

# Newsletter

Spring 2024



## OUR NEW LOOK WEBSITE



As part of a consortium of Housing Associations and in partnership with Kiswebs we launched our new look website in December 2023, and we would love your feedback; do you find the website easy to use and navigate? Does it include all the information you would expect? Could we improve?

Check it out here

[www.oaktreeha.org.uk](http://www.oaktreeha.org.uk) Give your feedback here [info@oaktreeha.org.uk](mailto:info@oaktreeha.org.uk)



OTHA WEBSITE  
QR Code

## Voluntary Board Members

OTHA has two exciting opportunities for the right individuals to join its thriving Management Committee. We are looking for Board Members who are interested in contributing to the strategic leadership of the Association. This opportunity offers the chance to gain experience in governance and strategic leadership of a charitable registered social landlord.



Our Management Committee comprises of individuals with differing skillsets and experience with a strong and shared commitment to set and deliver Oak Tree Housing Association's strategic objectives. The Management Committee currently meet on the last Monday of the month (approx. 8-10 meetings per year). Meetings are held in the evening at 6:30pm for approximately 2 hours. Attendance can be "in person" or remotely.

If you are interested, please contact Nick Jardine, CEO for an informal chat/recruitment pack on 01475 807000.

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# Rent Consultation Exercise 2024

In January and February of each year, the Association traditionally carries out a consultation exercise on the proposed rent increase being considered from 1st April of that year. We made a start in December 2023 this time and the information pack and survey was issued with the Christmas newsletter.

We sent everyone information and a survey form by post and for those tenants that we have a mobile number or email address for, we sent an electronic version of the survey. We held 3 separate meetings at different times of the day in our office and these meetings gave us the opportunity to speak to tenants in more detail.

The rent increase for consultation was modelled as 6.1% based on the RPI figure of October 2023.



A total of 265 responses were received. This is a 15% response rate which is slightly higher than the last 2 years. Out of the 265 responses only 162 made comments on the survey.

We asked if tenants felt they had received enough information about the rent increase and 55.1 % said they had. Only 31.7% said they agreed with the increase of 6.1% with 68.3% disagreeing.

We are always keen to capture feedback and we asked for tenants' comments on the rent increase. A total of 162 comments were received. There were some common themes, and the comments were grouped into the same themes as in 2023 so a comparison could be made.

Theme	Number 2024	Number 2023
Overall rise in cost of living	29	29
Fair increase	19	10
Too high	59	28
Property not up to standard	0	1
General comment	24	12
Planned maintenance comments	9	10
Dissatisfied with service - complaint	0	4
Repairs service	19	11
More information needed	0	0
Enquiry - follow up	1	6
Compliment	2	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>162</b>	<b>112</b>

Thank you to everyone who took the time to give us their views. Annual rent increases are a necessity to allow the Association to continue to maintain our services to our customers and remain financially viable.



# Customer Care Statistics - Quarters 2/3 2023/24

Target Area	Task Targets	Target Times (annual %)	Method of measuring performance	Performance Q2(Jul-Sep)	Performance Q3 (Oct-Dec)
Answer incoming telephone calls	Within 20 secs	100%	Export of data from telephone system	95.5%	96.5%
Return telephone call	By end of next working day	100%	Checking complaints register and Customer Care survey for non-compliance	100%	100%
Email response	5 working days	100%	As above	100%	100%
Social Media response	5 working days	100%	Facebook inbox & comments	100%	100%
Time to wait for an appointment to see specific member of staff	Same or next working day	95%	Survey carried out twice per month (rotating days)	N/A – no survey	N/A – no survey
Appointments kept/ attended on time	Within 5 mins of agreed time	100%	Survey carried out twice per month (rotating days)	N/A – no survey	N/A – no survey
Acknowledge or fully respond to a written enquiry	5 working days	95%	Incoming mail register	100%	93%
Behavioural code of Committee, Staff and Contractors/Agents	Adherence to Code	100%	Based on complaints received via Complaints Handling Procedure	0 incidents	3 incidents
Behavioural code of Customers	Adherence to Code	100%	Managers reporting incidents	0 incidents	0 incidents

## Volunteer Opportunity to be part of the Oak Tree Focus Group

You may remember we ran an article in our Winter Newsletter as we are keen to establish a small group of tenants to be part of our Focus Group. Thank you to those who responded, we will be back in touch with some suggestions of meeting dates and topics soon.

We would love to hear from any other willing volunteers interested in meeting with us to chat about the Association's Policy work and any consultation projects we are working on. There wouldn't be a long-term commitment and you could engage as much or as little as you wanted.

It would be an opportunity to meet with other tenants and our staff and you would receive a very warm welcome.

If this is something that interests you, please contact us either by phone on 01475 807000, via email [info@oaktreeha.org.uk](mailto:info@oaktreeha.org.uk) or pop into the office and ask for Kirsty Davis, for an informal chat and to give you further information.

# Reporting a Repair

Following our successful tender process, you will have seen several newer contractors carrying out reactive maintenance throughout Oak Tree's stock. Although the contractors have changed, our repair reporting process and repair timescales have not.

Noted below is a short reminder of our timescales and categories.



**Emergency Repairs:** Out of Hours and During Office hours.

Emergency repairs will be attended to within 4 hours

If follow-up works are required, emergency repair will be made safe and a further repair raised in the urgent or routine categories



**Urgent Repair:** Completed within 2 working days



**Routine Repair:** Completed within 7 working days



**Complex Repair:** Completed within 28 working days



**Heating Repairs:** The timescales for heating repairs are the same as above.

In the event of emergency works requiring parts to be ordered, a follow up repair will be raised under the urgent or routine timescale.

Our heating contractor will offer temporary heating in circumstances where it is not possible to re-instate the heating at the time of their visit.

The temporary heating will be in the form of warm air blowers, which our contractor can carry within their vehicles.

This is a temporary measure only and it is hoped that parts will be sourced, and the repair completed at the earliest opportunity.

Unfortunately, Oak Tree does not have the facility to offer compensation in circumstances where temporary heating has been offered.

You can report all repairs to our repair-line on Telephone Number: **01475 807001**.

The repair-line is open during office hours which are: Monday 9:00am – 5:00pm

Tuesday 9:00am – 6:00pm

Wednesday 12:00pm – 5:00pm

Thursday 9:00am – 5:00pm

Friday 9:00am – 4:00pm



**Out-with these times our emergency contractor for all repair types (James Frew), can be contacted on the same telephone number: 01475 807001 alternatively you can contact them direct on Tel: 01294 468113.**

## Membership of Oak Tree Housing Association

Lifetime membership of the Association costs just £1 and you can apply at any time. As a member, you would be invited to attend the Association's AGM where you would be entitled to vote for the Management Committee or stand for election to the Management Committee yourself.

If you would like to find out more about membership of Oak Tree Housing Association, or you would like an application form, please contact our office on 01475 807000 or email us at [info@oaktreeha.org.uk](mailto:info@oaktreeha.org.uk).

## We need to be sure we are speaking to the right person

We deal with our customers in a variety of ways – face to face, on the telephone and by letter and email.

A lot of our staff have worked with Oak Tree Housing Association for a long time and have got to know our customers very well. You may be familiar with your Housing Officer for example and know them by name.

We need to make sure, however, that when we are speaking to you that we are speaking to the right person. In particular, when we are providing information about your rent account, repairs or your housing application. These are all personal matters which are private to you.

When you contact the Association by telephone or by calling into the office you will already be asked for your name and address.

We may also ask you to confirm some additional details for security purposes. This is to make sure it is you we are speaking to. For example, we may ask for :-

- Postcode
- Date of Birth
- Telephone number
- How you pay your rent? (e.g. direct debit, housing benefit)
- National Insurance Number



If you want to make a specific arrangement with us which would allow someone else to deal with your tenancy or your application on your behalf, then we are happy to put an arrangement in place.

We can also put a password of your choice on your account that we would ask you for when we speak to you.

# Being A Good Neighbour

Everyone should be allowed to enjoy freedom from nuisance and annoyance caused by their neighbours, their family or visitors to their home. Good neighbours can usually work out differences without falling out. Where differences can't be resolved, our policy is to work with residents to try to find a solution or to change the behaviour which is causing concern.



## Noise

This is one of the most common complaints we receive. It can be very disruptive noise that affects several neighbours e.g.

- Rowdy Visitors
- Parties
- Loud music being played
- Dogs barking

Or it can also be general household noise e.g.

- Noise from televisions
- Household appliances on after 10.00pm (vacuum, washing machines etc)
- Children playing
- Doors slamming
- Walking on laminate flooring with shoes
- DIY noise particularly in the early morning or evening



Sometimes a tactful approach to your neighbour can resolve noise problems. Most people will try to reduce a noise problem when they are aware of it.

With adjoining properties, particularly flats, noise can travel through floors and walls. Sometimes, even ordinary levels of noise can transfer if the sound insulation is poor. A tenant will only be in breach of their tenancy agreement if the noise level is unreasonably high, or the noise happens at anti-social hours. In this type of case, OTHA will contact the neighbour on your behalf to discuss the situation.

In a serious & enduring case, we can apply to the Sheriff Court for an eviction decree if a tenant continues to create excessive noise. An alternative is to apply for an Anti-Social Behaviour Order (ASBO) which if breached leads to criminal penalties.

Last year the Court awarded 2 decree's for eviction in relation to Anti-Social Behaviour.

There are a number of other agencies that you can contact who have powers to deal with a noise problem:

Complain to the Environmental Health Services at Inverclyde Council. They can lend noise-monitoring equipment and can issue a notice requiring your neighbour to stop any noise nuisance. If the noise still continues, they can then take your neighbour to court and have them fined.

Complain directly to the police at the time the noise occurs. They will attend and have powers to deal with any breach of the peace and to remove hi-fi equipment if necessary. It also gives an independent report of the problem, which can be used as evidence.

# Estate Management & Tenant Responsibilities

## Common areas

- All tenants are jointly responsible for keeping the close, gardens and/or common areas and back courts clean and tidy.
- Anyone who witnesses vandalism to our Association's properties must report this to us and the Police. We will repair any damage to common areas as quickly as possible.
- Communal areas cannot be used to store any items such as bikes, prams, furniture or rubbish.
- Our Housing Services Team carries out regular close inspections and will identify any items left in the close. We will initially write out to residents to advise that they must remove their items from the communal area. We will also give a date for these to be removed and advise that if the items are still there after the agreed date they will be uplifted by our contractor and disposed of. These costs will be re-charged to the resident/s responsible. If there are items in the close that have been left by a former tenant, please let us know and we will arrange for these to be removed. It is for everyone's safety that the communal areas are kept clear.
- If you have any pets, you are responsible for cleaning up any faeces from communal areas.



## Security

If you live in a property with a door entry system you must make sure all outside doors are kept locked to stop unauthorised visitors coming into the building.

## Bins

You must put all waste in the bins provided and keep the bin area clean and tidy. You must ensure your bin is out for collection and returned to the bin store on the same day.



# Death of a tenant – Taking over the tenancy

## Death of a tenant – Taking over the tenancy (Succession to the Tenancy)

This is a gentle reminder on what you need to do to ensure that at what is an upsetting and difficult time, you know your rights and what you need to have put in place to ensure you have succession rights.

Succession to the tenancy is the right of someone to take over the tenancy on the death of the tenant. When a tenant passes away the tenancy will pass to the joint tenant, lawful spouse or civil partner. However, in some cases the person wishing to take over the tenancy is an unmarried partner, family member (including adult children) or carer. If this is the case the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 introduced from 1st November 2019, states that they must have lived in the property for at least 12 months, as their only principal home. The residency period starts from when the tenant of the property informs the Association in writing that the person is now residing with them.

# CANNABIS USE AND CANNABIS CULTIVATION

**Cannabis is a Class 2 Drug and in Scotland it is illegal to: –**

1. Possess or use Cannabis
2. Cultivate Cannabis
3. Sell Cannabis

## 1. Cannabis Use

Unfortunately, the Association has seen an increase in the number of complaints received from residents about the smell of cannabis from neighbouring properties.

This is particularly a problem in blocks of flats, and it is often not clear which resident is either smoking cannabis themselves or allowing others who visit to smoke it. The complaints are not just confined to flats however, smoking cannabis in a private garden is also illegal and anti-social behaviour.

It is illegal to possess cannabis and use it – even within your own home. In addition to it being illegal, it is also a breach of tenancy.

**Oak Tree Housing Association's Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement contains the following clauses that relate to drug use:-**

- 2.3 You must not use or allow the house to be used for illegal or immoral purposes. This includes, but is not limited to, the following: having controlled drugs in the house; ..... You must not carry out any act in the house or in the neighbourhood which may lead to a criminal conviction against you or any member of the household or persons visiting the property.
- 3.3 In particular you, those living with you, and your visitors must not:
  - use your house, or allow it to be used, for illegal or immoral purposes;
  - loiter or cause nuisance in any open space within the neighbourhood;
  - use or sell unlawful drugs or sell alcohol.
- 3.4 In addition, you, those living with you, and your visitors must not do the following in an anti-social way:
  - use drugs or alcohol.

It is clear that taking illegal drugs is a breach of tenancy and if the Association can obtain sufficient evidence of the breach, then legal action will be taken.

It can be difficult to pinpoint which tenant is responsible when complaints are received about the smell of cannabis – particularly in a block of flats. The tenant may not wish to smoke in their own home so is using the common close or backcourt and because it is illegal to use cannabis, they are less likely to admit to using it.

The Association will always pass on any information received to the Police and we strongly encourage neighbours to do the same if they have concerns about illegal drug use. You can call the Police on 101 or Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.





## 2. Cannabis Cultivation

The Police in Inverclyde have been successful in finding several large-scale Cannabis Cultivations. Production has stopped, the plants and equipment have been destroyed and charges are pending.

There is a very serious and dangerous aspect to cannabis cultivation, and it is very important that the public are aware of the danger.

To cultivate cannabis plants, large amounts of heat and light are needed and in many cases the criminals involved in this cultivation will tamper with the electricity supply. This is extremely dangerous and could result in a fire or an explosion. High power fans or extraction devices are often used to disguise the smell, and these can overheat.

There is an increased chance of electric shocks, and these can prove fatal and again increases the risk of fire or explosion.

Whilst it is often the case that industrial type premises are used for large scale cultivations, domestic premises are often used too. Even cultivation of a few plants in a house or flat is dangerous to the occupants and others as well as being illegal.

Some signs to watch out for are:-

- Strong smell
- Condensation on windows
- Windows closed in hot weather
- Noise from fans running
- Heat radiating from the property
- Flickering lights in the close or your own flat on a regular basis

If you have any concerns about a property, then please either contact the Police or your Housing Officer to discuss your concerns. You can report it anonymously by using the Crimestoppers number 0800 555 111

## 3. Selling Cannabis

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 (the 2014 Act) provides for a new streamlined eviction process where there has been a criminal conviction punishable by imprisonment for antisocial or criminal behaviour within the previous 12 months, committed in or in the vicinity of the house by the tenant or someone residing in or visiting the house.

The above process would apply to a conviction for cultivating or selling drugs, including cannabis. The Association will always take eviction action against any tenant, someone residing or visiting the house, who is convicted of cultivating or selling drugs from the Association's property.



# Garden Competition Winners

Following the garden competition that took place last year, here is Louise Ward, Housing Officer presenting the garden competition winners with their certificate and gift voucher. Well done!



# Condensation and Mould Advice

## Condensation and Dampness

The Association often receives phone calls regarding dampness in homes and more often than not the problem relates specifically to condensation. The following advice note should help you to understand the issues relating to condensation and mould growth and the remedial measures that can be taken to avoid the problem occurring in your home.

## Condensation and Mould Growth Advice

It is important to note that there are different types of dampness, and each have different solutions. The types of dampness you might find in your home are:

### Condensation

Condensation is water vapour held in the air. The problem occurs where lots of moisture is being produced, for example, in the kitchen and bathroom, moisture can settle on cold surfaces, and this can sometimes result in mould. There is a misconception that condensation only occurs in older properties. This is not true and can happen in new properties as well. This leaflet gives you advice on how to tackle the problem.

### Rising Damp

Rising Damp is caused by moisture rising up the wall from the ground below. This only occurs on ground floor walls and can usually be identified by evidence of a tidemark up to 1 metre above the ground. The usual remedy is to install or repair the damp proof course.

### Rain Penetration

This is caused by an outside defect in the wall or roof, which allows moisture to come through the building fabric. You will notice this type of damp is worse in wet weather. **You should contact our Maintenance Team on Tel: 01475 807001 to report signs of rain penetration.**

### Plumbing Problems

A small leak over a period of time will lead to a patch of dampness close to the source of the leak. Fixing the leak should solve the problem. **You should contact our Maintenance Team on Tel: 01475 807001 to report any plumbing problems.**

## CONDENSATION

If your home is damp or you find patches of mould on walls, furnishings or clothes, condensation may be the cause. The following advice will help you solve the problem:

### Why are you getting Condensation?

Air can only hold a certain amount of water vapour – the warmer it is the more it can hold. If it is cooled by contact with a cold surface such as a mirror, window or even a wall, the water vapour will turn into droplets of water–condensation, so the warmer you keep your home the less likely you are to get condensation.

### When is it a Problem?

Every home gets condensation at some point – usually when lots of moisture and steam are being produced, for instance at bath times, when a main meal is being cooked or when clothes are being washed or dried.



# Condensation and Mould Advice

It is quite normal to find your bedroom windows misted up in the morning after a cold night. There is nothing much you can do to stop this, but, if your home never feels free of condensation read on ....

## How do you know it is Condensation?

It is not always easy to tell but other kinds of damp, such as rain or plumbing leaks usually leave a tide mark. Condensation is usually found on north facing walls and in corners, in cupboards and under work surfaces – in fact wherever there is little air movement.

If you are not sure what is causing the damp in your home, start by checking pipes, overflows and under sinks to see if there are any obvious leaks. Have a look outside too – you may be able to see if there are slates missing from the roof or if gutters or rainwater pipes are cracked or leaking.

If you have a new or recently modernised house or flat, don't forget that it may not have dried out yet from water remaining after the building work. It usually takes 9 to 18 months for this to happen, and you need to use more heat during that time.

## What can you do about it?

The way you use your home affects the amount of condensation you get. This does not mean that you should alter your habits drastically – just bear in mind the following tips:

### Heating

You will get less condensation if you keep your house warm most of the time.

Insulation will help you do this. We understand fuel price is an issue, however, try to remember the following too:

- It is important that your heating system is checked regularly so that it works effectively
- Try to leave some background heat on through the day in cold weather. Most dwellings take quite a long time to warm up and it may cost you more if you try to heat it up quickly in the evenings.
- If you can't afford to spend more on fuel due to high quarterly bills, ask your fuel supplier about their budget schemes, which help spread the cost of fuel.

### Ventilation

In winter open windows a little, only as long as they are misted up. If you fit draught stripping, leave a space for a small amount of air to get through.

### Chimneys

Never block these up completely. They need an air vent to allow ventilation.

### Bottled Gas and Paraffin Heaters

You will need to allow extra ventilation if you use one. Flueless heaters of this sort produce more than a pint of water for every pint of fuel they burn. Always check the manufacturer's written instruction before using any sort of flueless heater.

### Drying Clothes

Drying clothes indoors, particularly on radiators, can increase condensation unless you open a window to allow air to circulate. If you have a tumble dryer which is not vented to the outside, you will need to allow more ventilation when you use it.



# Condensation and Mould Advice

## Doors

Keep kitchen and bathroom doors shut, particularly when cooking, washing or bathing – otherwise water vapour will spread right through the house and condensation will probably reach other rooms.

## Extractor Fans

If you have an extractor fan, use it when the windows get steamed up.

## Kettles and Pans

Don't allow kettles and pans to boil away any longer than necessary.

## Cupboards and Wardrobes

Don't overfill cupboards and wardrobes, and always make sure that some air can circulate freely by fitting ventilators in doors and leaving a space at the back of the shelves.

## Dehumidifiers

Solve the problem if the damp is caused by condensation. You will not reduce condensation dampness unless you take steps to balance the level of moisture, heat and ventilation in your home.

## First Steps against Mould

- Treat any mould you may already have in your home then do what you can to reduce condensation. This will restrict new mould growth.
- Do not disturb mould by brushing or vacuuming, this can increase the risk of respiratory problems.
- Wipe off mould growth immediately with water. Do not use washing up liquid.
- To kill and remove mould growth, wipe down affected areas with a fungicidal wash or spray. This is available from hardware, DIY stores and supermarkets, choose a product which carries a Health & Safety Executive "approval number". Always follow the manufacturer's written instructions carefully. Do not use bleach.
- Dry-clean clothes affected by mildew and shampoo carpets.
- After treatment, redecorate using a good fungicidal paint to help prevent mould recurring. Please bear in mind that this paint is not effective if overlaid with ordinary paint or wallpaper.



# Staffing Update



## A warm welcome to our newest Housing Admin Assistant, Amy Tannock.

Oak Tree welcomed Amy in February 2024, on a temporary contract, when she joined the Housing Team as Housing Administration Assistant. We wish Amy every success in her role.

# Tenants Satisfaction Survey 2024

Your views are really important to us. So later in 2024 we will be organising our next Tenant Satisfaction Survey.

This is an independent survey and the information gathered helps us understand how satisfied you are. It also measures what areas we do well in or where we could do better and how can we change what we do to ensure that we deliver value for money and meet the changing needs of our customers.



We will provide more information in our Summer Newsletter edition.

# Consultation Cafés - Customer Services & Office Premises



**Our  
Consultation  
Cafe will  
take place  
on :**

**Wed. 17  
April  
2024 at  
2.00pm**

Please come and join us (at our office or via a Teams Call) on Wednesday 17th April at our Consultation Café – Save the Date.

Following our Consultation on our Customer Care Charter. We would love to hear more of your views/feedback on different aspects of our office. This will include our office opening hours, layout of our reception area & services. There will also be a "Tesco Voucher" prize draw for those attending.

Places are likely to become limited, therefore to be part of this Consultation Café and come along to this event all we ask is that you let us know in advance by giving us a call on 01475 807000 or email us at [info@oaktreeha.org.uk](mailto:info@oaktreeha.org.uk). If you need help with transport please let us know and we will try and assist.



# Chocolate Cornflake Cakes

## Ingredients:

- 50g butter
- 100g milk or dark chocolate broken into chunks
- 3 tbsp golden syrup
- 100g cornflakes

## Instructions:

1. Weigh out the ingredients. Older children can do this themselves with supervision and little ones can help pour or spoon ingredients into the weighing scales. Put 50g butter, 100g milk or dark chocolate, broken into chunks and 3 tbsp golden syrup into a saucepan or microwave bowl. Put 100g cornflakes into another bowl.
2. Melt the weighed butter, chocolate, and golden syrup in a saucepan over a low heat or briefly in the microwave. Allow to cool a little before pouring over the cornflakes.
3. Stir the ingredients together gently using a wooden spoon. Spoon the mixture into 12 cupcake cases arranged on a muffin tray (or baking sheet, if you don't have one). Grown ups will need to do this for younger children or simply arrange on a tray and let the mess happen. Put in the fridge to set.

## Prefer Paperless?



Did you know that you can receive your correspondence from us by email?

Going paperless is better for the planet and helps keep costs down. We want to make sure we are providing you with the best value for money.

Please email [info@oaktreeha.org.uk](mailto:info@oaktreeha.org.uk) to make the switch.

## Translate

If English is not your first language and need your correspondence from us translated into your preferred language, please contact the Association and we will update your details.



**STAY  
in  
TOUGH!**



01475 807000



[info@oaktreeha.org.uk](mailto:info@oaktreeha.org.uk)



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2024 / 2025



## PUBLIC HOLIDAYS



**EASTER**

FRIDAY 29TH MARCH  
MONDAY 1ST APRIL

**MAY DAY**

MONDAY 6TH MAY

**SPRING**

FRIDAY 24TH MAY  
MONDAY 27TH MAY

**GREENOCK  
FAIR**

FRIDAY 28TH JUNE  
MONDAY 1ST JULY

**SEPTEMBER  
WEEKEND**

FRIDAY 27TH SEPTEMBER  
MONDAY 30TH SEPTEMBER

**CHRISTMAS  
& NEW  
YEAR**

WEDNESDAY 25TH DECEMBER  
THURSDAY 26TH DECEMBER  
FRIDAY 27TH DECEMBER  
WEDNESDAY 1ST JANUARY  
THURSDAY 2ND JANUARY  
FRIDAY 3RD JANUARY



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