ECEY6011 Leadership and Management for systems of quality

SHELLY

Good afternoon, everyone.

The objective of today's meeting is to discuss and evaluate our Self-Assessment of Service Statement (SASS), a legal requirement under The Childminding and Daycare (Wales) Regulations 2010. According to Play Wales (2021), the (SASS) is an online form that all childcare providers in Wales must complete. The SASS has two parts- Service Information and Quality of Care Report. Failure to complete the annual SASS will result in a non-compliance from (CIW) Care Inspectorate Wales (2025).

Early Years Wales (2020) states that Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) has three strategic priorities for the next three years:

1. To be a trusted voice that influences and drives improvement.
2. To consistently deliver a high-quality service.
3. To be highly skilled and responsive.

We aim to achieve this in our Cardiff Flying Start Setting, striving to exceed national minimum standards. The Welsh Government's goal is to ensure every child in Wales has the best possible start in life, driven by children's rights and key programmes like Flying Start, linking to Articles 3, 29, and 36 of the UNCRC (Welsh Government, 2023a; UNICEF, n.d).

We offer 2.5-hour sessions for 20 children aged 2-3 years both boys and girls, adhering to a 1 adult to 4 children ratio (Standard 15: Staffing Ratio Daycare, 15.1). The registered person ensures these ratios are maintained (NMS, Welsh Government, 2023c). These sessions are conducted by a team of 6 highly motivated and qualified staff.

With an upcoming CIW inspection, it is important to highlight our quality-of-care report and the services we offer to families and children (Care Inspectorate Wales, 2025). We must ensure compliance with National Minimum Standards for regulated childcare (Welsh Government, 2016).

Reed and Canning (2012) emphasise that enhancing quality is an ongoing action, involving assessment of practice elements to support children and family’s wellbeing beyond inspection processes. It serves as a method of self-assessment aimed at improving outcomes. Siraj-Blatchford and Hallett (2014) highlight the importance of a leader's ability to create and communicate a vision, providing a meaningful framework for policy and practices

We will use a proactive, collaborative approach to address changes since our last inspection and discuss further enhancements needed (Ferdman, 2021). Brock (2015) asserts that integrating reflection with personal and situational understanding

is essential for improving quality. We will follow our quality-of-care report to evaluate current standards (Care Inspectorate Wales, 2022).

Collecting feedback from families is vital for monitoring effectiveness and quality, allowing us to adapt and enhance holistic experiences (McDowall Clark, 2020). What is the feedback so far please?

Clare

Thanks Shelly. As curriculum lead, I recently sent out a questionnaire to parents to prepare for the upcoming CIW inspection to gain an insight into parents' involvement with their child's learning and gained feedback that we can make improvements on in this area. This will ensure communication between our setting and parents is a successful collaboration that benefits the learning and development of the children (Department for Education, 2021b). As noted in the feedback and following guidelines from Quality-of-Care Review (2019) parents feel their children are happy and safe and communication is of a high standard with practitioners relaying information about children's development. This feedback shows that we are providing quality care and parents feel reassured whilst communicating and building relationships with parents (PACEY, n.d). However, some parents commented that they were not aware of how we implement the new curriculum and asked for advice with how to support their children at home.

The questionnaire was written with a range of question types such as closed questions with rating scales and open-ended questions to allow for comments if necessary (Smart Survey, 2023). These focused on areas of the communication and involvement and our settings strengths and areas for improvement. Questionnaires were anonymous to encourage honest feedback and for this reason we decided to send out an online form (Ages and Stages Questionnaires, 2025). I want to review this further in 6months to reflect on what impact this improvement will have to continue our high standards. Additionally, I want to value the feedback we receive from the parents and maintain good relationships so we will keep parents informed using our newsletter (Welsh Government, 2023a).

According to the National Minimum Standards [NMS] (Welsh Government, 2023c) working in partnership with parents is paramount to meet the needs of the children while keeping parents informed of their child's routines and the settings policies and procedures. Additionally, the Welsh Curriculum (2021) states that building relationships between home and the setting will nurture children's sense of belonging by sharing information regarding their learning and development. I propose that we invite parents for a stay and play session where we can speak to parents one to one. This can benefit parents to see how their children's learning in the curriculum is linked to their play and provide their assessments for the parents to view. In turn, this will allow conversations to take place to support their child at home with their learning.

Does anyone have any objections to this idea?

Ok thank you, I will share a suitable date with you soon.

Moreover, Wilkins (2024) notes that communication is key to building successful partnerships where we can encourage parents to share insights or concerns of their child's development. Therefore, we can ensure parents feel valued and are actively involved in their child's learning experiences. Garbacz *et al.* (2017) stated the importance of partnerships between families and settings using Bronfenbrenner's theory that everyday interactions between adults and surroundings can support a child's development. Furthermore, Education Endowment Foundation (2023) support the encouragement of parental engagement that can benefit children's development by up to 5 months of additional progress. However, this statistic may look different for some disadvantaged families where they may feel excluded and hard to reach (Early Intervention Foundation, 2019). In this case, additional support will be offered to these families, working with multi-agencies to direct support and early intervention where needed to give children the best start in life (Welsh Government 2023a).

Furthermore, the Welsh Curriculum (2021) states that high quality provision is essential to children's development aspiring to set them up for life encompassing the four purposes to become citizens of the world, ready to learn, work and become valued members of society (Welsh Government, 2023a). Practitioners promote children's holistic development by creating a nurturing environment that encourages independence, exploration, and social interaction while also developing physical, emotional and intellectual growth (Brodie, 2018; National Minimum Standards, 2023b). Continuing to maintain these high standards show we are providing the best care for our children and their parents which contribute to the quality of our practice.

<u>Shelly</u>

As a Flying Start provision, we proudly participate in the Gold Standard Healthy Snack Award, promoting healthy snacks and drinks as part of the Cardiff Healthy and Sustainable Pre-School Scheme [CHASPS] (Keeping Cardiff Moving, 2019). This initiative has been a positive development for our setting, helping children build confidence in their social and self-help skills. It has encouraged children to make healthier food choices, learn about seasonal fruits and vegetables, and explore new foods (Flying Start Cardiff, n.d.), supported by Cardiff and Vale NHS University Health Board (NHS Wales, n.d.).

Moreover, good nutrition during early childhood is essential for giving children the best start in life. It plays a key role in shaping their development, health, and overall well-being, The Food Foundation (2021).

We have also recently introduced the *Designed to Smile* programme, a toothbrushing initiative for children aged 0-7. This scheme collaborates with nurseries and schools in disadvantaged areas and has now become an integral part of each Flying Start session. It aims to promote oral hygiene, improve toothbrushing habits, and provide families with guidance, free toothbrushes, and fluoride toothpaste (Welsh Government, n.d.).

Tassoni (2018) highlights the importance of high-quality settings in allowing children to practice self-help skills, fostering their development.

The children have engaged enthusiastically with this activity, and several parents have shared positive feedback during drop-offs and pick-ups. They've noted that bedtime toothbrushing has become less challenging, and their children are showing greater independence in brushing their teeth at home.

Flying Start (n.d.) recognises the importance of maintaining good hygiene for everyone attending the setting and encourages children to follow good practices through role modelling. The setting provides appropriate equipment, cleaning products, and protective clothing for staff. Staff are trained in relevant hygiene procedures, have access to all policies, and are supported in maintaining high standards of cleanliness. Policies are reviewed and updated annually, and any changes in legislation are promptly reflected to ensure compliance, (Food Standards Agency, 2025; *Foods Standards Act, 1999*), National Minimum Standards [NMS] (Welsh Government, 2023c), (*Public Health (Wales) Act 2017)*.

Becky, I feel all staff will benefit from further training in food allergens and intolerances, can this be arranged please?

<u>Becky</u>

Absolutely, I will make a note to research effective courses for food allergy awareness.

<u>Clare</u>

Reflecting on our last inspection report, the outdoor environment required improvements to ensure children have access to learn and play in a high-quality setting. Over the past 6 months significant enhancements have been made, including the construction of an undercover area to ensure year-round accessibility and the introduction of curiosity areas for the children to explore. These upgrades have created an enriching environment which actively supports children's learning, positively influences their behaviour and enhances self-regulation (Welsh Government, 2014). As stated in NMS:7 (Welsh Government, 2023c) children should have opportunities to play and learn outdoors and have a range of experiences of play that contribute to their development. This is further supported by Eadie *et al.* (2022) who suggest that by enhancing settings with quality improvements can increase outcomes for children by promoting meaningful play opportunities.

To assess the impact of these improvements a study was conducted using the Leuven Scale (Eyworks, 2022). This allowed practitioners to measure children's well-being and engagement levels in the improved outdoor space. As noted in UNCRC article 12 (Unicef, n.d) and NMS:4 and 7 (Welsh Government, 2023c) listening to and collecting the views expressed by the children in planning is actively sought and taken seriously. This is achieved by practitioners placing emphasis on the value of

children's voice and encouraging opportunities for involving children in decision making will support their well-being development (Welsh Government, 2022).

Moreover, there are advantages to using the Leuven Scale as it is observation based and puts the child at the centre of the assessment (Famly, 2021). It is a practical way for practitioners to self-assess, quantify engagement and learning and to improve the quality of the provision (Sando, 2019). However, this scale does not always account for those children with Additional Learning Needs [ALN] or disabilities who may express engagement differently. Would you agree Rory?

Rory

Yes, the scale can limit the behaviours of ALN children especially non-verbal children who find it difficult to interact with others. However, I feel as staff that we have had the training necessary, and all know the ALN children well enough to be able to see if they are responding within the scale.

Clare

Thank you for that.

Observations in the improved outdoor area demonstrated high levels of involvement with children fully engaged in the curiosity areas. Concentration levels were observed across a period of time with no distractions from the recent bad weather to interrupt play. Children therefore scored extremely high in their well-being levels being happy, engaged and using communication with peers and adults to show their enthusiasm.

This is a positive contribution towards to the overall quality of care, in which children can develop in many areas of their learning while supporting their health, well-being and social development (Siraj-Blatchford *et al*., 2022). Thank you all for your contribution in carrying out these observations and I look forward to collaborating on further enhancements to increase the quality of provision and maximise learning opportunities for all children. I'll now pass to Rory.

Rory

As Additional Learning Needs (ALN) lead within the setting I was interested in seeing the responses that our parents had to the questions posed to them in the questionnaire about how we work with both the children with either diagnosed or undiagnosed additional needs as well as how we work with the families too. As the Care Inspectorate Wales (2025) states a Self-Assessment of Service Statement (SASS) form is a legal requirement for all childcare providers to complete. I used the care and development area of the SASS form to help formulate the questions I wanted to ask parents. This area looks at how responsive practitioners are in meeting the needs of the child, how they help children feel emotionally secure whilst also ensuring children are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy. Care Learning (2025) also notes the importance of responding to a child's needs as soon as possible. They state that early recognition and intervention are important when it comes to supporting children with ALN. Moreover, they believe that failure to

recognise and intervene could lead to children facing barriers to learning not only in the early years setting they are in but throughout their lives.

When asked on the questionnaire if they felt that we as a setting are proactive in recognising and responding to their children's needs, the feedback was positive, and this is largely due to the work of our Flying Start inclusion team. Flying Start Cardiff (n.d.) are made up of an Early Years Specialist Teacher and Transition Support Worker. Their role is vital in supporting children and their families in accessing flying start settings, ensuring the transition from home to early years runs as smoothly as possible. In addition to this they provide training, advice and support to professionals within settings. Becky is this something we are going to be looking to utilise again in the future?

Becky

Yes Rory, there is an upcoming meeting with the Flying Start Inclusion team where this can be discussed.

Rory

Thanks Becky. As Care Learning (2024) notes Early Years education is constantly evolving and staying up to date and delivering a high-quality service will only be possible with continuous professional development and training across the board. Furthermore, in the Welsh Government (2024a) Flying Start childcare guidance they note the expectation of flying start staff to attend specialist ALN training. This guidance from the government demonstrates the importance of ensuring all staff are up to date with their training so we can maintain the high-quality standards we have set ourselves.

Another positive mentioned by parents who completed the questionnaire was our effectiveness of multi-agency working. The development of a multi-agency approach to Flying Start is key in the effectiveness of the service provided and is vital when it comes to supporting children and families through early identification, assessment and referral, Welsh Government (2012). Welsh Government's (2024b) Flying Start childcare guidance corroborates this. They believe that decisions regarding the most appropriate course of action for a child should be undertaken by a multi-agency panel of experts organised by the local authority with staff and families involved throughout to ensure appropriate support is provided, in turn making sure we continue to provide the highest quality service possible. An example of multi-agency working that we have used within our setting has been our health visiting service and I am sure you will all agree they have been a significant help. As Flying Starts Cardiff (2024) states they have specialist training in a range of Early Years specific provisions, including childhood developmental assessments. As the NHS (2020) explains, these assessments focus on general development including social skills, behaviour and speech. On occasions we have had the health visitor raise concerns about children within our setting in regard to their speech. This early recognition has then allowed us to expand our multi-agency team, incorporating speech and language therapists to help those children who need it most when it comes to improving their communication. Flying Start Speech, Language and Communication

guidance (2024) states that Speech and Language Therapists working in flying starts should ensure that all children have the opportunity to develop their communication skills to their full potential, regardless of any ALN. This begins with the Welcomm screening tool which every child will complete, ensuring that any child who may need extra support receives this as soon as possible. Once again having these expert professionals as part of our team has allowed us to offer the highest quality of practice possible to all which has been noted by parents on the questionnaire. Becky, as you oversee checking all DBS forms for people working in the setting, have we ensured that all agencies who are coming in to work with us have had their DBS checked prior to their arrival?

Becky

Yes Rory, a Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) enhanced disclosure check must be seen before having any unsupervised access to children, this is stated in Standard 13 of the National Minimum Standards (Welsh Government, 2023c) and the importance of this will be discussed further on in our meeting.

Rory

Thank you, Becky. As ALN lead it gave me immense pleasure to read the responses from parents on the questionnaire regarding the quality of support we give them and their children. I am sure you all agree that these high standards are something that we need to maintain, and I am confident that by working together with other agencies and by always keeping our fingers on the pulse in terms of training and personal development, we will continue this high-quality practice. 19:42

Becky

As the lead of staff recruitment, training and continuing professional development, I have been tasked with reviewing our strengths and any areas for improvement with regards to how we provide enabling adults within our provision (Welsh Government, 2023a) showing regard for all areas of assessment within the SASS. It is my job to ensure that each person is suitable for their role at the setting, this includes but is not limited to, reviewing their qualifications, experience and values, ensuring they are DBS checked and have undergone full induction training (Welsh Government, 2023c).

It is recognised by Sellgren (2019) and Burns (2020) that the quality of staff within the early years workforce can determine the quality of experiences provided for children in early years setting. According to Welsh Government (2017) the effects on child development can be profound where the workforce has the skills, knowledge and behaviours to provide care of a high standard. Significantly, Welsh government (2017) believes that it is particularly essential for children from a disadvantaged background, or those with additional learning needs. However, the Nutbrown Review (2012) an independent review commissioned by the Sutton Trust and lead by Professor Cathy Nutbrown, identified failings amongst the quality of staff within the early years workforce and recommendations were made to increase the level of qualifications among the workforces. According to the National Minimum Standards, Standard 15, at least 40% of the workforce must hold at least a level 2 qualification, with at least half of these at a level 3 qualification (Welsh Government, 2023c).

Additionally, a further 10% must be working towards a level 2 or 3 qualification. However, a report by Burns (2020) continues to outline concerns surrounding the early years workforce, with many barriers to the retention of a qualified workforce, including long working hours, a feeling of being undervalued and a lack of pay. Consequently, this is affecting the quality-of-care children are receiving (Burns, 2020).

It was noted in feedback from the questionnaires that most parents were familiar with staff working at the setting. I just wanted to get your views on how you feel we keep parents informed about the staff at the setting, and if you have any further ideas on how we could improve this?

Shelly

We have the staff notice board at the entrance to the setting, with photographs and information about our staff.

Rory

We have conversations with practitioners when welcoming the children in and during handovers, this allows parents to become familiar with practitioners.

Becky

Lovely, I have also noted that we could keep parents updated about any changes to staff and about any recent training through our monthly newsletters.

Clare

I also feel that my suggestion for stay and play sessions may help us to engage with the parents who may be less familiar with us, moreover, trying to engage with those parents who can be hard to reach.

Becky

That is a great idea Clare.

Furthermore, as a Flying Start setting, we are expected to be of a higher quality and exemplars of best practice (Welsh Government, 2023a) for this reason we operate with 80% of staff qualified at a level 3, with the other 20% working towards their qualification. These qualifications must be outlined within the Social Care Wales Qualification Framework (Welsh Government, 2023c) and this information is shared with parents through our ‘who we are’ display at the entrance.

It was also noted in the questionnaires that all parents felt that their children were safe at the setting. Safer recruitment is described by NSPCC Learning (2024) as a set of practices that ensure staff and volunteers are suitable to work with children and young people. This is a vital part of creating a safe and positive environment committed to keep children safe from harm. As the lead in recruitment, I have accessed the Safer recruitment and selection training offered by Cardiff Workforce development and this was delivered in house with all staff during an inset training day. Can you confirm that you attended this training and have signed the document to say that you attended?

Dom, as the lead in safeguarding could you explain the importance of this?

Dom

Yes of course, According to Social Care Wales (2025) Safe recruitment and selection processes ensure that staff within the setting are safe adults who can protect children from harm. Awareness was raised as to the importance of safe recruitment processes within the Bichard Inquiry Report (2004) where failings and shortcomings were made allowing Ian Huntley to work closely with children resulting in the death of two school children, Holly Wells and Jessica Chapman.

Becky

I believe that we have safe and robust recruitment processes in place in line with our Safe Recruitment and Selection Policy. All recruitment and selection procedures comply with current legislation and specifically the guidance set out in Part 3 of Keeping Children Safe in Education (Department for Education, 2024b). It is a requirement that all staff have undergone a vetting procedure that complies with regulations, full induction training including health and safety and safeguarding, a Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) enhanced disclosure check before starting work or having any unsupervised access to children as stated in Standard 13 of the National Minimum Standards (Welsh Government, 2023c).

With an upcoming CIW inspection, I have reviewed all other mandatory training requirements set out within the NMS (Welsh Government, 2023c) and all staff training is up to date, including first aid, food hygiene and safeguarding. Additionally, an expectation of CIW is that staff undergo regular supervision sessions and an annual appraisal. I believe that as a flying start setting, we go beyond these requirements, with appraisals taking place every 6 months. Furthermore, with regards to staff CPD, all staff have undergone training within their areas of interest, and this is reflected within our effective record keeping systems.

Dom

As safeguarding lead my main objective with regards to our upcoming inspection is to demonstrate that all policies and procedure are always followed. (NSPCC, 2024b). Now as I am sure you are all aware we have regular audits, which ensure that all our staff have a good understanding of how to correctly safeguard our children as well as ourselves as explained in section 1.3 of the Internal Audit Records Management (HM Treasury, 2011).

As Shelly mentioned, we have a duty of care to record and reflect on our self-assessment documentation with legal requirements to complete SASS, as stated in section 16 and 17 of the Child Minding and Day Care (Wales) Regulations (2010). As discussed in previous meeting we have identified key points that as a setting we are doing to provide quality care and support for our young learners as well as their families, addressed by Estyn (2024).

Department for Education (2024a), outlines that to achieve this all staff are required by law to undertake relevant safeguarding training. I have identified that several of our staff will need to complete the refresher course by the end of the summer term to

comply with this (Early Years Careers 2018 and Public Health Wales, 2017). It is my recommendation that we attempt to book this into the diary as soon as possible to allow inspectors to understand that supporting and up skilling our staff is at the forefront of our vision, as Early Years Alliance (2003 – 2019), lists as one of the main priorities to include within an early years settings safeguarding policy. I will be compiling a live working document to record all training and alerts in place as a reminder for staff to undertake any further training relating to their role (Department for Education, 2021a).

As a Flying Start setting, we also need to be mindful of our staffing in terms of ratios. National Education Union (2024) suggest following strict ratios to ensure quality practice. I have assessed our trajectory for the start of the next academic year - we will need to increase our staff by at least 2, to accommodate the rising number of children in compliance with Standard 15 of the National Minimum Standards (2016) document.

As Becky has discussed, this will result in a rigorous recruitment process. All applicants will have needed some experience of working with children to ensure that we maintain high levels of competence, understanding of child development as well as the quality of our provision is consistent (CIW, 2016 and Welsh Government, 2017). Becky, would you confirm this to be an accurate interpretation and guidelines to share with our parents to support their role in safeguarding their children?

Becky

Yes Dom, as explained, the timeline of events surrounding safeguarding policies has significantly impacted our awareness of protecting our children and their families, as well as NSPCC (2024) acknowledgment to those impacting the UK.

Dom

Thank you. In my opinion we are already working to provide our young children and families high quality care when we are planning to meet their needs.

Results of our recent questionnaire and feedback from parents, as Department for Education (2024b) identified to be a significant initiative to carry out in early years care. A few areas arose, where we could potentially improve our quality of safety. As we are a Flying Start setting, we are unfortunately limited to the buildings that are on offer to us, due to the disadvantaged areas. Stressing the importance of working towards providing quality care to children within these area, as outlined by data from Department of Work and Pensions and HM Revenue and Customs, highlighted in Welsh Government (2023a) Flying Start Programme Guidance, only cements the necessity to provide higher quality of safety to our families and show them that their opinions are valued.

Again, as a Flying Start setting, we are working within an area of deprivation and can sometimes mean that we are opened to several colourful and challenging situations within the area, something which Welsh Governments intends to address and overcome within it’s Taking Wales Forward (2016-2021) document.

Clare has already touched base with outdoor areas. To meet safety requirements, explained through Health and Safety Executive (no date), in compliance with the *Health and Safety Act* (1974), some parents are still concerned that the surrounding areas are still accessible to the public. This is an issue that has been identified previously and remains a concern. In comparison to the previous year's feedback, I understand that as a setting we have done our best safeguard the children and their families, this has had a positive impact on the community – minimising traffic, ultimately allowing safer transitions to and from the setting for our children.

Safety is of upmost importance to our setting, and we are continuing to maintain high quality care and learning to support our young children in their development, encapsulating the articles within the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) whilst keeping in mind, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943), in order to meet children's basic needs for them to gain a sense of safety and security.

Maintaining clear non negotiables for all to understand how to best provide opportunities for children to learn at their own pace, in their own preferred style as well as giving them quality engagement opportunities through a child centred approach, as acknowledged in Donaldson's Successful Futures (2015) document. One Page Profiles will document anything that is important or relatable to that child and their families. (17) Rory, I understand this works well for the children you work with in relation to their additional learning needs. Do you think this is a method we could implement to safeguard all our vulnerable learners but offer security for any child within out setting?

<u>Rory</u>

Absolutely. Profiles offer a wealth of child centred knowledge to support development and provide the sensitivity and empowerment to families that require alternative approaches or provision (Hodgkins and Prowle, 2023).

<u>Dom</u>

Thank you.

It is also good practice to include a child centred approach to feedback. I believe it is beneficial to include our young learners' views to gain a holistic understanding of how our young children feel. Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (no date), hints that pupil voice to be pivotal in supporting learning and development.

Thorpe *et al*. (2020), explains that maintaining and supporting the health and wellbeing of staff, in turn, ensures that the quality of care provided to children and their families can be to the best possible standard. Smith (2021), agrees, spotlighting the safety of children begins with the safeguarding of staff in charge.

Thank you for your continued support with regards to safeguarding – please maintain the level of care and attention to demonstrate our daily practice in readiness for CIW make their impromptu visit in the near future.

<u>Shelly</u>

As a team, we have successfully established a provision with an inclusive environment that actively promotes a sense of belonging. Children are demonstrating high levels of emotional and physical well-being and are deeply engaged in their learning through meaningful child-adult interactions and access to high-quality activities that foster independence, choice, and a sense of wonder. The importance of this is emphasised by the Education Endowment Foundation (2024). Moreover, Teach Early Years (2025) highlight that high-quality early years provision is essential for achieving successful learning outcomes. Moving forward, we will continue to evaluate our practices and strive to achieve quality that exceeds the National Minimum Standards (NMS).

Our next staff meeting will be on Friday 4th April. CPD meetings and supervisions will continue to be conducted on a ½ termly basis however, as you are aware our open-door policy is always promoted within the setting and any suggestions or ideas are welcomed.

As the setting leader, I would like to take a moment to thank each of you for your incredible dedication and the positive impact you have on the children and families who rely on our provision. Your hard work does not go unnoticed, and it truly makes a difference.
So, thank you.

Any Questions?

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