



Tried and tested 2018:

Local changes that are improving children's lives through the Permanence and Care Excellence (PACE) programme



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We share a vision, alongside colleagues in our sector, that every looked after child in Scotland will ultimately be provided with a settled, secure and permanent place to live, quickly and with minimum disruption to their young lives.

Part of this process is working towards an end to the unacceptably long waiting times experienced by so many looked after children, what is known as 'drift and delay'. We know all too well that such delays in decision-making can be detrimental to a child's development.

In partnership with the Scottish Government, we have developed an innovative and rigorous whole-systems approach to improving permanence for looked after children, using Improvement Methodology and working with all agencies involved in permanence decision-making. This is being delivered through the Permanence and Care Excellence (PACE) programme.



This document provides a snapshot of examples of 'tests of change' that have been successfully introduced in some of our local PACE areas across Scotland. It demonstrates what can be achieved when agencies come together to design and fully test out innovative changes to the way the system currently works, all with the interests of children at its heart.

The changes themselves in isolation won't achieve the sustained, fundamental difference to the lives of our looked after children that we all want. However, they are a part of the bigger picture of driving the socially significant outcomes we aspire to.

To find out more details about any aspect of our PACE work please contact **celcis@strath.ac.uk** or visit our website **www.celcis.org**.



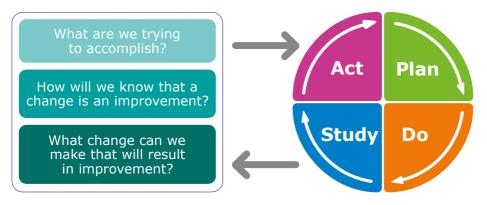
A child becomes looked after	
at home	

A child becomes looked after away from home

This timeline shows the key milestones in decision making for children who are looked after, including child returning home.

Model for improvement

We use the Scottish Government's Improvement Framework to set out what we need to do to support the needs of children.



www.gov.scot/Topics/Government/PublicServiceReform/Improvementframework



Recommendation for returning home or permanence away from home. Agency decision-maker decision

Legal permanence achieved

Pathway for children who are unable to return home

The PACE programme works with partners to set specific and measurable aims in decision making milestones for children. Timescales and operational definitions are agreed with each Health and Social Care Partnerships (HSCP)/Local Authority (LA) area during the course of engagement with PACE and have cognisance to data, legislation and research about good practice. Below is the broad outline of the focus of the aims.

Aim 1

Children who have been looked after at home for more than 2 years will have a 24-month review looking at their whole period of time being looked after at home on a Compulsory Supervision Order (CSO).

Aim 2

Children who become Looked after & accommodated will have a recommendation for Permanence (including a permanent return home) within 6 months of becoming looked after and accommodated.

Aim 3

Children who have had a recommendation for permanence away from home will have the decision ratified by the Agency Decision Maker within 14 weeks of the Looked After Review that recommended permanence.

Aim 4

Children whose plan has been approved by the Agency Decision Maker will have their application for a legal order lodged within 3 weeks of agreement of the recommendation.

Children's Hearing Panel Members have a checklist

Agency

Children's Hearings Scotland

Changes for improvement

Address 'drift' for children subject to a Compulsory Supervision Order (CSO) at home. Social workers prepare a checklist to be used when preparing for children's hearing. This ensures the key questions are addressed in their report and communicated verbally at the hearing. At the same time, a sub-group of panel members and social workers gather data on recommendations and decision-making at Children's Hearings over a six month period.

Rationale

• to ensure in each case when a child is subject to a CSO at home, it is proportionate and the need for compulsion applies.

Impact

• the number of children on CSOs at home has reduced by more than a third, allowing children to remain with their parents or carers, without the need for presentation and review at Children's Hearing.

Permanence policy implementation

Agency

Social Work, Local Authority Solicitors, Education, in PACE partnership with Children's Hearings Scotland, Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA) and NHS Lothian.

Changes for improvement

Prior to joining PACE, the local authority developed a permanence policy which then led to a service review and ultimately a restructure creating a specific team focusing on the needs and experiences of children from birth to 12 years old. The data shows that timescales reduced when the policy was introduced, and reduced further after the two week planning meeting as result of a PACE test of change.

Rationale

The re-design of our service was largely influenced by the Scottish Government's policy paper: **Getting It Right For Looked After Children and Young People** – early engagement, early permanence and improving the quality of care.

Impact

Children are now receiving a permanence decision within 7.5 months of being accommodated.

Five days of permanence training

Agency

Social Work, Reviewing Officers, Legal Services

Changes for improvement

Five days of permanence training have been introduced for Social Workers to increase their knowledge and understanding of permanence.

Rationale

To increase Social Workers' understanding of the need for early decisionmaking in permanence planning for looked after children, and to raise the 'permanence profile' within the local authority. The training covers the legal tests for permanence, good practice, sharing case examples and a multiagency approach to permanence planning.

Impact

Permanence is prioritised in the same way as child protection, and Social Workers' confidence in early permanence planning is increased.

Concurrency planning

Agency

Social Work, Health, Children's Hearings Scotland, Legal Services

Changes for improvement

To consider and test the concurrency model of practice for one infant placed post-birth with prospective adopters.

Rationale

In acknowledging the drift and delay that had occurred for some siblings in permanence planning in East Renfrewshire, the PACE team decided to use the concurrency model as a test of change, for one child who would not be returning home from birth.

The research referred to included Harriet Ward's working to a child's timeframe and Corham's concurrency model.

Impact

The journey of this infant was tracked by the multi-agency PACE group. She was introduced to her prospective adopters at 2 days old and her adoption was granted within 9 months. The positive outcome for this child has highlighted the benefits of the whole system for children working together, as this panel member in East Renfrewshire has highlighted:

"It is so rewarding to see all the hard work having such positive results, as a result of PACE, with regard to the child that was with her adoptive parents from 2 days old. I feel that as a panel member we were able to make robust decisions re: contact, and were able to confidently terminate contact and justify why our decision was in the best interest of the child".

Involvement of health in Children's Hearings

Agency

Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA), Health and Social Work

Changes for improvement

SCRA email a generic Health inbox to alert them to dates of Children's Hearings. Health Visitors then liaise with Social Work to ensure that all relevant Health updates are included in the Children's Hearing report. Health Visitors can also decide whether it would be beneficial for them to attend the Children's Hearings.

Rationale

To allow a more multi-agency approach to recommendations at Children's Hearings and to ensure that children's health needs are suitably represented at Children's Hearings.

Impact

Greater focus on multi-agency working between SCRA, Health and Social Work to ensure that children's health needs are suitably communicated to Children's Hearings.

Aim 2: A child becomes looked after away from home

Standard agenda for 72-hour post admission meeting

Agency

Social Work, Health and Education

Changes for improvement

Standing agenda which anticipates future issues. Child's 72-hour post-admissions meeting has a set agenda which includes roles and responsibilities for all agencies (e.g. Health, Education, Social work) involved with the child and family over the next two week period.

Rationale

• at every 72-hour review, all agencies should be clear about the information they need to provide about the child to support planning.

Impact

• contributed to improved decision-making for a child to return home or remain accommodated by 40 weeks, therefore encouraging a more stable environment for the child at as early a stage as possible.

Alert to SCRA pre-birth

Agency

Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA)

Changes for improvement

Early alert to SCRA. SCRA is given two weeks' notice in advance of children who are likely to become accommodated outside of their family upon birth.

Rationale

- although SCRA is unable to take referrals for children before they are born, this early alert allows them to start considering evidence and preparing Grounds for Referral to be drawn up. It also allows them to hold an Initial Children's Hearing within two weeks of birth
- it is hoped that this will reduce delays in establishing grounds for referral, should reunification with birth families be unsuccessful
- it is also hoped to reduce the need for emergency measures (Child Protection Orders) being taken, therefore reducing potential stress for families.

Impact

 contributed to improving early initial Children's Hearings being held for new born babies who were unable to return home to their parents at birth, and therefore improving the life chances of the child.

Aim 2: A child becomes looked after away from home

Permanence Planning Meeting for kinship care

Agency

Social Work and Legal Services

Changes for improvement

All children who have a permanence plan for kinship care will have their plan scrutinised and formally recommended at a Permanence Planning Meeting, in line with plans for other looked after children.

Rationale

To ensure that children in kinship care have decisions made regarding their permanence plan with as much scrutiny as other looked after children.

Impact

A greater focus on children living in kinship care and a clearer process for active decision-making and scrutiny for kinship care permanence plans.

Supervised contact template

Agency

Social Work

Changes for improvement

A template for recording observations and assessment during supervised contact was developed, tested and rolled out with the intention of ensuring sufficient evidence was recorded, incorporated into assessment reports and supported Panel Members in Children's Hearings to make better decisions in relation to permanence plans and contact.

This change for improvement ran in parallel with and supported contact training for Panel Members which was delivered by the same Senior Social Worker/Team Manager leading this change.

Rationale

There were concerns in relation to number of Children's Hearings that Panel Members seem unable to agree with multi-agency recommendations both in relation to permanence and to contact. This resulted in a review and consideration of the standard and quality of information being presented within assessment reports to support the recommendations being made.

The social worker could use the templates to discuss issues with parents even when not supervising the contact, and could use this information when completing the reports for the Children's Hearing.

Impact

The change has resulted in a better quality of assessment report with specific evidence to support any recommendations being made.

As a follow up, the social work team has now adopted the practice of allocating no more than two workers to each child who requires supervised contact, and this model is providing a more focussed approach to evidence gathering and reporting.

Aim 2: A child becomes looked after away from home

Wellbeing baby tool

Agency
Social Work
Changes for improvement
 Introduce a wellbeing baby tool. to maintain a focus on the infant's needs during pre-birth work with parents in cases where there are concerns about their capacity to parent to both support parental understanding and prioritise the needs of the infant.
Rationale
 to give the infant a voice by changing the language used with parents supporting them to understand what their young child needs from them and why to emphasise parental responsibilities as well as rights to be used at pre-birth Child Protection Case Conference.
Impact
 social workers report this helped to facilitate conversations with parents and kept the child at the centre of the discussion and decision-making

• the infants involved remain with their families.

Information for children

Agency

Social Work (Children and Families)

Changes for improvement

Using a permanence leaflet to support a discussion with children on the definition of permanence.

A colourful draft was created using clear language and no jargon and headed "What do we mean when we use the word 'permanence'?"

The leaflet outlined the four routes to permanence (starting with 'returning home, if safe to do so'), those who need to work together to make sure that the young person is safe and happy, the legal responsibilities of parents and finally, what 'permanence' does not mean. The draft leaflet was then shared with young people and their views and suggestions for any changes obtained.

Rationale

There is a lack of information for young people about the concept of permanence and what it means for them. There are stories that young people tells us that permanence feels like a distant concept. The intent of this leaflet is to reduce the anxiety that young people may experience about being a looked after child.

Impact

Young people explained that the leaflet was good at sharing what permanence means, and it allayed their fears about not seeing their family. Most children explained how they wished they had received a leaflet like the one shown to them, before becoming permanent in placement.

Comments made by young people included the fact that they thought the leaflet was bright and clear and they liked the photographs that were used. The suggestions for improvement included changing the word `child' to `you' and incorporating coloured backgrounds or borders on certain pages.

Further feedback from the Children's Parliament explained how a 'fun' font, an opportunity to personalise the leaflet (i.e. somewhere to write your name and draw a picture) and a choice of colours would further improve this.

Aim 2: A child becomes looked after away from home

Looked after review 2 weeks from becoming accommodated

Agency

Social Work, Health and Education

Changes for improvement

Looked After Review at two weeks. Two weeks after a child is accommodated, a review takes place, chaired by an Independent Reviewing Officer. Dates for all future Looked After Reviews are set at this meeting including the Permanence Decision-Making Looked After Review, within the agreed timescale.

Rationale

- an Independent Reviewing Officer who is consistent for the child throughout their journey takes ownership and exercises leadership in driving the child's plan
- this includes having an overview of completion of assessment, and meeting timescales for decision-making, scheduled from the two week review.

Impact

 contributed to improved decision-making for a child to return home or remain accommodated by 40 weeks, therefore encouraging a more stable environment for the child at as early a stage as possible.

All children have permanence plans

Agency

Social Work

Changes for improvement

Permanence plan for all looked after children. Through a process of review over a period of nine months, a permanence plan was recorded for each looked after child. For some children there would be no further planned move and although a permanence decision had been made for each child, it had not been formally recorded.

Rationale

The language of 'permanence' has changed and should be incorporated into the looked after review process. Although plans may change, at any point in time, all looked after children should have a permanence plan.

Impact

All looked after children in this local authority now have a permanence plan in place.

Aim 2: A child becomes looked after away from home

Concurrent assessment of kinship carers by independent worker

Agency

Social Work

Changes for improvement

A social worker other than the child's social worker completes the assessment of potential kinship carers.

Rationale

Having a social worker other than the child's social worker allows the worker undertaking the assessment of kinship carers to be even more independent, and allows the child's social worker to have even more focus on supporting rehabilitation plans.

Impact

Greater independence in undertaking assessment of kinship carers. It was also easier to meet timescales for the assessment as it reduced the workload of the child's social worker.

Permanence planning meeting for children in kinship care

Agency

Social Work and Legal Services

Changes for improvement

All children who have a permanence plan for kinship care will have their plan scrutinised and formally recommended at a Permanence Planning Meeting, in line with plans for other looked after children.

Rationale

To ensure that children in kinship care have decisions made regarding their permanence plan with as much scrutiny as other looked after children.

Impact

A greater focus on children living in kinship care and a clearer process for active decision-making and scrutiny for kinship care permanence plans.

Aim 2: A child becomes looked after away from home

Legal advice in advance of permanence looked after review

Agency

Legal Services and Social Work

Changes for improvement

Early legal advice for Permanence Looked After Review. Eight weeks in advance of the Permanence Looked After Review, social work ask for legal services to diarise the provision of written legal advice four weeks before the review.

Rationale

- for those children who are accommodated, evidence suggests that they are unlikely to return home
- to avoid delay, legal advice can be sought in advance of the Permanence Looked After Review
- if parents in the meantime are supported and able to address their parenting capacity issues sufficiently, this advice can be withdrawn.

Impact

contributed to reducing delay caused by waiting for legal advice after a
permanence decision, by eight weeks caused by waiting for legal advice
after a permanence decision away from home has been made at a looked
after review.

Using a Referral Form to request legal advice on child's permanence plan

Agency

Legal Services and Social Work

Changes for improvement

A Referral Form is now completed by the child's social worker and sent to Legal Services with accompanying documents when legal advice is sought on a child's permanence plan (before the Looked After Child Review at which permanence is being recommended).

Rationale

A lot of "back and forward" between Social Work and Legal Services was causing delay, as Legal Services did not have the necessary information in order to give advice. 38% of Looked After Child Reviews were being cancelled as Legal Services had not had the necessary time or documents to give legal advice. The Referral Form means that the social worker is very clear on the information and documents that Legal Services need in order to give advice.

Impact

There is greater clarity between Social Work and Legal Services about the information that is required in order to give legal advice on a permanence recommendation. It focuses the mind on the evidence required to support a child's permanence plan at an early stage.

Using visual timeline

Agency

Social Work and Panel Members

Changes for improvement

Holding and maintaining a chronology of life events for a child is a vital component in our understanding and analysis of a child's experience. A test of change undertaken has been to use a visual timeline to support the chronology for a child, and to ensure that it is presented at relevant meetings to inform decision-making.

Rationale

- the timelines have been used with parents, with a child or young person, with carers, extended family, with decision-makers, within supervision, with Panel Members and at permanence (fostering and adoption) panels
- gaps in the timeline provide a crucial visual representation of how much time has passed between each event and can often tell us much more about the child's experience than the chronology alone.

Impact

The timelines have helped to keep the child and their lived experience at the centre of decision-making by telling the child's story on one sheet of paper. It has enabled the whole decision-making system of parents, carers, social workers, Panel Members and courts to visually 'see', consider and understand the child's journey to date and the implications of their age and stage of development. It has had an emotional impact on those reading it, and has created a sense of urgency in securing a safe and settled place for the child to live.

Health assessment checklist taken to permanence planning meeting

Agency

Health and Social Work

Changes for improvement

Improve provision of medical assessments on time. Permanence social worker (some local authorities have a dedicated Permanence Team who work with children once a decision away from home has been taken) takes Health Assessment Checklist to the Permanence Planning Meeting, as well as a Panel Paper Checklist. Checklists are also sent to locality managers for distribution at Permanence Planning Meeting.

Rationale

 ensure partner agency information (e.g. Health/Education) is received as swiftly as possible.

Impact

This has led to better communication between agencies and greater clarity on the next steps that need to be taken by all agencies to progress permanence plans for looked after children.

Reduction in process

Agency

Social Work, including Looked After Child Review Chairs.

Changes for improvement

Removing the "Ratifying Looked After Child Review". This Local Authority had a three stage process :

- 1. A Looked After Review recommends a child is permanently placed away from home
- 2. A Permanence Planning Meeting considers the decision of a Looked After Child Review
- A further 'ratifying' Looked After Review considered both decision again before the next part of the process can start to secure the child legally. The change involved people having confidence at the first Looked After Review to make a decision rigorously supported by evidence.

Rationale

This additional step in the process of decision making was causing additional weeks without legal security for some children. Thus the system was causing unnecessary harm. Removing additional steps can free up staff to focus on working with the family and child and ensure focus on gathering evidence in a timely way to reduce drift for the child caused by process.

Impact

This has been very positively received in all tests and is now "business as usual" in this area. As a result, one step in the process has been removed and so timescales for furthering a child's permanence plan have been reduced.

Aim 3: Recommendation for a child to be placed permanently away from home

Establishing Kinship Care Panel

Agency

Social Work, (with representation on Kinship Care Panel from Education, Health and Legal)

Changes for improvement

Establishing a Kinship Care Panel to approve and review both formal and informal kinship carers.

Rationale

To ensure that kinship carers are assessed and reviewed with the same scrutiny as carers for other looked after children.

Impact

A greater focus on children in kinship care and more intense scrutiny of kinship carers and kinship care placements.

Aim 3: Recommendation for a child to be placed permanently away from home

Cease use of Form E part 2

Agency

Social Work

Changes for improvement

Cease use of Form E part 2. The assessment report that goes to the Permanence Looked After Review is amended to contain all the information about the child which would be required by the Permanence Panel.

Rationale

Social work staff described the repetition that occurred in producing a Form E after completing a comprehensive assessment for consideration at the Permanence Looked After Review. This additional documentation was burdensome and did not add significantly to the information for the child, which causing significant delay while awaiting its completion.

Impact

 contributed to the reduction of three months in the time it was taking for a decision to be ratified by the agency decision-maker when deciding to place a child permanently away from home.

Mentoring for staff

Agency

Social Work

Changes for improvement

Mentoring support. Two weeks after the Permanence Review that has recommended permanence away from home, a social work mentor meets with the child's social worker to confirm tasks, roles and responsibilities that need to be fulfilled. This enables the presentation of the recommended child's plan to the Permanence Panel within the agreed timescale.

Rationale

Mentoring and coaching supports workers to ensure they are clear about tasks, and feel supported to drive through plans within timescales that are in the best interests of the child.

Impact

• contributed to the reduction of three months on the time it was taking for a decision to be ratified by the agency decision-maker when a child is placed permanently away from home.

Aim 3: Recommendation for a child to be placed permanently away from home

Recorded delivery for advice hearings

Agency

Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA)

Changes for improvement

Recorded delivery of notification for advice hearings. Advice hearings are notified by recorded delivery, and social workers make contact with the family two days before the hearing. In the event of a continuation, the reporter undertakes to reschedule the advice meeting within two weeks.

Rationale

- to avoid panel members continuing advice hearings when relevant people don't attend
- delay is avoided by special attention to getting the right people to attend, and when this isn't possible providing evidence that notification was received.

Impact

 contributed to SCRA reporting that there was a significant reduction in advice hearings being continued.

Aim 4: Permanence plan approved by Agency Decision Maker

Reduction in number of productions for court

Agency

Judiciary and Social Work

Changes for improvement

Communicate what works between the court and practitioners.

- round table meeting with Sheriff Principal, Sheriff and Social Work to discuss barriers to decision-making and the most useful way that information is submitted to the court
- quantity of productions reduced, memorandum of understanding agreed with legal services and family solicitors in advance of presentation at court, and clerks to the court prioritise court time for children's hearing and local authority applications.

Rationale

- lengthy court proceedings for children can add to 'drift and delay' in decision-making and insecurity for children
- some matters can be agreed in advance of hearings to reduce the need for evidence being led
- concurrent court time for leading evidence enables matters to be resolved in a shorter timescale.

Impact

- two thirds of applications to court were dealt with by 20 weeks or sooner
- solicitors report an improved relationship between legal services and the court.

Aim 4: Permanence plan approved by Agency Decision Maker

Gathering feedback from young people

Agency

The Children's Parliament, Education, Social Work, Children's Hearings System

Changes for improvement

To spend time with young people at the Children's Parliament and to act on their feedback on the quality of a number of child-friendly resources. This will provide us with clear and useful guidance when producing child-friendly resources.

Rationale

The PACE programme is committed to ensuring that the voices of all infants, children and young people who have care experience impacts meaningfully on their care. This includes in their individual care journey, and also in shaping the care that others experience.

An opportunity arose to work with children with care experience to shape what child-friendly resources could look like by partnering with the Children's Parliament. Some exceptional learning was had in this process, which is detailed below.

Impact

After spending time with children in a relaxed environment, the following themes were identified:

- the option to personalise a leaflet (space to write a name or draw a picture) would be welcome
- being given a choice of colours and styles of resources preferred
- They need to be age specific (i.e. don't give an adolescent a leaflet aimed at a young child)
- friendly, big, bouncy font is better than straight, sharp font
- relatable pictures (i.e. of children of a similar age) are important
- clear definitions and simple language is important
- using the resource as a tool to support a discussion (rather than as a standalone resource) is crucial; it should act as a memory jogger for a child
- having child friendly sections on websites; somewhere else to learn more about the topic
- information of someone to contact in case of any queries was well received.

Timescales for PO aligned with POAs

Agency

Legal Services

Changes for improvement

Same timescales for Permanence Orders as for Permanence Orders with Authority. Apply the same timescales to decision-making and lodging at court for Permanence Order (PO) as for Permanence Orders with Authority (POA).

Rationale

A legal decision for a PO is as important to the child as an application for POA.

Impact

Improved focus on the importance of legal security for all children. The change has anecdotally been reported to drive more timely applications for PO and for them to be treated with the same priority as POAs.

Aim 4: Permanence plan approved by Agency Decision Maker

Reduction in number of reports produced

Agency

Legal Services and Social Work, Children's Services

Changes for improvement

Cut down on the report writing required for children where the plan is for looked after child to be matched for Permanence Order with their existing foster carer. No Forms E will be required in such circumstances (as there is no statutory requirement for this). The Permanence Panel will receive a Permanence Order report which will also be suitable for use by Legal services when the Permanence Order application is submitted to court.

Rationale

Provided the quality and type of the information contained in the Permanence Order report is sufficient to enable the Permanence Panel to make a recommendation in respect of the child, the need for only one report should speed up the process between appearing at Permanence Panel and making an application to the Court for a Permanence Order. One child, who was due at panel, had the new report completed and the feedback from Panel Members was that the Permanence Order report was sufficient to allow a recommendation to be made and that the Form E was not required in addition to the PO report. A style Permanence Order report has been prepared with commentary from Legal Services to assist Social Workers in preparing a report which will cover all the issues which the Permanence Panel need to consider.

Impact

The impact has been that children's cases come to court an average of five weeks earlier than previously as there is no need for the child's Social Worker to draft a second report after presentation at Permanence Panel. More data will continue to be collected as this test is scaled up. The lack of duplication of form writing has also freed up social work capacity.

Permanence plans reviewed by independent reviewer

Agency

Social Work

Changes for improvement

All young people aged 15 and a half will have their permanence plans reviewed by an independent reviewer to ensure suitable decisions are made regarding pathway planning.

Rationale

A greater focus on older looked after children and young people to ensure they have the support they need into adulthood.

Impact

Looked after young people will have clear pathway plans set and reviewed into adulthood.





CELCIS, based at the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow, is committed to making positive and lasting improvements in the wellbeing of Scotland's children living in and on the edges of care. Ours is a truly collaborative agenda; we work alongside partners, professionals and systems with responsibility for nurturing our vulnerable children and families. Together we work to understand the issues, build on existing strengths, introduce best possible practice and develop solutions. What's more, to achieve effective, enduring and positive change across the board, we take an innovative, evidence-based improvement approach.

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