

Early Years Development

A Guide to Facilitating successful transitions.



Own Image (2015)

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Introduction

The aim of this illustrated handbook is to highlight and examine the importance of effective communication to enhance successful transitions. To support this journey the handbook will present evidenced examples for further research into a unique child's development, focusing on young children and their families in the Early Years context.

The handbook is designed to educate and guide multiagency professionals and the relevant supporting workforces, to facilitate a smooth process of transition from a home setting into an educational environment.

The following literature will explore some of the Theorists and Models said to be influential in the development of Early Years research, identifying where and how this can be applied during a practical transition in the workplace. This information will support continuous, professional, and personal learning, delving deeper into understanding the benefits communication and building relationships can provide in successful transitioning.

The handbook also aims to identify key principles of today's curriculum in Wales surrounding child centered learning, in particular linking to The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Article 3 – Best interests of a child. Article 12 – Respect for the views of a child and Article 13 – Freedom of expression - Relevant to the development of the child in a transition setting.

All theories, policies and practices documented in this handbook are referenced on page.... to provide a starting point for personal research and development into the topic of effective communication, child development and the importance of productive transition in the early years.



Image: Benison Media (2021)

Transitions

“Transitions are Inevitable”

A title recorded on The British Association for Early Childhood Education (2020) Website. From birth, a child will unavoidably experience transitions throughout their development.

Allingham, S. (2011) Describes her definition of transition as any variant of adjustment to the child's usual daily routine or practice. For example, a new key person being introduced, or a consistent key person being absent. A new physical environment or simply adapting to a change within existing surroundings.

A child's initial transition from their home setting to their first educational environment is pivotal according to Aubrey and Riley (2019). The authors write that in all likelihood this first experience can define how the child manages future transitional encounters, depending on their personally perceived interpretations. Similarly documented, transitions motivate growth and development in children. However, if extemporal and handled without due care and consideration, especially relating to younger learners, the negative impact can lead to continued failings and insecurity in future transitions. OECD.org (2006)

Brooker L. (2008). Interestingly described the process prior to transition as ‘intuitive.’ Using the illustration of Parents and Carers sharing their opinions that despite trepidation they recognise when their children have matured beyond the home environment and are ready to learn, discover and be challenged by new and exciting beginnings.

“Transitions are a trigger for development and learning”

Brooker, L. (2008)

Transitions appear to be defined similarly by many sources, the theory and methodology behind it can often be linked but the research literature over hundreds of years is vast and plentiful.

Brooker, L. (2008) Classifies Bronfenbrenner as the “Father” within the study of the transition process. Brooker suggests that Bronfenbrenner set the core values that underpin the early intervention programs and research surrounding the process of transition. Bronfenbrenner (1979) defined these transitions during the early years as a change that takes place whether it be environmental, functional or both. A change that has the potential to create a lasting footprint on a child's development whether that be positive or negative. This description links closely to Aubrey and Riley (2019) and OECD.org (2006) sharing a similar analogy which reflects the impact of the child's first experiences on their future experiences.

The Needs of the Child



The child belongs at the very center of the educational system. Changes to improve policy or adaptations to enhance surroundings will be ineffective without the child's agreement and intrinsic acceptance to engage. Plowden Report (1967)

The Early Years Outcomes Framework in Wales is a government engagement driven by public consultation to develop policies and programs, improving service quality and consistently effective outcomes in provision.

The Framework targets all adults with service obligations relating to children and families from fetal to the age of seven.

Set out in the Early Years Outcomes Framework (2019) Are 6 important needs and conditions for 0–7-year-olds in Wales.

The Framework states.

[All children in the Early Years.](#)

- [are and feel safe](#)
- [are cared for, supported, and valued](#)
- [are resilient, capable, and coping](#)
- [are healthy](#)
- [learn and develop](#)
- [do not live in, and are not disadvantaged by poverty](#)

Presented by the Early Years Matters (2021) website outlining the basic needs required according to EYFS and how meeting these needs can develop a child's progression and engagement.

How can Practitioners ensure that the 'Unique Child' can be tenacious, self-assured, and proficient?

According to Early Years Matters (2021) Practitioners are required to be understanding and observant during each individual child's development, and support children in growing a sense of personal identity. Practitioners need to be aware of the indicators within additional supportive needs. Safety of each child is paramount, and practitioners must respect children and their families without prejudice.

The website also states that relevant to the needs of the child are the positive relationships that will form during their first interactions and further into their development.

- Children need a warm and caring approach and the encouragement to believe they belong.
- The child needs to feel understood regarding their ideas and feelings.
- A child needs to believe they can express independence and be supported within reason to grow.
- There is a need to consistently set rules and boundaries that the child must aim to adhere to support structure and routine.
- The child needs to be stimulated and interested.
- The child needs to feel confident enough to establish relationships with key people within their environment.

Early Years Matters (2021)

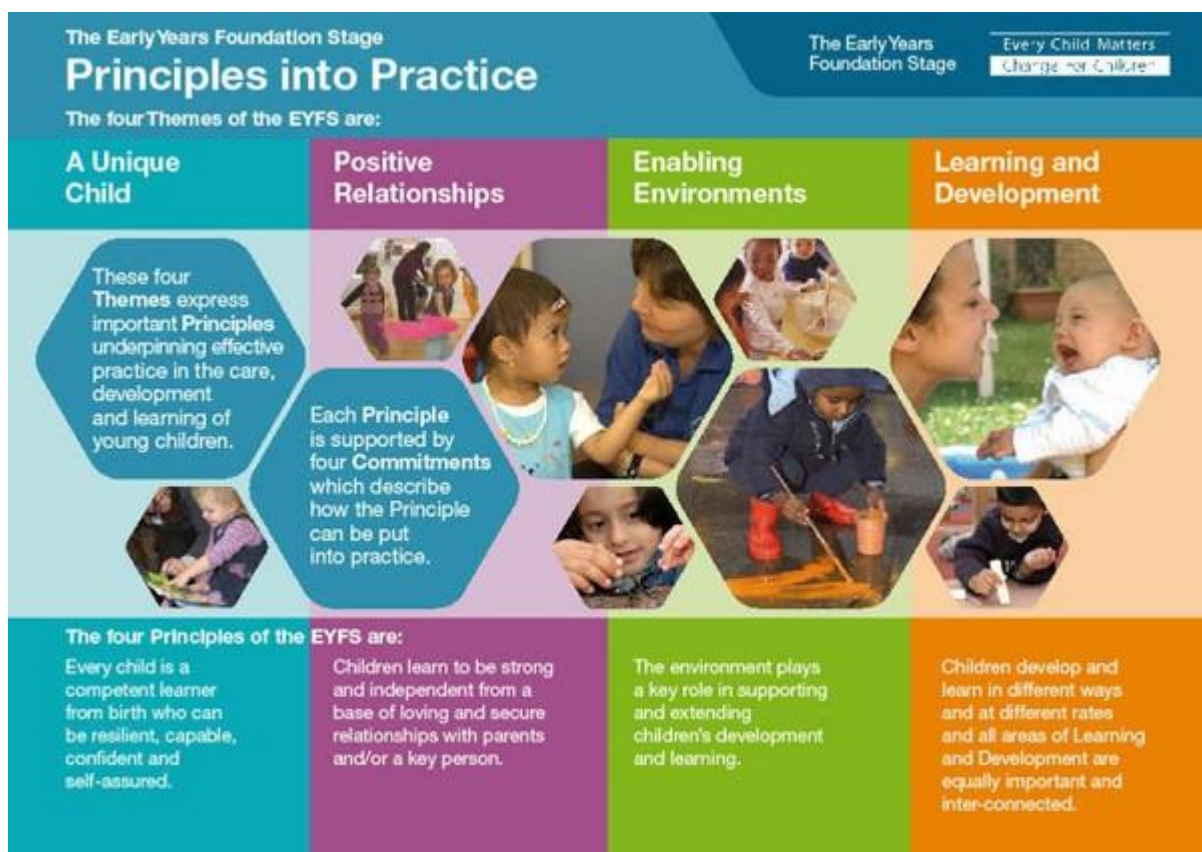


Image: Welsh Government (2019)

Looking further into the research and theory dedicated to the needs of the child, Stoyanov S (2017) states that the creation of Maslow's 'Hierarchy of Needs' intended to establish how individuals are primitively motivated to implement a progression of needs and requirements. This, Stoyanov (2017) continues begins with vital physiological compulsions central to the conventional needs required to live safely.

Maslow believed that the basic needs from birth developed in a hierarchical order. Stoyanov, S. (2017)

Love, self-esteem and self-actualisation can only develop through various stages once the critical physiological needs are sufficiently met, thus then creating room for the next higher priority need in order of relevant importance at the time.

See Maslow's 'Hierarchy of Needs' depicted in the scaffolded illustration below.

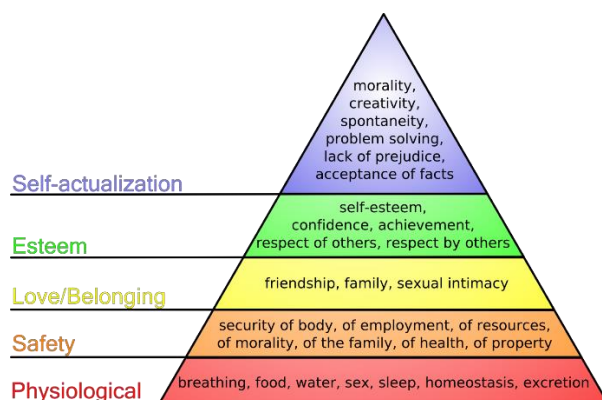


Image: Finkelstein, J. (2006)

According to Hayes, N. O'Toole, L. And Halpenny, A.M. (2017) and their research into Urie Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Model of Development, the child is believed to reside at the center of an intricate structure. The Authors describe Bronfenbrenner's theory that the child flourishes and advances in accordance with their surroundings, relationships, and experiences with environment and materials. Hayes, O'Toole and Halpenny (2017) document Bronfenbrenner's ideals for vaster understanding of child development, perceptively in the implementation of a more holistic human development. The Authors suggest that Bronfenbrenner insisted on unearthing child development within the confines of their environmental circuitry.

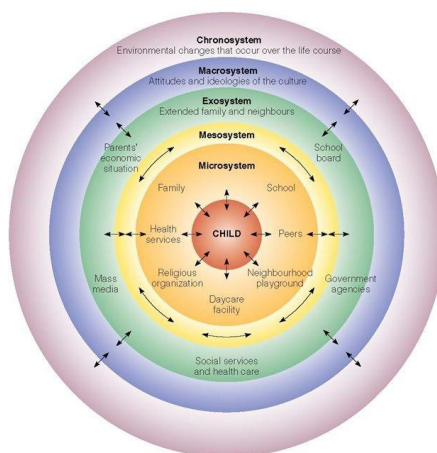


Image: Dr Fabiola Begula (2020)

Role of the Adult

Key adults involved in child development and transition



Own Image (2015)

Linking very closely to the needs of the child, the role of the adult plays a mammoth part in their journey and development.

Dryden, L. 2005 wrote that the adult is one of the crucial elements to superlative practice and provision throughout the child's learning environment.

Allingham, S. (2012) Identified the key adults in the child's transition into the learning setting as.

- Teachers and Classroom support staff
- School Administration staff
- Visiting Specialists such as Musicians and Photographers
- School Nurses and Health Visitors
- Therapists and Case Workers
- Assessors
- Students
- Kitchen staff
- Cleaning staff
- Parent helpers and volunteers

The environment that the key workers provide for the children they are responsible for is, according to Allingham, S. (2012) Conceivably the most predominant influence in determining the outcome of transition.

Allingham, S. (2012) Also specifies that this is due to the phrase 'environment' not signifying mere physical surroundings and materials, but indicating that the emotional environment takes precedence, with the physical environment being a strong supporting component.

When thinking about what a child needs to develop through the early years in the most positive way, key workers, and adults responsible for the care and provision of the child should prepare themselves with knowledge of the child development theories and underpinning policies that are at the center of their practices.

The Montessori Method influenced some of the major workings in the early years and further into the education pathway. Aubrey and Riley (2019) The authors use the term "Legacy" to describe how Montessori not only made a critical impact on the way in which young children are educated but also on her idea that the teacher was a catalyst, transforming from every-day educator to an enabler. Aubrey and Riley write that Montessori instructed her educators to recede and witness the natural unfolding actions and outcomes of the child, reflecting mindfully and learning fundamentally from observing.



Own Image (2015)

Supporting this, Allingham, S. (2012) acknowledges observation as integral to planning in an early year's transitional process. Enabling practitioners to understand the unique child's needs, emphasising strengths, interests, and areas to be developed. Observation is crucial in identifying early indicators of additional learning needs and special educational needs.

Observing the child can support strong supportive links between home and school, giving feedback and including parents/carers in educational plans and focuses. Additionally, observation can assist in further transition between Foundation Phase and Key Stage 2 and can often be key in monitoring the effectiveness of the current curriculum in practice.

Rose, J. (2014) Writes in the Early Education Journal, volume 73. That through the observation, assessment, and planning (OAP) Cycle in Early Years practice, the responsible adult would largely focus on the processes of the individual child while they make sense of their own world.

What motivates them?



Own Image (2012)

How are their unique identities developing?



Own Image (2015)

Dewey, an influential yet controversial theorist born in 1859, proposed that teachers were responsible for channeling individuals. Aubrey and Riley (2019)

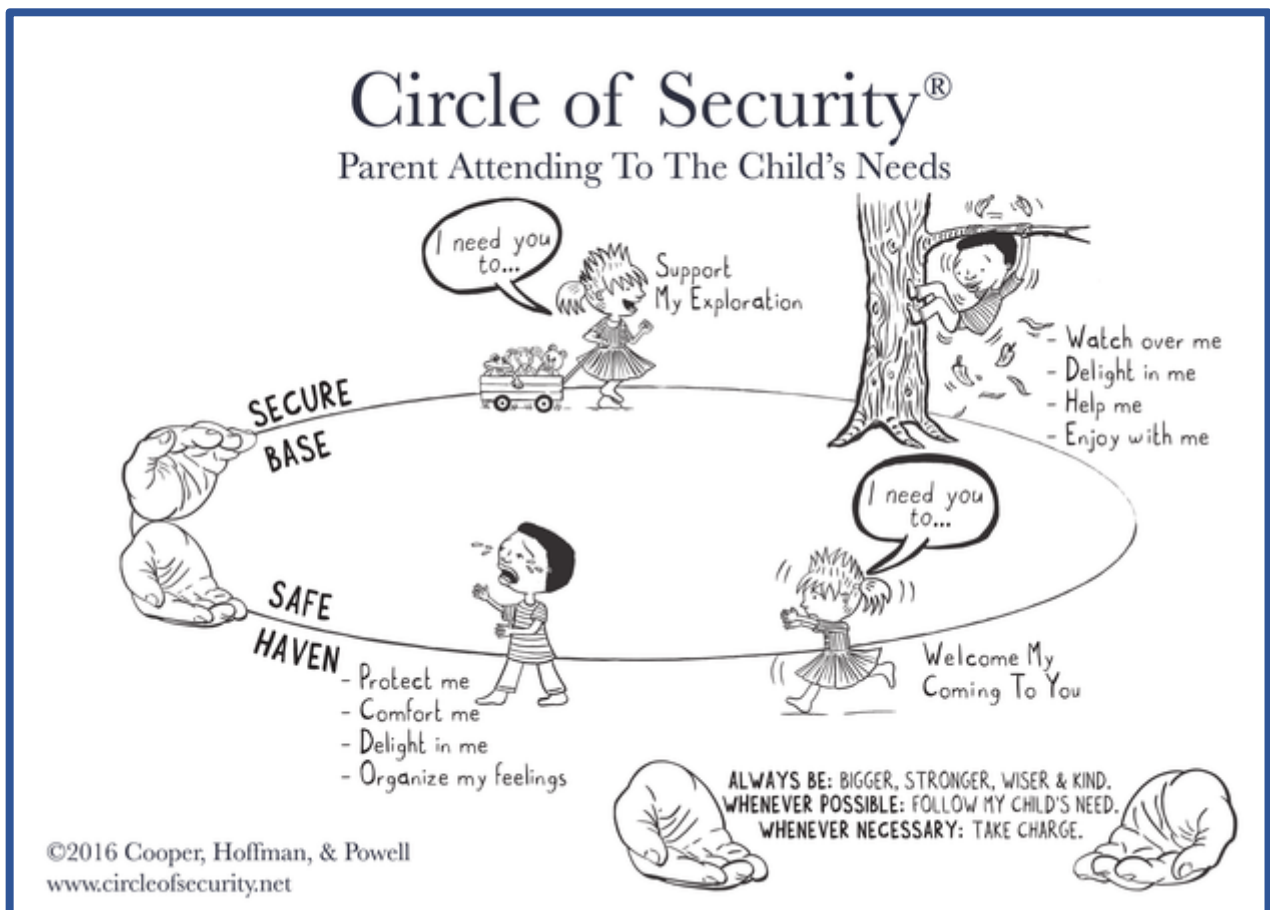
According to the authors, Dewey campaigned for educators to inspire 'learner-centered pedagogy' allowing the learner to experiment and develop their own interests replacing the instructive ways of teaching and promoting a more active experience.

Carr, D. (2003) Suggests that in Primary education, in particular the Early Years stages, teachers might propose a less regimented approach to education and learner outcomes, focusing more on the child's social, physiological and wellbeing development.

Relationships and communication

When there are Key individuals involved daily in a child and their family's lives, relationships and connections are formed. Bowlby, J. (2012)

According to the NSPCC (2021) website, it is hugely important for all adults working with children to have knowledge of attachment theories and possess the means to help Parents and Carers become conversant to the child's needs.



Cooper, Hoffman and Powell (2016)

When Bowlby (2012) was searching for a new framework to understand the Mother and Infant relationship, the standard and discussed theories of the time depicted two types of markers, primary and secondary. The primary relationship relating to food and nourishment and the secondary relating to a more personal dependency. Bowlby did not believe the statistics, he asked if that were so would a child not choose food from a stranger over a mother's affinity?

This question led Bowlby through a deep search into the very nature of the ties and connectivity between the mother or primary care giver and child.

According to Health Research Funding (2021) Bowlby believed that the behaviours relating to attachment are instinctively automatic and react to simple triggers. Susceptibilities such as insecurity and separation would initialise the attachment behaviours.

The website continues to break down Bowlby's attachment theory into five main points:

1. Children have a fundamental, inborn urgency to form an attachment with at least one primary care giver.
2. Children need to receive a continuous level of care from their Primary source especially up to the age of 2 years.
3. Lack of affection and empathy occurs when Primary attachments are unstable.
4. Separation from Primary attachments can cause predominant stress.
5. Each child uses the attachment to their relationships to develop and form an inherent working model.

Just as imperative as the relationship between Parent/Primary Care Giver and child is the relationship between the Key workers, the child, and their family.

Aubrey and Riley (2019) document the critical and integral process of working collaboratively with family, to form an essential link enabling key workers to provide the correct support each individual child requires according to their specific needs.

Bowlby, J. (2012) Refers to teachers and caregivers as secondary attachment figures for children.

According to Barry, J. (2019) It is important for teachers to possess fundamental knowledge in the individual attachment patterns so they can deduce a child's behaviour. Teachers and support staff with no prior knowledge routinely confuse insecure attachment behaviours as unruly or others misinterpret as aggressive and uncooperative.

One simple technique is to ask the child "What happened to you?" in preference to "what's wrong with you?" allowing the Teacher/Support staff to form compassionate relationships which will impact the child's future interactions and communications. Barry, J. (2019)

Article 12 of the UNCRC relates to 'A Child's Right to be Heard.' The article was developed to ensure young children feel able to express themselves and their opinions. This gives children the strength to communicate with key workers, care givers and peers. The UNCRC (2021)

Clare, A. (2016) Writes that the cognitive progress in children with lower levels of well-being is deeply impacted. When a young child is placed in a new setting away from the environment they are used to, it is crucial to provide a smooth settling in regime involving both the child and the family.

To enable a successful settling in period the Parents/Carers and the child need to develop a close comfortable relationship with the key workers in the new setting. To develop this relationship further practitioners, need to identify and build knowledge on what the primary care givers have disclosed regarding their child.

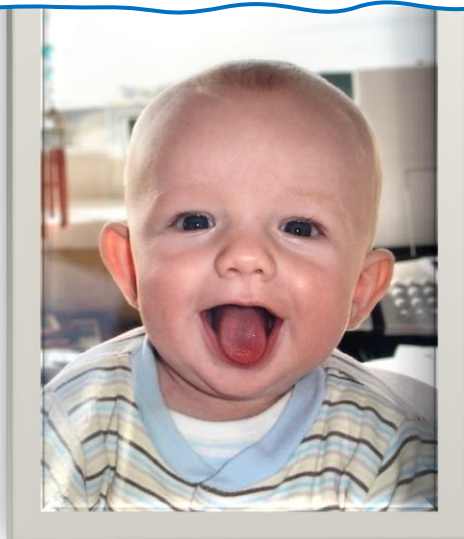
According to The Early Years Matters website (2021) The key to a successful transition from pre-school to school is to build in advance the knowledge of the child through effective communication between the current and future care givers.

Every Child Matters (2003) Reports on the concerns of the Government regarding shortfalls in child protection systems. Through the policy of inclusion, the government proposed to tackle the identified problems.

The publication of Every Child Matters recognises socio-environmental factors for example, poverty and deprivation. This can influence a child's level of vulnerability. Also discussed in the Every Child Matters policy is the requirement to consistently provide inter-disciplinary and multi-agency collaboration to enable the rapid, effective response towards any issues or concerns within the community of the child and their primary carers.

Services supporting children need to be ethically integrated within the context of the child and family's wellbeing. Paying close attention to the family's rights and needs and abiding by confidentiality laws.

EVERY CHILD MATTERS



Own Image (2009)

Learning, playing, and interacting

DCSF (2009) States that one of the keyways in which a child learns best is through play. Playing indoors and outside, isolated playing or joining together to play with others. Playing regardless of how it takes its form allows the child freedom to experiment and practice, take risks, and make mistakes that encourage growth. Play can induce exploration of feelings and surroundings and allow the child to establish control enabling confidence and creativity in their imagination.

The adult can support the child using playful activities within learning according to DCSF (2009) The document refers to adult led provision and gives an example of how a key worker can have a positive impact during this process.

Adult-led simply means initiated by an adult. The activities are not regarded as play in the child's mind, but they should be playful in content to engage the children. When activities are presented, they must possess an open-ended outcome to provide room for exploration. Adults can also provide equipment and resources to inspire play motivating the children. For example, a cardboard box....



Own Image (2013)

Interventions/Outcomes

There are many examples taken from intervention already implemented in Welsh schools using the principles of the above sources. The UNCRC, the Early Years Outcomes Framework, Maslow's Model of Hierarchy, Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Model, Bowlby's theory of attachment and the countless Government policies put in place to provide as much information as possible, to support the needs of the child during Early Years development and transition, providing positive outcomes.

For example:

- Schools have daily access to sufficient and cost-free drinks and fruit and strongly support and encourage healthy eating and exercise as part of the curriculum. The provision of school meals is under constant scrutiny and more recently Free School Meals for all Primary school pupils has been discussed.
- Outdoor activities are interlinked with the curriculum. Learning goes much further than the classroom with children exploring their local areas and communities.
- Creation of stimulating, safe surroundings to play, and calm, comfortable surroundings to rest and take time. Rooms set aside for worries and buddies allocated for the opportunity to talk.
- Staff focus on building relationships with parents and links in the community to create a supportive and inclusive ethos. Connecting through home/health/community and school.
- Children have a voice that must be heard (UNCRC - Article 13) School councils and opportunities to share opinions and be heard.

To conclude:

The connections formed in the first instance of transition between the key worker and the child is proven to be critical. The key worker needing to gain the trust and create a relationship that will grow with the child. To enable this, the key worker needs to be aware of the background of the child and have knowledge surrounding early human development, attachment and policies practiced within the setting. The most successful relationships will develop if commitment is made with the child, the family and the multi-agency workers involved in the child's day to day life.

The groundwork prior to transition can prove indispensable, creating a focus and plan individual to the unique child. This can be assisted by conducting home visits, having open days for children and their families. Engaging with the child and building links via video call and telephone.

Collating information provided by sources closest to the child is also fundamental for a smooth transition.

If the key worker is successful in meeting the needs of the child during the settling in period, the child's wellbeing will be reflected in how they interact with others, engage in tasks, communicate with key workers, peers, and family, and appear relaxed and content. Continued observation and planning can boost the outcomes of transition especially when supporting the unique child.

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