b> Equality and Good Relations Unit  <b>Timeline:</b> Jan 2017 and 2017  <b>Status: Action suspended</b></p> <p>While a language paper was presented to SMG in January 2017 and March 2017 in anticipation of it being presented to the Assembly Commission when the Assembly resumed normal business, this action has now been superseded by the new language commitments in the New Decade, New Approach (NDNA) deal, which was published in January 2020. The Assembly Commission will</p>

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					<p>consider the actions required within its remit in the context of the legislation passed by the Assembly.</p> <p>In addition, the Committee on Procedures is expected to take forward the NDNA commitment to develop new Standing Orders to be agreed by the Assembly to provide for simultaneous translation of Assembly business into Irish and Ulster Scots. Once such Standing Orders are agreed by the Assembly, the Assembly Commission will ensure that the resources are in place to deliver any new procedures agreed by the Assembly.</p>
9) Monitoring the outcome of the EQIA on the Flying of the Union Flag at Parliament Buildings	Good Relations (Theme 1c of Audit of Inequalities)	Persons of different religious belief Persons of different political opinion Persons of different racial group	<p>Monitoring included regular consideration of:</p> <p>complaints and other forms of feedback through current complaints mechanisms;</p> <p>the results of research/surveys relating to the promotion of good relations. A visitor survey is conducted three times a year in October, February</p>	Yes	<p><b>Lead:</b> Equality Manager <b>Timescale:</b> Ongoing <b>Status: Complete</b></p> <p>As outlined in the 2017-18 Annual Equality Progress Report to the Equality Commission, the Assembly Commission considered the EQIA final decision report in June 2015, and it agreed by majority that the Union Flag would fly from Parliament Buildings on designated days as defined by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport.</p> <p>The Equality Commission advises that, if the monitoring and analysis of results of EQIAs over a two-year period show that the policy results in greater adverse impact than predicted, or if opportunities</p>

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			<p>and June. A question relating to the monitoring of this EQIA has been added. The current policy sits within the area of Good Relations which is monitored on an ongoing basis. A good relations monitoring report is issued to SMG every 6 months detailing the updated policy position and progress. Audits are also conducted to monitor for any adverse impacts.</p> <p>any EQIAs of related policies carried out by the Commission or other public authorities are reviewed;</p> <p>any research carried out by public authorities or</p>		<p>arise which would allow for greater equality of opportunity to be promoted, the public authority must ensure that the policy is revised to achieve better outcomes for the relevant equality groups. Monitoring of the flag EQIA from June 2015 to June 2017 did not identify a greater adverse impact or opportunities to promote greater equality of opportunity.</p>

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			<p>independent bodies is considered in relation to the into the impacts of the display of flags and emblems.</p> <p>A report will be brought to the Commission in June 2016 summarising the impact of the policy during its first year of operation under the above headings. This will form part of the Annual Equality Progress report to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.</p>		
10) Monitoring of revised Engagement Strategy	Participation (Theme 1d of Audit of Inequalities)	All groups	Monitoring by July 2016 in line with Directorate wide business plan reviews	Yes	<p><b>Lead:</b> Engagement  <b>Timescale:</b> July 2016  <b>Status: Complete</b></p> <p>The Engagement Strategy has now been incorporated into the Corporate Strategy 2018-23 and Corporate Plan 2019-23.</p>

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11) Engaging with women, people with disabilities and ethnic minorities under-represented in public life through Assembly Community Connect	Participation (Theme 1d of Audit of Inequalities)	Men and women generally Persons with a disability and persons without Persons of different racial group	Increased engagement with women, people with disabilities and ethnic minorities; inform groups how to utilise resources available through Assembly Community Connect & partner organisations	Yes	<p><b>Lead:</b> Engagement  <b>Timescale:</b> Ongoing  <b>Status: Complete for reporting period</b></p> <p>Due to the public health situation and associated Regulations and guidelines, and the closure of Parliament Buildings to the public in March 2020, no physical meetings or engagement activities were held until August 2020, but work was undertaken to design outputs for remote delivery. Delivery of those outputs started in late August 2020 and are being gradually rolled out. Approximately 50 requests will be facilitated prior to Christmas 2020; work has been or is being undertaken with five Committees (Bill of Rights, Education, Communities, Health, and Economy), which has and will include meetings to assist those Committees in consultation exercises. For example, a focus group with third sector organisations took place in September 2020, which focused on how to engage with the hard to reach and marginalised groups, with specific reference to the Ad Hoc Committee on a Bill of Rights. A major survey was also undertaken in August/September in conjunction with the Committee for Education in relation to post-primary</p>



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					<p>transfer to seek the views of parents, teachers and young people (over 9,200 responses were received, with just under 800 from young people). A Stakeholder event for the Health and Economy Committees will be held in October 2020 to hear from older people in care homes and their families.</p> <p>The Corporate Strategy and Plans include actions to improve connections and ensure engagement with a wide range of groups. Proposals for an Assembly Community Network are being reviewed and updated. There is also a commitment in the corporate plan to deliver an event programme and to review opportunities to include different sections of the wider community by, for example, considering marking specific defined days and/or theming recurring annual events. However, given the public health situation, the associated regulations and guidelines, and the closure of Parliament Buildings to the public, physical events cannot be held and work is under way to design and deliver virtual events.</p> <p>A focus group took place with s75 groups in September 2020 to discuss how to engage with marginalised and hard to</p>

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					reach groups following the impact of COVID-19 restrictions.
12) Engagement with young people through Education Service visits programme	Participation (Theme 1d of Audit of Inequalities)	Persons of different age	Education Programmes provided for young people from Key Stage 2 (age 8) to Key Stage 5 (Post 16)	Yes	<p><b>Lead:</b> Education Service  <b>Timescale:</b> Ongoing  <b>Status: Complete for reporting period</b></p> <p>The Education Service has recorded 2 programme sessions, one for primary pupils and one for post-primary – key stages 3 and 4, for publishing mid-November 2020. Teachers and pupils will be able to access at any time via the Education Service Website. Live, online sessions are also now available. The recorded sessions and live programme sessions will be advertised to schools by mid-November 2020.</p> <p>The Education Service recorded a talk by Dr Claire Rice for Key Stage 5 (Post 16) pupils. This academic review of Northern Ireland Politics 2020 will be available on the website and on YouTube week commencing 2 November 2020. An Education Officer has delivered a live session to young people as part of Mencap's Heroes Project (19 October), with a further session planned for early 9 December.</p>

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13) Engagement with young people	Access to Services (Theme 1b of the 2011 Audit of	Young people	In 2016, the Education Service will apply for Erasmus+ to fund a youth partnership programme. This project will aim to recruit young people who face social and economic barriers to participation	Yes	<b>Lead:</b> Education Service <b>Timescale:</b> 2016 - 2018 <b>Status: Complete</b>  The application for Erasmus+ funding was unsuccessful.
14) Development of appropriate resources to support learning about the Assembly	Access to Services (Theme 1b of the 2011 Audit of Inequalities)	Young people	Develop and update a variety of educational resources across all Key stages ( all ages) this will include new website activities and video resources	Yes	<b>Lead:</b> Education Service <b>Timescale:</b> Ongoing <b>Status: Complete for reporting period</b> Recorded primary and post-primary sessions have been made and will be published week commencing 9 November. Four new animations have been scripted and sent to CCEA for development. First of a special academic lecture series for Key Stage 5 recorded and will be available online week commencing 2 November. The Assembly and Executive animation has been updated and papers on Assembly Questions and Committees, also for Key Stage 5.
15) Implementation of Secretariat Gender Action Plan	Recruitment and Selection (Theme 2a of Audit of Inequalities)	Men and women generally	The removal of any actual or perceived barriers to gender equality within the	Yes	<b>Lead:</b> Equality Manager <b>Timescale:</b> This project lasts 2016-2018 <b>Status: Complete for reporting period</b>

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	Equality issues for existing staff		secretariat through the implementation of a gender action plan.		The 2016-18 Gender Action Plan is complete; the 2019-23 Gender Action Plan is now in place and six-monthly updates are provided to SMG. Within the reporting period, a six-monthly update was tabled at the October SMG meeting.
16) Provision of an Irish Language champion	Participation (Theme 1d of Audit of Inequalities)	Young People	Translation of the primary section of the Education website will complete in February 2016. Delivery of programmes in Irish continues.	yes	<p>Lead: Education Team  Timescale: Ongoing  Status: <b>Complete for reporting period</b></p> <p>This was paused to allow the outworking of changes following changes required after the 2016 and 2017 elections, and any possible changes following the 'New Decade, New Approach (NDNA)' agreement. Work on the translation of the primary section is now being finalised by the Education Website partner, CCEA. The Education Service is working with the Ad Hoc Committee on a Bill of Rights to consult young people. A focus group session will be delivered in Irish.</p>
17) Continued facilitation of the Pensioners' Parliament	Participation (Theme 1d of Audit of Inequalities)	Persons of different age	To facilitate one Parliament per year	Yes	<p><b>Lead:</b> Engagement  <b>Timescale:</b> 2016-2021  <b>Status:</b> In progress</p> <p>This action was suspended because the partner organisation, Age Sector Platform, no longer exists. That, along with the public health situation and associated Regulations and guidelines,</p>

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					<p>and the closure of Parliament Buildings to the public in March 2020, meant that no Pensioners' Parliament was held during the reporting period. It is likely that AGE NI will relaunch the Pensioners' Parliament in 2021 and the Engagement Manager is being kept informed of developments. However, a focus group took place with s75 groups in September 2020 to discuss how to engage with marginalised and hard to reach groups following the impact of COVID-19 restrictions. This group included AGE NI. A session is scheduled to take place for representatives from AGE NI in November.</p> <p>The Corporate Strategy and Plan include actions to improve connections and ensure engagement with a wide range of groups. Proposals for an Assembly Community Network are being reviewed and updated. There is also a commitment in the Corporate Plan to deliver an event programme and to review opportunities to include different sections of the wider community by, for example, considering marking specific defined days and/or theming recurring annual events. All of those actions will give due regard to older people.</p>

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18) Additional Minority Parliaments	Participation (Theme 1d of Audit of Inequalities)  Good Relations (Theme 1c of Audit of Inequalities)	Persons of different racial group/people with a disability	To facilitate one BEM Parliament per year	Yes	<b>Lead:</b> Engagement <b>Timescale:</b> 2016-2021 <b>Status: Suspended</b>  A BEM parliament has not been held, notably because the partner organisation NICEM, no longer exists.
19) Continued Implementation of the 'Perspective on...' series	Good Relations (Theme 1c of Audit of Inequalities)	Promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.	To hold events as agreed by the Assembly Commission for 2016, namely: Easter Rising; Battle of the Somme	Assembly Commission to agree future events at the beginning of the 2016-2021 mandate in 2016.	<b>Lead:</b> Speaker's Office <b>Timescale:</b> 2016-2021 <b>Status: Complete for reporting period</b>  The Assembly Commission agreed in January 2020 to hold an event in November 2020 to mark the 100 <sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Government of Ireland Act which set up Northern Ireland. In light of the COVID-19 restrictions, the Speaker has agreed to host an online lecture which will be delivered by Dr Eamon Phoenix.
20) Continued lighting of the exterior Parliament Buildings	Good Relations (Theme 1c of Audit of Inequalities)	Promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.	To light the exterior of Parliament Buildings as agreed by the Assembly Commission.  The Commission will schedule up to 4 days (consecutive or not) during a calendar year for	Yes	<b>Lead:</b> Events <b>Timescale:</b> 2016-2021 <b>Status: Complete for reporting period</b>  The Assembly Commission agreed a new lighting policy in February 2020. That new policy has since been implemented in line with the Commission's decision.

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			<p>event(s) of its choice in line with the policy.</p> <p>b) The Northern Ireland Charity of the year will have access to the system for up to 5 days (consecutive or not) during its 12 months term.</p> <p>c) The Assembly Commission will grant up to another 8 days for events during a calendar year when requests are made (paragraphs g) in line with the policy (1 day per event).</p> <p>Altogether there will be up to 17 days scheduled per year in line with the policy with potential extraordinary ad-hoc requests as</p>		

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			specified at paragraphs h) & i).		
21) Continue annual series of 'Let's Talk' events across constituencies	Participation (Theme 1d of Audit of Inequalities)	Young People	Hold events in school venues which will involve all constituencies	Yes	<p><b>Lead:</b> Education Service  <b>Timescale:</b> 2016-2021  <b>Status: Complete for reporting period</b></p> <p>The public health situation has meant that the holding of physical events has not been possible during the reporting period. However, the Education Service has recorded 2 programme sessions, one for primary pupils and one for post-primary – key stages 3 and 4, for publishing mid-November 2020. Teachers and pupils will be able to access at any time via the Education Service Website. Live, online sessions are also now available. The recorded sessions and live programme sessions will be advertised to schools by mid-November 2020.</p> <p>The Education Service recorded a talk by Dr Claire Rice for Key Stage 5 (Post 16) pupils. This academic review of Northern Ireland Politics 2020 will be available on the website and on YouTube week commencing 2 November 2020. An Education Officer has delivered a live session to young people as part of Mencap's Heroes Project (19 October), with a further session planned for early 9 December.</p>



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22) Speaker to host 'Assembly Women's Week' in 2016 which will focus on encouraging women to participate and increasing female representation	Participation (Theme 1d of Audit of Inequalities)	Gender	The week will host a range of different events including discussion with female role models, increasing female representation on public and private boards, increasing female presence in the media.	Yes	<p><b>Lead:</b> Speaker's Office and Communications and Engagement  <b>Timescale:</b> 2016  <b>Status:</b> Complete</p> <p>Completed in 2016, and every year since each Speaker has hosted an event to mark International Women's Day as part of the Speaker's annual programme of events.</p>
23) Develop a business outreach plan by delivering targeted training to businesses to raise awareness of the Northern Ireland Assembly Business Trust (NIABT) in the private sector.	Participation (Theme 1d of Audit of Inequalities)	Men and Women generally	Increase NIABT members by 5% year on year and improve wider understanding of how businesses can engage with the Assembly. The NIABT will specifically run events to encourage the involvement of women.	Yes	<p><b>Lead:</b> Engagement  <b>Timescale:</b> Ongoing  <b>Status:</b> In progress</p> <p>The Northern Ireland Assembly Business Trust (NIABT) Board of Trustees agreed in 2017 that the NIABT should be dissolved. Dissolution was not possible during the political hiatus 2017 to January 2020. Since the restoration of normal Assembly business in January 2020, work has been under way to effect dissolution, which is expected to happen in the 2021/22 year. The Corporate Strategy and Plan include actions to improve connections and ensure engagement with a wide range of groups, including the business community. Proposals for an Assembly Community Network are being reviewed and updated.</p>

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24) Regular meetings with Section 75 groups to inform reviews of Engagement Strategy.	Participation (Theme 1d of Audit of Inequalities)	All s75 Groups	Annual meetings with appropriate groups to inform reviews of Strategy.	Yes	<p><b>Lead:</b> Engagement  <b>Timescale:</b> Annually  <b>Status:</b> In progress.</p> <p>The Engagement Strategy has now been incorporated into the Corporate Strategy and Corporate Plans. However, a focus group took place with s75 groups in September 2020 to discuss how to engage with marginalised and hard to reach groups following the impact of COVID-19 restrictions. In addition, the Corporate Strategy and Plan include actions to improve connections and ensure engagement with a wide range of groups. Proposals for an Assembly Community Network are being reviewed and updated. There is also a commitment in the Corporate Plan to deliver an event programme and to review opportunities to include different sections of the wider community by, for example, considering marking specific defined days and/or theming recurring annual events. All of those actions will give due regard to section 75 groups.</p>

Function Two: The recruitment and ongoing development of suitably qualified and experienced staff to support the Assembly.

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25) Continue to implement fair and inclusive recruitment practices	Recruitment and Selection (Theme 2a of Audit of Inequalities)	All	<p>Ensuring that all recruitment competitions are fully accessible</p> <p>Apply welcome statements or affirmative action if appropriate in consultation with the Equality Commission for NI.</p>		<p><b>Lead:</b> Head of HR  <b>Timescale:</b> Ongoing. The procedures for internal and external recruitment have been reviewed to ensure compliance with good practice. A guaranteed interview scheme has been implemented for both internal and external recruitment  <b>Status: Complete</b></p> <p>During 2019 there was a fundamental review of the Assembly Commission's recruitment and selection policy and procedures which included reviewing compliance against good practice. The GIS remains in place for all competitions.</p>

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26) Continue to implement staff surveys	Recruitment and Selection (Theme 2b of Audit of Inequalities)	All	<p>Use the results of the staff survey to produce and implement an action plan if required</p> <p>Monitor the progress of the implementation of this action plan</p>		<p><b>Lead:</b> Corporate Support</p> <p><b>Timescale:</b> Staff surveys to be undertaken regularly between 2016 and 2021 Action Plan following on from 2014 survey will be reviewed in March 2016.</p> <p><b>Status: Complete for reporting period</b></p> <p>The results of the 2019 Staff Survey were presented to the Secretariat Management Group (SMG) in April 2020. The Clerk/Chief Executive and Directors further considered the findings and recommendations in May 2020 with a view to producing and implementing an action plan. Further progress was however delayed as efforts were directed to managing the Assembly Commission's COVID-19 response. This will be considered again during Autumn 2020.</p>
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