

# Corporate plan 2019–2020





# Introduction

## About us

We are the independent regulator for nurses, midwives and nursing associates. As of 31 March 2019, our register held a total of nearly 700,000 nurses and midwives who can practise in the UK, and nursing associates who can practise in England.

Better and safer care for people is at the heart of what we do, supporting the healthcare professionals on our register to deliver the highest standards of care.

We make sure nurses, midwives and nursing associates have the skills they need to care for people safely, with integrity, expertise, respect and compassion, from the moment they step into their first job.

Learning does not stop the day nurses, midwives and nursing associates qualify. To promote safety and public trust, we require the professionals on our register to demonstrate throughout their careers that they are committed to learning, developing, keeping their skills up to date and improving as practitioners.

We want to encourage openness and learning among our registered professionals to improve care and keep the public safe. On the occasions when something goes wrong and people are at risk, we can step in to investigate and take action, giving the people affected a voice as we do so.

## Our role

### Our regulatory responsibilities are to:

- maintain the register of midwives and nurses who meet the requirements for registration in the UK and nursing associates who meet the requirements for registration in England
- set standards for education, training, conduct and performance so our registered professionals are able to deliver high-quality health and social care consistently throughout their careers
- take action to deal with individuals whose integrity or ability to provide safe care is compromised, so that the public can have confidence in the quality and standards of care that midwives, nurses and nursing associates provide.



# Our strategy

## Overview

This is the final year of *Strategy 2015–2020: Dynamic regulation for a changing world*, which challenges us to ensure that our approach to regulation is innovative, forward-looking and adaptable to changes in healthcare and the demands on midwives, nurses and nursing associates. It sets out four strategic priorities to help guide our work in pursuit of our ambition. These are:

**1**

**Effective regulation**

**2**

**Use of intelligence**

**3**

**Collaboration and communication**

**4**

**An effective organisation**

# Our achievements since 2015

We have continued to strengthen the way we regulate. Changes we have made include:

- introducing a **new Code** of professional standards of practice and behaviour in 2015, which is the cornerstone of good nursing and midwifery care, and updating this in 2018 to reflect our regulation of nursing associates
- continuing to deliver our **education strategy**, a four-year programme to review and update all our nursing and midwifery standards, set new standards of proficiency for nursing associates and change the way we quality assure education programmes
- introducing **revalidation** in 2016, which enables the people on our register to demonstrate continuing professional development
- taking action in 2018 to address the findings of the **Professional Standards Authority's (PSA's) Lessons Learned Review** into our handling of fitness to practise concerns about midwives at Furness General Hospital
- introducing our **Public Support Service** in 2018 to provide tailored support to the public and families who have raised concerns about someone on our register
- launching a **new strategic direction** in 2018 for fitness to practise, signalling our commitment to moving away from blame culture towards a just culture in health and social care
- expanding **NMC Online** for nurses, midwives and nursing associates to interact with us more easily
- opening a new part of the register for **nursing associates** in England in January 2019
- improving our process for **applicants from outside the UK** to join our register, including making changes in 2017 and again in 2018 to our English language requirements.

# Strategic context

## The wider picture

We operate in a fast moving environment, so our corporate plan needs to be responsive to changes in the world around us.

- **Building trust in professional regulation**

In delivering our public policy initiatives, we are asking nursing associates, midwives and nurses to be mindful of their behaviour and their impact on people in their care. We would like the public and other stakeholders to engage and interact with us in new ways, and our employees to think differently about who we are and how we demonstrate our values and behaviours.

- **Rising economic, workforce and performance pressures on the health and social care sectors**

The recent Health Foundation report states there are 41,000 vacant nursing and midwifery posts in the NHS in England – more than one in 10. Recruitment and retention challenges also prevail across the devolved administrations. We need to ensure that our standards and processes enable and encourage qualified, compassionate nurses, midwives and nursing associates to join and remain in the workforce.

- **Changes in the need for care, and how and where care is delivered**

We need to ensure the education of nurses, midwives and nursing associates adapts to meet these challenges. This includes the impact of technological change, the aging population, the increased numbers of people living with dementia and other conditions, greater demands for social care, and the impact of the growth in inequalities.

- **Impact of Brexit**

We need to plan for a range of scenarios affecting EU midwives, nurses and nursing associates who wish to join our register and UK nurses, midwives and nursing associates who may wish to work in the EU.

- **Possible regulatory reform**

Together with other regulators, we have long pressed for modernising our legislation. We responded to the Government’s consultation in January 2018 and look forward to continuing to help shape and influence the future of health regulation.

- **Strategic collaboration**

We will continue to develop the potential to collaborate with other regulators where it makes sense to do so and can promote better, safer care.

## **Developing our next strategy**

As we approach the end of our 2015–2020 strategy, we need to plan our priorities for 2020 and beyond. During 2019–2020 we will review what we have learned and build on our current progress and achievements. We are carrying out a major piece of research to better understand the values and beliefs of the public, professionals on our register and our partners about professional regulation and the role of the NMC. We will consider potential changes in the wider environment and engage with the public, professionals on our register and our partners, as well as our colleagues within the NMC, so we can co-produce our priorities and strategy for 2020–2025.

## **Working with the devolved administrations**

We regulate midwives and nurses in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and nursing associates in England. The devolved nature of health and care means that each government sets its national objectives and priorities.

Our strong relationships with each of the devolved administrations ensure we are able to understand policy objectives in the four countries and the implications for regulation.

# Our priorities and commitments for 2019–2020

## Our four delivery areas

This plan describes our corporate priorities for the final year of our strategy for 2015–2020. It builds on our past progress and things we have learned so we can deliver our strategic priorities.

The cross-cutting nature of our strategic priorities means that key initiatives often contribute to more than one of the strategic priorities. Since September 2018, we have been planning our work and reporting under three delivery areas, and in this plan, we are adding a fourth delivery area.

1



### Changing our approach

New strategic initiatives that will significantly change how we regulate, including our new approach to fitness to practise.

2



### Core regulatory initiatives

Work that ensures our regulatory action is effective and efficient to enable better, safer care. Examples are the delivery of our education programme and regulation of nursing associates.

3



### Enhancing our capability and infrastructure

Ensuring that we are an effective and efficient organisation now and in the future.

4

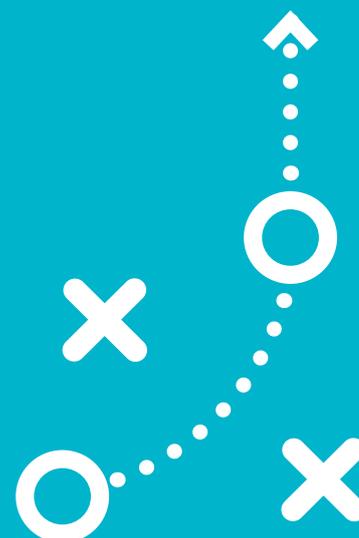


### Developing our new strategy for 2020–2025

Taking into account the views of stakeholders, and developing our key priorities for 2020–2025.



# Changing our approach



## **Delivering a new approach to fitness to practise**

Our focus is on reducing risks to people using services, patients and the public in the future by encouraging openness and learning.

The changes we are making are about embracing a person-centred approach during fitness to practise. This will make sure we treat our registered professionals and the public with compassion and respect, and properly listen to and resolve concerns about nurses, midwives and nursing associates.

We will work more closely with employers so that as many issues as possible can be resolved quickly and effectively at a local level. We'll give greater consideration to the context in which incidents occur, because we know that the professionals on our register will face complex issues and pressures every day.

When concerns are raised with us, we will strongly encourage midwives, nursing associates and nurses to be open and honest about what has happened and to talk to us as early as possible about what they have done to make things right. If more action is needed, we'll seek to agree with midwives, nurses and nursing associates what steps they need to take before they are fit to practise safely and effectively.

In many cases, a full public hearing might not be needed. This will reduce the burden on everyone involved, especially the public, patients and families who would otherwise have to re-live distressing experiences. We will continue to give full reasons for the decisions we take so there is transparency about what steps we have taken to promote better, safer care and why.

## Our commitments for 2019–2020

**Accountable owner:** Director, Fitness to Practise

1. By the end of quarter one, we will evaluate the outcomes of the pilots we started in 2018–2019 and make operational changes to deliver the new strategic direction.
2. To improve the level of support that we provide for nurses, midwives, and nursing associates who go through our fitness to practise process, we will:
  - provide better information and sign-posting to sources of support by the end of quarter two
  - launch an emotional support helpline by the end of quarter three
  - introduce a pro-bono legal advice service for unrepresented registrants, in partnership with a law school, by the end of quarter two.

## Embedding the Lessons Learned Review recommendations

In May 2018, the Professional Standards Authority (PSA) published the *Lessons Learned Review* of our handling of concerns about midwives' fitness to practise at Furness General Hospital. We know that our approach to these cases – in particular the way we communicated with the families – was unacceptable and we are sorry for the impact this had on everyone affected.

On 6 June 2018, our Council fully considered and discussed the Lessons Learned Review, during which we apologised unreservedly to the families. Council asked our Executive to prepare a wide-ranging programme of work to address the recommendations and this was agreed at the Council meeting on 25 July 2018.

We have made significant progress against this programme of work including introducing our new Public Support Service. Work will continue in each directorate during 2019–2020 to embed these changes, for example our ongoing work on the Fitness to Practise strategy and our work to embed the Public Support Service.

## Our commitments for 2019–2020

**Accountable owner:** Director, Registration and Revalidation

We will use a transparent, person-centred approach and transform the way we deal with all enquiries and complaints by quarter four.

## Reviewing the overseas registration process

We value the essential role overseas professionals play in the UK health workforce and we also know that choosing to come and work in the UK requires significant personal and financial investment. Our overseas review continues to focus on making the process for overseas applicants as efficient and easy to understand as possible, while continuing to ensure our high standards are maintained.

### Our commitments for 2019–2020

**Accountable owner:** Director, Registration and Revalidation

We will automate the whole application process by quarter two, continue to improve our support and guidance for applicants, and continue to develop and improve the test of competence.





## Core regulatory initiatives



### 2. Core regulatory initiatives

#### Delivering our education programme

We want to ensure that our education standards are fit for purpose and that nurses, midwives and nursing associates are equipped with the skills and knowledge they need to deliver high quality, safe care now and in the future.

In 2017 we engaged extensively with the professionals on our register, the public and our partners across the UK to help us develop our new education framework and nursing standards. These were published in March 2018 and the first students started training against the new standards in 2019. In 2018 we also published new standards for prescribing programmes and adopted the Royal Pharmaceutical Society *Competency Framework for all Prescribers* as our standards of proficiency for nurse and midwife prescribers.

In February 2019 we started consulting on new midwifery standards that set out the skills and knowledge that midwives of the future will need. The draft standards have been developed in partnership with midwives, women and families, advocacy groups, educators, and our partners across the health and care sector.

There are currently around 900 approved education programmes at more than 80 approved education institutions (AEIs) delivering nursing, midwifery and nursing associate education and training. Our quality assurance process makes sure that the education programmes meet our standards to prepare health and care professionals to join our register. In 2019 we will begin to quality assure all education institutions and programmes against the new standards.

## Our commitments for 2019–2020

**Accountable owner:** Director, Education and Standards

### 1. Developing our standards

- **Future nurse**

We will implement our new education framework and our new standards of proficiency for registered nurses from the start of quarter three.

- **Future midwife**

We will complete the consultation on our draft standards for registered midwives, approve the final standards in autumn 2019 and launch at the start of quarter four.

- **Return to practice**

We will publish new return to practice standards for nurses, midwives and nursing associates in quarter one.

- **Post registration standards**

By the end of quarter one, we will agree a timescale and work programme to complete our review of post-registration standards.

### 2. We will quality assure all education institutions and programmes against the new standards using our new model of quality assurance.

## Embedding regulation of nursing associates into our core functions

We opened a new part of the register for nursing associates in England in January 2019. They bridge the gap between health and care assistants and registered nurses. The nursing associate role creates opportunities and offers a new entry-point to the health and care professions and a progression route to graduate level nursing. It is a standalone role in its own right.

Nursing associates are trained to work with people of all ages and in a variety of health and care settings. They support (not substitute) registered nurses so nurses can focus on more complex clinical duties.

## Our commitments for 2019–2020

**Accountable owner:** Director, Education and Standards

We will approve nursing associate pre-registration programmes, using our new education framework<sup>1</sup>.

We will monitor and review our regulatory processes to ensure they work well for nursing associates on an ongoing basis through the year and seek to gain insights from the evaluation being undertaken by the National Institute for Health Research into the introduction of the role.

<sup>1</sup>Approvals are demand led so this commitment does not have a specific deadline



3

## Enhancing our capability and infrastructure



### Transforming our corporate systems

We use a range of technologies to help us perform our regulatory duties. An example is our online register of nurses, midwives and nursing associates. We need to ensure these technologies are cost-effective and support modern regulation.

We are delivering a three-year programme to replace outdated IT systems and deliver solutions that improve the use of intelligence, enhance our efficiency, and provide a better experience for our colleagues, the professionals on our register, the public and our partners.

### Our commitments for 2019–2020

**Accountable owner:** Director, Technology and Business Innovation

1. We will transform our corporate systems to provide greater efficiency and effectiveness, and ensure they are fit for purpose now and in the future. By the end of the year, we will:
  - replace our systems for registration, revalidation, case management and quality assurance of education providers, and take advantage of new Microsoft software
  - launch a new solution to replace our document management system.
2. We will enhance our business intelligence infrastructure and systems that support the Regulatory Intelligence Unit with identifying and addressing potential areas of regulatory risk.

## Creating a digital workplace

Alongside transforming our corporate systems, over the next two years, we will provide our employees with technology to enable them to do their jobs more effectively while supporting agile and flexible working. This will include new telephone and video conferencing enhancements, virtual hearings, improved internal collaboration and communication platforms such as Workplace by Facebook, a new intranet and new online surveying tools, which will transform the how we communicate internally and externally.

### Our commitments for 2019–2020

**Accountable owner:** Director, Technology and Business Innovation

1. Phase one of the telephony upgrade has already been delivered. Phase two, which includes upgraded call centre functionality, will be delivered by the end of quarter four.
2. Most employees will be issued with laptops, and new corporate WiFi will be installed across all NMC sites by the end of quarter two.
3. We will implement a new collaboration and communications platform (workplace) to complement our intranet by the end of quarter one.



## Delivering our People strategy

People are essential to our success and we remain committed to investing in our colleagues.

2019–2020 is the third year of our four-year People strategy, which will develop a progressive, sustainable and engaged working environment that contributes to our development as a great place to work. We aim to attract, develop and retain professional, highly skilled and engaged employees to deliver our ambition of better and safer care.

We will begin modernising our pay and reward framework to ensure we can attract and retain highly skilled colleagues.

We will improve our employee engagement through targeted initiatives such as improving career progression and vocational pathways for colleagues, learning and organisational development interventions and continuing our leadership development programme throughout 2019–2020. By implementing these initiatives we can continue to build on our culture of creating high performing teams. All this work supports our commitment to our equality and inclusion action plan and contributes to our vision of being an employer of choice.

We will continue to develop and promote our values, and establish positive behaviours that make the NMC a great place to work. We will use feedback already gathered to ensure the employee voice is heard as we develop our new values and behaviours framework to underpin our new strategy for 2020–2025.

We will continue to improve our internal HR and organisational development capabilities to ensure we can support colleagues to deliver the best work they can and embrace our people-centred culture.

### Our commitments for 2019–2020

**Accountable owner:** Director, People and Organisational Development

1. New pay and grading system to be consulted upon and implemented by end of quarter two. Longer term work on future pay scheme design to be concluded by the end of quarter four.
2. Equality and inclusion action plan to be rolled out during quarter one.
3. New values and behaviours framework to be agreed by the end of quarter four.

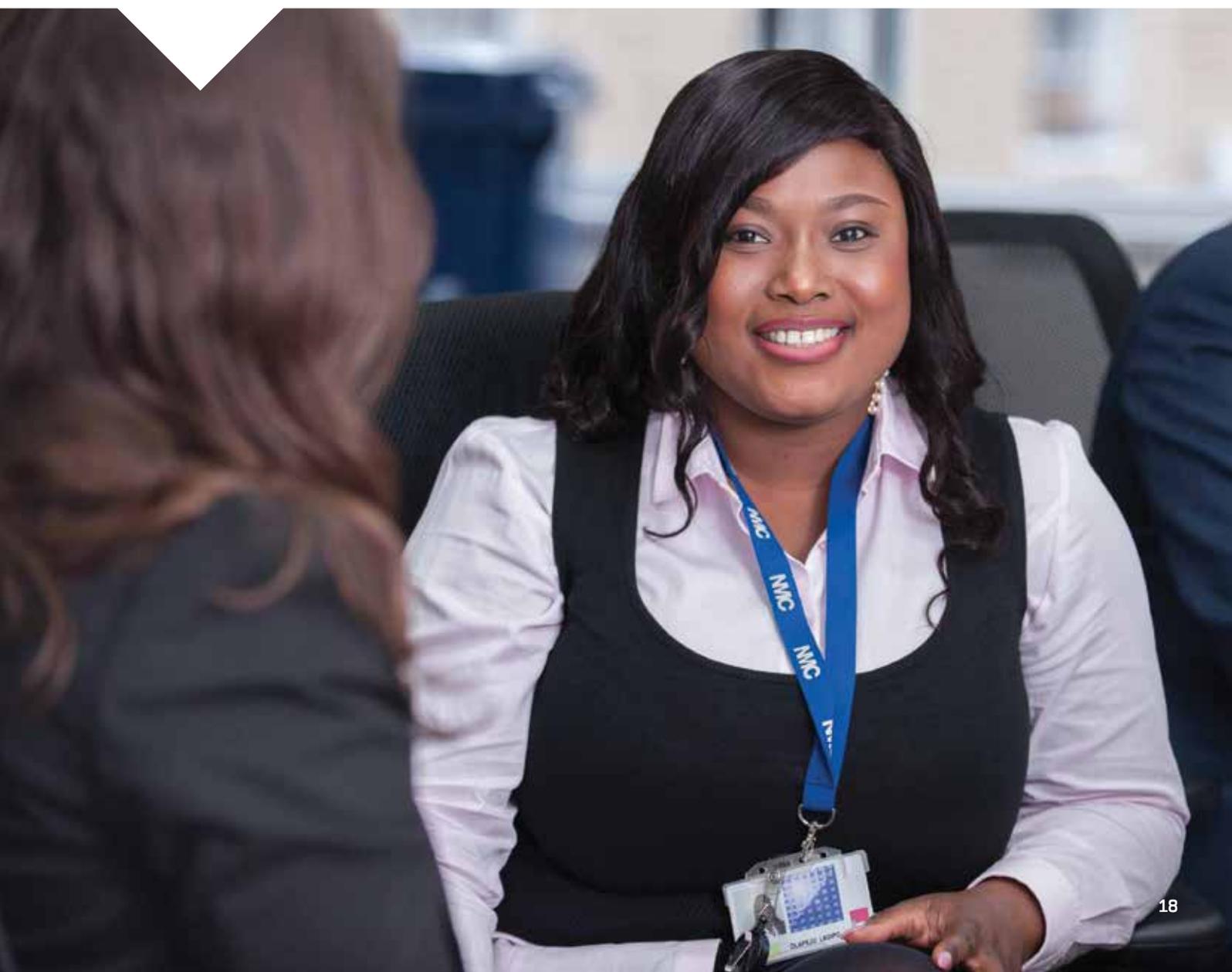
## **Moving our fitness to practise teams to new accommodation**

During 2019–2020, we will move our fitness to practise teams from 23 Portland Place, 1 Kemble Street, and 61 Aldwych to new modern offices in Stratford, saving £1 million a year in rent. We will maintain our existing fitness to practise premises at 2 Stratford Place and George Street in Edinburgh. We will continue to run hearings in London, Edinburgh, Cardiff and Belfast.

## **Our commitments for 2019–2020**

**Accountable owner:** Director, Resources

Move our fitness to practise teams from locations at 23 Portland Place, 1 Kemble Street, and 61 Aldwych into a single location at Stratford by the end of quarter two, without disruption to operations.



## Delivering proactive strategic communications and engagement

Our goal is to develop a stronger and leading voice in health and social care, building trust and confidence in professional regulation among the public, people using health and social care services, our partners and professionals on our register to play a more significant role in providing better, safer care.

We need to engage more effectively. We should demonstrate that we are listening to people, so we can communicate better with them. Central to this will be telling a coherent and compelling story.

This will explain to NMC employees, the public, people using health and social care services, professionals on our register and our partners who we are, what our plans are, and what these changes and improvements will mean for them.

### Our commitments for 2019–2020

**Accountable owner:** Director, External Affairs

1. By the end of quarter one, we will co-produce with stakeholders and key audiences the draft themes for the 2020–2025 corporate strategy.
2. By the end of quarter two, we will employ the new operating model for communications and engagement to support the successful roll out of our public policy initiatives, and improve engagement with parliamentary and devolved administrations by establishing and growing our network.
3. By the end of quarter four, we will launch the corporate strategy, achieving widespread third party support and high levels of employee knowledge.





## Developing our new strategy for 2020–2025



### **New strategy for 2020–2025**

Our new strategy will be co-produced internally between the Council and our employees, and co-produced externally with the professionals on our register, the public and our partners.

We commissioned a major piece of research in 2018 to better understand all of our stakeholders' values and beliefs. This work will be completed in 2019 and will inform how we develop the strategy, alongside horizon scanning and a wide range of other inputs.

We are committed to being a learning organisation. We will use our knowledge about what has worked well in the past and areas where we need to improve. We will build on the progress made under the 2015–2020 strategy including the new approach to fitness to practise and transforming our corporate systems. We will continue to be ambitious, embrace cutting-edge approaches to how we regulate and strive towards even 'better, safer care'.

### **Our commitments for 2019–2020**

**Accountable owner:** Chief Executive and Registrar

Working together with our stakeholders, we will deliver a new strategy that inspires our employees, engages the professionals on our register, the public and our partners, and builds on our progress in promoting better, safer care. The Council will decide whether to approve the strategy by March 2020.



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The nursing and midwifery regulator for England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Better and safer care is at the heart of what we do.

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