

The Learning Trust

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 53119

Name of lead inspector: Jon Bowman HMI

Last day of inspection: 18 May 2012

Type of provider: Local authority

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Information about the provider

1. The Learning Trust (the Trust) is a not-for-profit company, limited by guarantee. It has provided education services in the London Borough of Hackney since 2002. The Skills Funding Agency funds the Trust, through the Adult Learning Service (ALS) to provide adult safeguarded learning, including family learning, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) and community learning courses. This inspection graded ESOL, literacy and numeracy and community learning. In 20010/11 4,851 learners enrolled on 574 programmes.
2. Programmes provided directly by the ALS through their Direct Teach team include English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), literacy and numeracy, information and communication technology (ICT) and family learning. The service also provides information, advice and guidance. The ALS subcontracts the provision of most of its programmes which are offered through 73 providers including primary and secondary schools and 17 children's centres. In addition, the following organisations provide training on behalf of the provider:
 - Community College Hackney
 - African Community School
 - Age UK
 - City and Hackney Mind
 - Core Arts
 - Cromwell College
 - ELATT
 - Interlink and Vista
 - Laburnam Boat Club
 - Mansford College
 - Work Skills Learning.
3. Hackney is an inner London borough with a population of some 219,000 spread over 19 wards. It is the second most deprived local authority in England. Approximately two thirds of the adult population have qualifications below level 3 and 14% of those aged over 16 have no qualifications. Unemployment rates in 2011 were 11% compared with London and national averages of 9% and 8% respectively. Of the adult population, 41% is made up of minority ethnic groups compared with 34% in inner London, and 9% nationally.

Type of provision	Number of learners in (previous year)
Provision for adult learners: Learning for social and personal development	4,851

Summary report

Grades: 1 is outstanding; 2 is good; 3 is satisfactory; 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness of provision		Grade 2
Capacity to improve		Grade 1
		Grade
Outcomes for learners		2
Quality of provision		2
Leadership and management		2
Safeguarding		2
Equality and diversity		1
Learning for social and personal development		Grade
ESOL, literacy and numeracy		2
Community learning		2

Overall effectiveness

- The overall effectiveness of provision is good. Learners, many of whom are new to learning or come from the more disadvantaged areas of the borough achieve well. They enjoy their learning and gain many personal and social benefits and improve their skills. Many progress onto other learning, employment and volunteering opportunities. However, the service does not have a comprehensive procedure for tracking learners once they have left a course and does not know the extent of their progress.
- Good quality teaching, together with good advice, guidance and support, is central to the good achievements that learners make. Learners, including the more vulnerable, make good progress in achieving their goals. They develop their confidence, self-esteem and a thirst for learning. While teaching is good, some inconsistencies are found in the recording of learners' progress and achievement. The service works extremely effectively with partners. It supports them very well to provide good quality courses. The wide range of partner organisations which offer adult learning ensures that a very good spread of provision exists across the borough and that learners can gain access to courses at venues near their homes.

6. The service is well led and managed. Senior leaders and managers set high standards and have an excellent understanding of the strengths and areas for development of the service. The courses offered meet local needs exceptionally well. Learners feel safe and their safety is prioritised effectively. The views of users help shape the content of courses and influence the development of the service well. Equality and diversity are promoted exceptionally well in sessions and through the very effective engagement of target groups. The service provides outstanding value for money and has an excellent track record of improving the provision. The capacity to make further improvements is therefore outstanding.

Main findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. Learners gain a wide range of attributes including increased aspirations, confidence and self-esteem and an enthusiasm for further learning. The service supports vulnerable learners well to take greater control of their lives, develop their interests and skills, and pursue their personal and career aspirations. Success, achievement and retention rates are good across the provision. Learners attend regularly.
- Learners make good progress in sessions and many move onto further learning, employment and voluntary work. However, whilst action has been taken to track the progress of learners more comprehensively once they have completed courses, the service recognises the need to capture more widely the destinations of learners into employment, further learning and community activities such as volunteering.
- Mechanisms for recording the achievement and progress of learners in non-accredited learning are satisfactory. However, these are not always consistently applied and therefore data on achievement are not fully reliable.
- Teaching and learning are good. The best sessions are well planned, move at a brisk pace and engage all learners very well. Learners make rapid progress, learning is assessed very well, reinforced and progress tracked effectively. Where less effective teaching is evident it is characterised by the slow pace of sessions and a lack of engagement by all learners.
- The service provides an excellent range of programmes in a variety of locations accessible to learners from across the borough. The ALS makes very good use of its excellent knowledge of local needs. The range of programmes very effectively supports the service's mission of engaging those new to learning and whose circumstances make them vulnerable.
- Partnership working is outstanding. Through a wide range of partner organisations the service successfully reaches and engages with learners whose circumstances make them vulnerable, hard to reach and those from the most disadvantaged communities. Partners receive both very good support and challenge to build capacity and ensure that provision is of good quality.
- Care, guidance and support are good. Learners receive good support that ensures that they achieve well. ESOL learners benefit from particularly effective information, advice and guidance. Tutors respond well to individual learners'

needs and are very supportive in providing individual guidance. Of those receiving help from the information, advice and guidance team, a good and improving proportion of learners move on to further training.

- Senior leaders and managers set high standards and governance is outstanding. They set challenging targets and monitor the performance of the service very well. They manage the service effectively and the outcomes for learners and the quality of provision have improved significantly since the last inspection.
- The arrangements to safeguard learners are good and safeguarding is effectively promoted and prioritised. All staff, including those in subcontracted providers, are subject to Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks. Training is routine. Designated safeguarding officers receive additional higher level training. Links with the local safeguarding board are strong.
- The organisation's approach to the promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. The ALS chooses its subcontractors carefully so that the most vulnerable groups in the borough are reached and engaged in learning. Learners from minority ethnic groups achieve the same good outcomes as their peers.
- The service provides outstanding value for money. Over a three year period learner numbers have increased without increases in funding. Resources are of good quality and much improved since the last inspection. The ALS uses self-assessment processes effectively to improve the provision and the current self-assessment report provides an accurate account of the strengths and areas for development of the service.

What does The Learning Trust need to do to improve further?

- Improve the consistency of the recording of learners' progress and achievement, so that all data on outcomes are fully reliable.
- Develop ways of capturing the destinations of learners so that the full impact of the service can be measured more effectively.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- their friendly tutors
- the learning that helps them in their daily lives
- the sessions at local centres which are easy to travel to
- courses that help build their confidence and self-esteem
- the practical help that enables them to overcome personal barriers and work towards their goals
- the supportive atmosphere in sessions.

What learners would like to see improved:

- the number of available sessions

- the availability of more accredited courses.

Summary of the views of partners as confirmed by inspectors

What partners like:

- the effective work in developing provision and building capacity
- the borough's approach in providing ESOL
- the opportunities to share good practice
- the close partnership working
- the effective subcontracting arrangements.

What partners would like to see improved:

- the availability of mentors to improve quality assurance.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 1

7. Leaders and managers have a strong and ambitious vision for the service. They set high standards and monitor closely that these are met. The members of the board carefully monitor the work of the service and provide exceptional challenge and support to senior managers. The service has an outstanding track record of improving the provision. Since the last inspection the service has consistently improved outcomes for learners to good or better levels in the vast majority of subject areas. Areas for development identified at the last inspection have been very effectively tackled. Learner numbers are increasing. User engagement is effective. The self-assessment process is informed well by the views of the users. The current self-assessment report provides an accurate account of the provision. Learners, partners and subcontractors contribute very well to the development of the service.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 2

8. Learners achieve well and accrue a wide range of outcomes that support their personal and social development effectively. Many are new to learning, develop a passion for learning and become highly motivated to take greater control of their lives and progress on to other learning opportunities. The practical skills learnt such as language skills, managing personal finances and using ICT help learners to become more independent in their day-to-day lives. Parents develop a good understanding of the school curriculum, how their children learn and become better placed to support their child's education. Their commitment to further learning leads learners to travel some distance across the borough to attend sessions.
9. Learners greatly enjoy their learning and take pride in their work which is of a good standard overall. Many progress well and move into further learning, training and employment. They become motivated to take an active role in their community through volunteering and helping others. Community Learning Champions encourage others to engage with learning. A good proportion of them secure employment, training and work experience opportunities. The annual progression survey shows that 80% of learners move into employment, further learning and community activities such as volunteering. However, the sample size is small and the service recognises the need to further develop approaches that identify the destinations of all learners to show the progress that they make.
10. Most learners attain their learning goals. Success rates are generally high and have been consistently so across the majority of provision, although they dipped in accredited provision in 2010/11. However, in-year data show that success rates on accredited courses are at the highest level for three years. In the small number of literacy courses success rates are low but improving. Retention rates are high. Learners enjoy and greatly value the sessions they attend. Attendance rates are high and improving.

11. Learners feel safe. They are often familiar with the venues which are located in their own communities. In sessions, learners from a rich variety of backgrounds learn and cooperate together harmoniously. Learners whose circumstances make them vulnerable such as ex-offenders and those with mental health problems achieve good outcomes. For some, attending sessions reduces their feelings of isolation and fosters important peer networks. No differences are recorded in the outcomes achieved for different groups of learners; all achieve equally well.

The quality of provision

Grade 2

12. Teaching and learning are good. Good initial assessment ensures that learners join the right courses for them. The service assesses the literacy and numeracy skills of learners effectively. In the best sessions tutors plan carefully to ensure that activities capture the interests of learners and engage them very well. Learning is made relevant to their everyday lives. Tutors routinely appraise the progress of learners in sessions; learners contribute enthusiastically and make rapid progress. Tutors effectively support and encourage learners to achieve high standards. They use learning technologies well to support teaching. In the less effective sessions the individual needs of all learners are not met sufficiently. In a few non-accredited courses inspectors identified examples where the recording of learners' progress and achievement was insufficiently detailed. The observation of teaching and learning scheme is well established and all tutors are observed annually. The grades awarded generally reflect accurately the quality of teaching. Peer observations of teaching effectively support the development of tutors. Staff value opportunities to learn from each other and observe each other's practice.
13. Provision reflects local and national priorities very well. The service's excellent knowledge of the local community ensures that provision is well planned and coordinated. Learner numbers are increasing. The service uses pilot programmes very well to test new courses and reach new communities. Adult learners' week successfully attracts a large number of learners through a wide variety of workshops and taster events. The range of programmes very effectively supports the service's mission of engaging those new to learning. Working with specialist providers ensures that target groups are engaged very well.
14. Partnership working is outstanding and extends the range of provision and the quality of the learners' experience very well. The service successfully engages with new providers, including small community organisations, ensuring that groups who do not traditionally take part in adult learning do so. The service builds the capacity and expertise in conjunction with partners so that they provide good quality learning experiences.
15. Care, guidance and support are good, in particular for more vulnerable learners. The information, advice and guidance and outreach teams provide effective support for individuals and for groups through workshops and targeted programmes. Support is well tailored to meet the individual needs of learners. They value the support and help they receive extremely highly. The service

provides practical help that supports them very well to achieve their personal ambitions and take positive steps to achieve their career goals. They take greater control over their lives, gain in motivation and self-belief. Tutors provide good individual support in sessions.

Leadership and management

Grade 2

16. Leadership and management are good. Senior leaders and managers set high standards that are very closely aligned to national and local priorities. They have an excellent understanding of the service and provide exemplary challenge and support to and for the provision. Managers set challenging targets for the service and its staff. Performance management is routine and thorough.
17. Communication at all levels within the service is excellent. Staff and partner meetings are very well attended and recorded. Priority is given to learners' engagement and how learners can be helped to achieve. Staff training and development are good. Staff are well qualified. Team meetings focus effectively on the outcomes for learners and a culture of ambition and achievement is well established.
18. Curriculum planning is outstanding. The ALS has an exceptionally detailed knowledge of local needs and a strong focus on helping learners gain employment and work-related skills. The provision is broad, flexible and very responsive to local needs. High quality outreach work ensures that the provision is very well targeted and designed to recruit those in most need. Planning is thorough and effective.
19. Safeguarding arrangements are good and the safety of learners is prioritised effectively. The service has accurately identified its most vulnerable learners. Procedures for risk assessment are good. All staff and those of partners undergo Criminal Records Bureau checks before their employment and have appropriate training relative to their responsibilities. Links with external agencies to share safeguarding concerns are very good.
20. The service has an excellent record in widening participation. Provision is tailored very well to ensure that the service caters effectively for a wide range of under-represented groups. Specific actions to attract learners from these groups are well planned and managed. The ALS chooses its partners carefully for their ability to engage and support those local residents most in need. The service is rigorous in ensuring that learners have an experience that is free from discrimination. Tutors promote equality and diversity exceptionally well in lessons.
21. Engagement with users is good. The service analyses thoroughly feedback from learners and partners' feedback. Views are gathered in a number of different ways and are brought together effectively to inform service improvements and decision making. The service responds swiftly and effectively to the views of users.

22. Quality improvement processes are good. They are inclusive, involving all staff, learners, partners and other stakeholders. The service's self-assessment is fully informed by individual subcontractors' self-evaluation and subject area reports. The quality cycle is well established and the service is very successful in developing quality assurance processes in organisations which are new to government funding. The current self-assessment report provides an accurate commentary on the provision. Development planning is sound with a sharp focus on improvements to the learners' experience.
23. The ALS provides outstanding value for money. Over a three year period the service has successfully increased the numbers of learners using its services without any increases in funding. The quality of resources is good and have much improved since the last inspection. Commissioning arrangements ensure that programmes are sustainable. The ALS makes good use of partners' premises that maximises the use of buildings, reduces the costs to the service and provides a flexible and responsive provision.

Learning for social and personal development

ESOL, literacy and numeracy

Grade 2

Context

24. Currently 476 learners follow ESOL courses; 98 are on literacy and 145 on numeracy programmes. Learners attend for up to five and a half hours each week for 16 to 36 weeks. In addition, some ESOL learners attend more intensive courses. Courses run in the daytime and evening in community venues across the borough. The programme is managed by three curriculum managers. Classes are taught by a team of 13 directly-employed tutors and 17 tutors in 5 commissioned organisations.

Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. Learners gain much confidence and make good progress in developing their language, literacy and numeracy skills. The overall standard of learners' work is good. However, in some literacy and numeracy classes the standard of work is satisfactory.
- Learners enjoy their courses very much. They are well motivated and progress onto further study enhancing their employment opportunities. A few learners in literacy and numeracy classes leave before completing their programme to take up employment. Some ESOL learners benefit greatly from a work placement in a local crèche before progressing onto childcare courses.
- Success rates are good on courses for numeracy. Achievement rates are high in ESOL. Success rates are low in literacy. However, in-year data indicate that success rates are increasing. Retention rates are good and remain stable for ESOL and numeracy, and are increasing for literacy. The provider has appropriate strategies in place to increase the number of learners on literacy courses.
- Teaching and learning are good. Tutors plan lessons well and meet the varied needs of individual learners. In the better sessions tutors use a range of interesting, challenging and local topics to engage learners. Learners actively contribute to discussions and work well in groups to research and share information. Tutors use effective strategies to check learning.
- The use of learning resources is good. Tutors produce colourful and stimulating learning materials which are topical and of local interest. These help learners to apply their learning in a practical context. Tutors make effective use of electronic whiteboards to support learning.
- Initial assessment is thorough and effectively identifies learners' starting points. Learners have a good understanding of their learning plan. The processes for measuring and recording the progress of learners are particularly detailed in ESOL and satisfactory in literacy and numeracy.
- The provision meets the needs and interests of learners extremely well for ESOL. Courses are offered in local and accessible community venues.

Progression opportunities for learners are good. However, the provision for literacy is insufficient. Strategies are in place to extend the provision and the service is currently piloting a number of imaginative programmes with partners.

- The service has outstanding partnership arrangements with a wide range of organisations who work with hard-to-reach learners. Partners contribute very well to the curriculum and assist productively in the recruitment of learners. Managers have established very effective working groups with local partners and agencies to develop programmes and ensure these most effectively meet the needs of residents.
- Learners receive outstanding support. ESOL learners benefit from particularly effective information, advice and guidance. A specialist carefully assesses learners' needs in a range of community venues before referring them to the most appropriate class. Many classes have a crèche. Tutors work closely with staff in children's centres so that learners receive targeted help on complex personal issues.
- Leadership and management are good. Curriculum managers lead their teams very effectively. They provide good support for tutors and communication is good. Staff attend many professional development opportunities. ESOL staff in particular benefit from subject specific sessions and a very effective peer observation process. However, this is not the case for numeracy and literacy tutors. Managers routinely use data effectively to review performance of courses.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Learning opportunities successfully engage the most disadvantaged groups in the community. Cultural diversity, rights and responsibilities are well promoted and are fully integrated into the curriculum. Learners have a good understanding of citizenship. Learners feel safe and gain a good understanding of safeguarding from their tutors.
- The self-assessment process is thorough and inclusive. Managers know their service well and have identified relevant actions to improve the quality of provision. The observation of teaching and learning scheme is rigorous and supports staff development well. It effectively identifies ways to improve the quality of teaching and learning. However, written reports do not always accurately reflect the grade awarded.

What does The Learning Trust need to do to improve further?

- Increase the range of literacy learning opportunities for residents by continuing to develop and implement the strategies currently being piloted.
- Develop the processes for measuring and recording the progress and achievement of learners in literacy and numeracy by adopting the existing good practice in ESOL.
- Improve the teaching and learning skills of literacy and numeracy tutors by adopting the peer observation practice used in ESOL.

Community learning

Grade 2

Context

25. Currently, 2,641 learners are on community learning programmes: 386 attend ICT courses, 266 participate in family learning and 621 in a range of informal courses. A further 1,368 learners attend arts and media courses, which were not directly inspected. The courses are held at 26 community venues and range from 2 hour workshops to programmes lasting 24 weeks, mainly provided by subcontracted community organisations. Most learners are from minority ethnic groups and the majority are women. Courses in arts and media and family learning are mostly non-accredited, and in ICT all but two programmes are accredited.

Key findings

- Learners achieve well and most attain their learning goals. They develop their skills very effectively; many make rapid progress in their learning and significantly gain in confidence. The skills learners acquire are highly relevant to their plans for employment, personal development or supporting their children. Learners enjoy their learning and take pride in their work which is of a good standard.
- Attendance and punctuality are good in the majority of classes and a high percentage of learners complete their courses. Success rates are very good for ICT accredited programmes. Achievement rates are similar for different groups of learners. A satisfactory proportion of learners progress onto other courses provided by the ALS.
- Learners feel safe. They have a good awareness of safeguarding and their rights and responsibilities. However, in most ICT classes, tutors do not sufficiently reinforce learners' understanding of e-safety. Health and safety within centres are effectively maintained by tutors who pay close attention during the classes to ensuring learners' safety.
- Teaching and learning are good. Courses and sessions are well planned with clear learning objectives. Tutors prepare well and provide learners with interesting and stimulating activities that effectively support and extend their learning. They have a good rapport with learners, use humour to make the sessions enjoyable and engage them, and provide much good individual encouragement. Learners participate enthusiastically in sessions.
- Initial assessment effectively identifies the appropriate courses for learners and their starting points. Learners have a good understanding of their individual learning plans. Where relevant, the service assesses learners' literacy and numeracy skills thoroughly. However, as recognised by the service, the recording of learners' progress and achievement is not always consistently carried out.
- The majority of resources are good and tutors use them well to support learning. Tutors are well qualified and have good knowledge of their subjects. Where it is available, learning technology is used effectively. Many tutors

produce imaginative resources that support learning well. However in a few classes, tasks or materials are not sufficiently contextualised for adults. A few classrooms are cramped.

- The range of provision meets the needs and interests of users well. The informal learning programmes demonstrate innovation in course development and increase access for specific learner groups. Provision in the main programme areas is well planned to meet learners' needs. Specialist organisations provide a range of accessible local classes in community venues.
- The use of partnerships is outstanding in developing provision to meet learners' needs, particularly in engaging target groups such as those with mental health issues. In family learning the service makes good use of its very effective partnerships with children's centres. Partner organisations contribute well to the development of the curriculum and recruitment of new learners.
- Learners receive clear advice and information before starting courses. The good care, guidance and support learners receive help them to achieve their learning goals. Tutors are highly responsive to the individual needs of learners and provide good guidance to them. They provide additional support for learners where it is needed.
- The provision is well managed and managers maintain a close focus on raising standards. The management of subcontracting arrangements is good and the commissioning process is managed very effectively. Communications are good with tutors, who benefit from useful training. Processes to identify learners' progression into further learning, employment or community activities do not provide sufficient data to identify trends.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding and very well integrated into the curriculum. The ALS works extremely effectively with a very wide range of learners most of whom experience barriers to learning and are new to adult education. The service makes strong efforts to increase participation by male learners. Tutors use very effective strategies to promote inclusion and ensure their teaching is appropriate for individual learners.
- Engagement with users to support and promote improvement is good. Learners' views are actively sought and actions for improvements are promptly acted upon by managers and tutors. Subcontractors contribute well to the self-assessment process. ALS uses self-assessments well to inform the self-assessment of each programme area. These are largely accurate.

What does The Learning Trust need to do to improve further?

- Provide information and guidance for ICT tutors so that they identify and use relevant opportunities in the classroom to reinforce e-safety to learners.
- Develop the service's plans to further improve the processes for recording learners' progress and achievement to ensure that these are of consistently good quality.
- Develop ways to identify, monitor and analyse learners' progression into further learning, training, employment and community activities to gain a more accurate view of the progression of learners and inform the assessment of the impact of provision.

Information about the inspection

26. Three of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and one additional inspector, assisted by the provider's quality assurance and curriculum manager, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from the funding body, Framework for Excellence indicators, the previous inspection report, reports from the inspectorate's monitoring visit and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
27. Inspectors used group, individual interviews, telephone calls and emails to gather the views of learners. They looked at questionnaires learners and employers had completed on behalf of the Trust. They also visited learning sessions, assessments or progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in each of the subjects the provider offers.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)**The Learning Trust Adult Learning Service**

Learning types: 14-16: Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; **16-18 Learner responsive:** FE full- and part-time courses, Foundation learning tier, including Entry to Employment; **19+ responsive:** FE full- and part-time courses; **Employer responsive:** Train to Gain, apprenticeships. **Social and personal development:** all adult safeguarded provision

Grades using the 4 point scale 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	Social and personal development
Approximate number of enrolled learners		
Full-time learners	0	0
Part-time learners	4,851	4,851
Overall effectiveness	2	2
Capacity to improve	1	
A. Outcomes for learners	2	2
A1. How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	2	
A1.a) How well do learners attain their learning goals?	2	
A1.b) How well do learners progress?	2	
A2. How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	2	
A3. Do learners feel safe?	2	
A4. <i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>		
A5. <i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	2	
B. Quality of provision	2	2
B1. How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	2	
B2. How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	1	
B3. How well do partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	1	
B4. How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	2	
C. Leadership and management	2	2
C1. How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	2	
C2. <i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	1	
C3. How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	2	
C4. How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	1	
C5. How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	2	
C6. How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	2	
C7. How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	1	

*where applicable to the type of provision

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