

Scotland's Support for Displaced People from Ukraine

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Introduction

On 24 February, Russia invaded Ukraine: an unprovoked illegal assault on a peaceful, democratic and sovereign nation. Since that time, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that over 12 million people, the majority of whom are women and children, have fled their homes.

Scotland condemns this illegal invasion in the strongest possible terms, and the Scottish Government continues to call for an immediate cessation of Russian aggression.

On 14 March, in response to the ongoing crisis, the UK Government launched its Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme (also known as 'Homes for Ukraine'), encouraging private households to host displaced people from Ukraine. Under the scheme, displaced people with an eligible UK-based sponsor were able to apply to the UK Government for a visa to come to the UK.

The Scottish Government has long called for the UK Government to waive all visa requirements, and properly fund a humanitarian resettlement scheme for displaced people from Ukraine. Since under the current constitutional arrangements in the UK, immigration is fully reserved to the UK Government, the Scottish Government is nonetheless committed to doing all it can to work within the UK Government's sponsorship scheme to provide support to people seeking sanctuary in Scotland.

Scotland's 'super sponsor scheme'

Accordingly, on 18 March, the Scottish Government launched Scotland's own 'super sponsor scheme' for displaced people as part of its Warm Scots Welcome programme. The Welsh Government opened a similar scheme on 18 March and paused it on 10 June.

The super sponsor scheme sits alongside private sponsorship as part of the UK Government's Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme, but addresses a number of areas of concern in the wider UK scheme. Crucially, it removes the need for a displaced person from Ukraine to first seek out a private sponsor, for example on social media, before being able to get a visa and travel here.

Having to match privately with a sponsor not only burdens displaced people with a source of stress, pressure and potential delay before they are able to apply for, and are granted, a UK visa, but also presents clear safeguarding concerns. While the majority of people offering to host displaced people from Ukraine are well-meaning and motivated by empathy and generosity, the private sponsor scheme leaves people at risk of arriving in the UK and being placed in homes before suitable checks have been carried out; and there have been concerning reports that people could be using the "Homes for Ukraine" scheme to prey on vulnerable people¹. A number of

¹ [Concerns over single men offering Ukrainian women homes and hosts being unable to provide under refugee scheme | STV News](#)

expert organisations, including UNHCR² and Refugee Action³, have also expressed grave concerns about this aspect of the UK scheme.

Under the Scottish Government's super sponsor scheme, people applying for a UK visa can choose the Scottish Government to sponsor their visa. Once the UK Government's Home Office has approved their application, they can then travel to Scotland. This provides a fast and safe alternative to private sponsorship, meaning people can travel immediately and be provided with temporary accommodation, meals and a range of support and advice including translation, assessing medical needs (such as trauma) and applying for benefits.

A Warm Scottish Welcome

As soon as a visa sponsored by the Scottish Government is issued by the Home Office, our national contact centre sends a 'Welcome Message' in Ukrainian and Russian. This includes details of an international free-phone advice line for help on travelling to Scotland, what to expect on arrival and to discuss any special requirements. On arrival, people are met and welcomed at a network of "Welcome Hubs", where they are triaged, offered the right level of care and support, and placed in temporary accommodation such as a hotel, where they can stay until they move into other accommodation. Some people may choose to rent privately, while others can use a government-approved matching service, which will seek to match them with an appropriately sized and located Scottish household under the super sponsor scheme. All households who are matched with a displaced person will have undergone thorough property and disclosure checks, to make sure that the displaced person or people will be safe with them during their stay.

The Scottish Government is extremely thankful for the generosity of everyone right across Scotland who has expressed an interest in hosting, or who has offered their support to people displaced by the current conflict.

Uptake of the super sponsor scheme

The Scottish super sponsor scheme has been overwhelmingly popular. Statistics published by the UK Government show that, as at 5 July, 22,451 confirmed applications sponsored by the Scottish Government had been made under the Homes for Ukraine scheme, and 17,377 Scottish Government sponsored visas had been issued. Scotland has already welcomed 7,286 displaced people from Ukraine, 4,666 of whom arrived under the super sponsor scheme. Scotland has seen the highest number of applications, visas issued and arrivals per head of population of any of the four nations, see Figures 1 to 3.

² [UNHCR - UNHCR Statement on the UK's Homes for Ukraine scheme](#)

³ [Letter To The Rt Hon Mr Michael Gove MP - Homes For Ukraine \(refugee-action.org.uk\)](#)

Figure 1: Weekly number of applications per 100,000 of the population, UK nations⁴

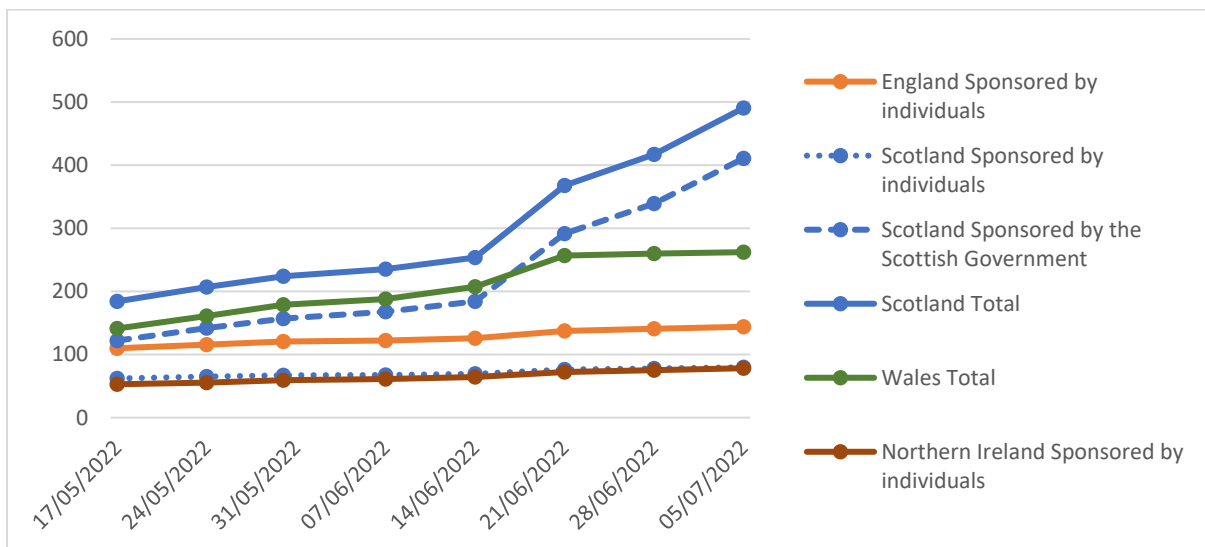
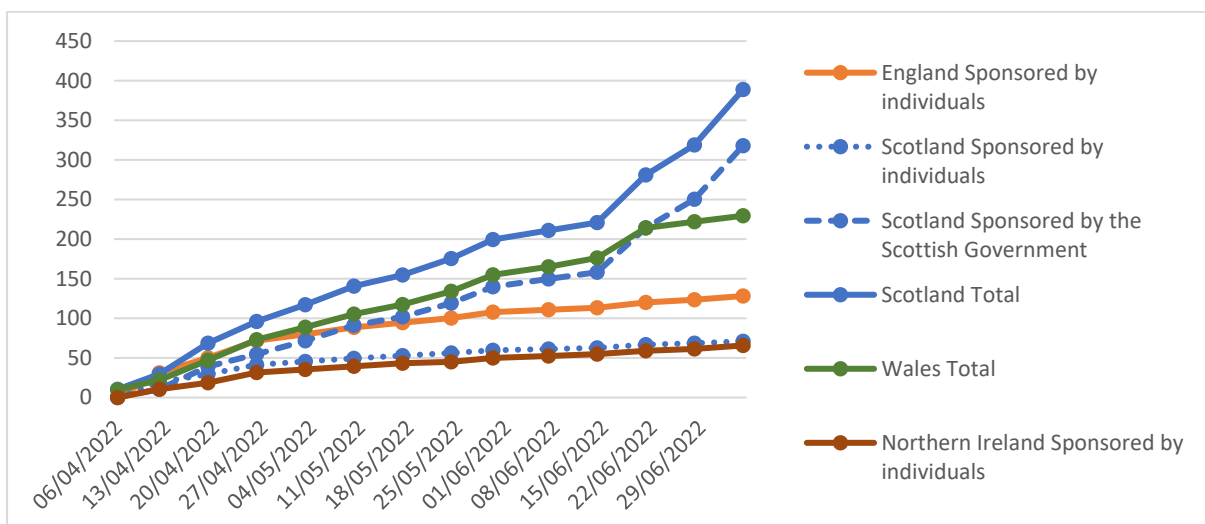


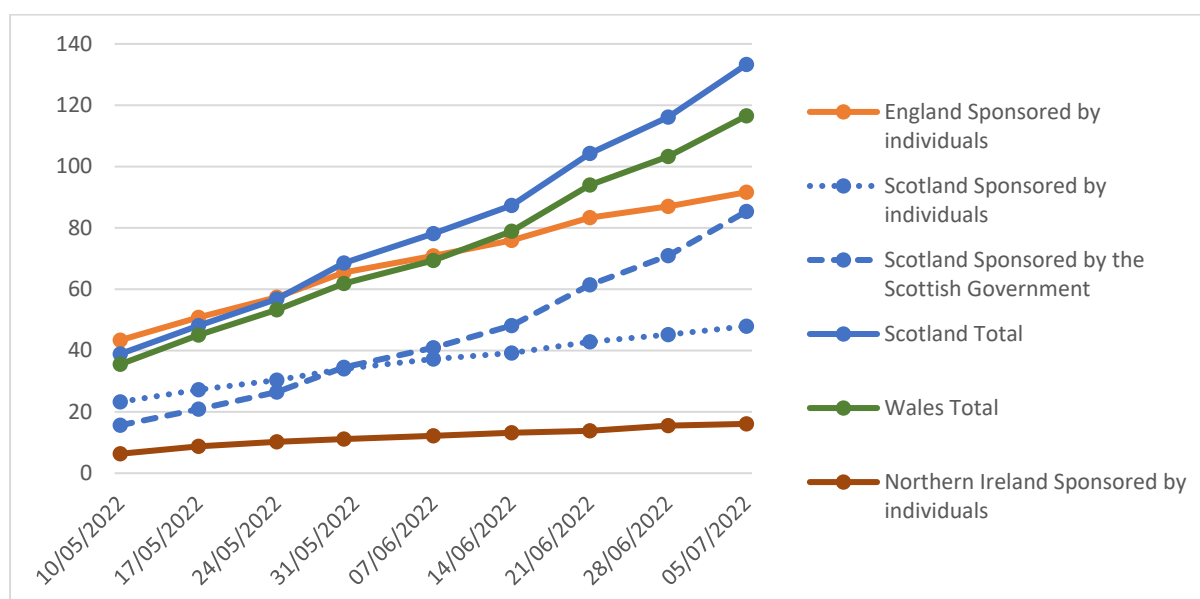
Figure 2: Weekly number of visas issued per 100,000 of the population, UK nations⁵



⁴ Raw figures are sourced from DLUHC publication ([Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme: Visa data by country, upper and lower tier local authority - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ukraine-sponsorship-scheme-visa-data-by-country-upper-and-lower-tier-local-authority)), population rates for each country are sourced from [Estimates of the population for the UK, England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/articles/estimates-of-the-population-for-the-uk-england-and-wales-scotland-and-northern-ireland). The population estimates underlying these graphs are based on 2011 census data and may not fully reflect changes in population in the 11 years since.

⁵ Ibid.

Figure 3: Weekly number of arrivals per 100,000 of the population, UK nations⁶



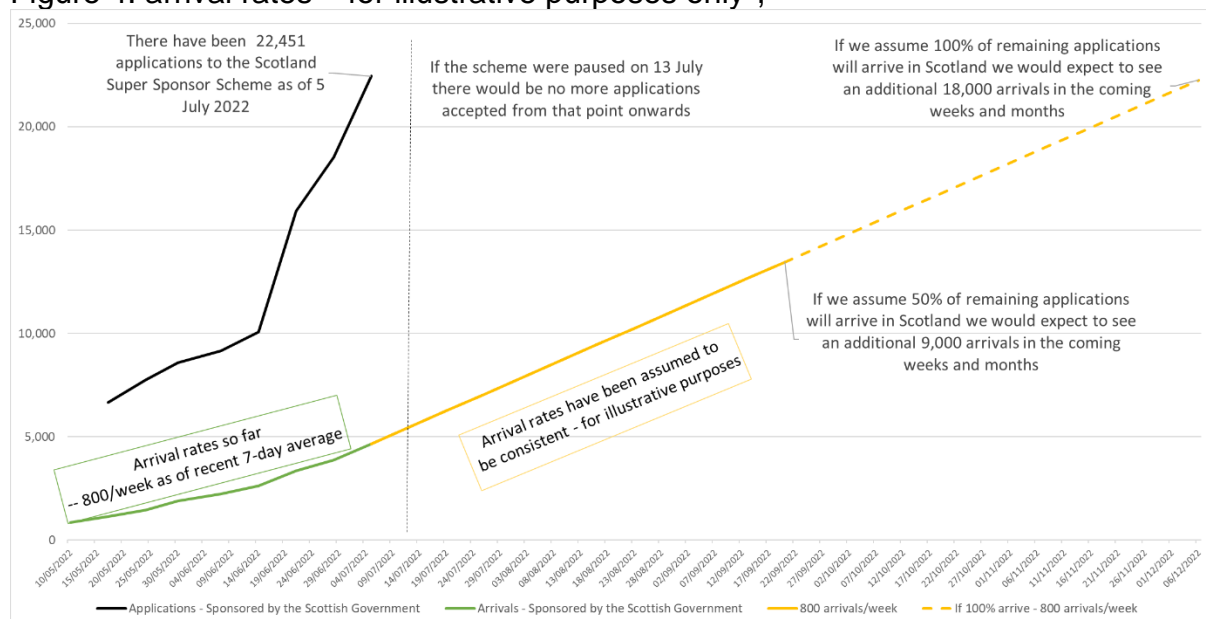
Projections for future arrivals

The rate of visa applications, visas issued and arrivals in Scotland under the super sponsor scheme continues to rise. As at 5 July, visa applications listing the Scottish Government as sponsor were up 21% on the previous week, with visas issued up 27% and arrivals under the super sponsor scheme up 20%.

Of course, not every displaced person who is granted a visa will actually travel to the UK. However, of those who have already applied under the scheme and have yet to travel, if we assume between 50% - 100% will arrive in Scotland we would expect to see between 9,000 and 18,000 additional arrivals in the coming weeks and months. Figure 4 is provided as an illustration of how many arrivals per day we could expect to see in Scotland under the super sponsor scheme, assuming the rate of arrivals remains constant. However, in practice this rate is unlikely to remain constant and we may expect to see a spike in arrivals in coming weeks.

⁶ Ibid.

Figure 4: arrival rates – for illustrative purposes only^{7, 8}



Pausing the scheme

In March when the Scottish Government launched the super sponsor scheme, our hope, and the hope of all democratic nations, was that the crisis in Ukraine would prove temporary and that a peace agreement could swiftly be reached. That hope, sadly, has not been realised.

With the very large volumes of displaced people who have already arrived in Scotland, the temporary accommodation sector is now at capacity. If numbers continue at this level, local authorities may find themselves having to house displaced people, including families, in emergency contingency accommodation such as camp beds in community settings. While contingency accommodation is a necessary part of local councils' crisis response to short-term emergencies, such as fires and flooding, it is not a sustainable solution for protracted emergencies like the war in Ukraine.

Moving to contingency accommodation would also fall short of the Warm Scottish Welcome that we are seeking to offer to often traumatised and vulnerable people. The Scottish Government's priority is to provide safe, comfortable accommodation and a wraparound support offer to the displaced people from Ukraine who are already in our country, and to those who have been granted permission to travel here.

In order to achieve that objective, the Scottish Government has taken the decision to pause the super sponsor scheme from 9am on Wednesday 13 July for a period of 3

⁷ Applications and arrivals are sourced from DLUHC publication ([Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme: Visa data by country, upper and lower tier local authority - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ukraine-sponsorship-scheme-visa-data-by-country-upper-and-lower-tier-local-authority)), extrapolation for illustrative purposes only

⁸ Published data available until the week ending 5 July, there will be a number of additional applications that will have been submitted between 5 July and 11 July which have not been incorporated into this analysis and illustration.

months. This will help us ensure that those displaced people who are already here, and those who will shortly be travelling to Scotland, are able to stay in appropriate temporary accommodation and get the right support ahead of moving into safe, sustainable longer-term accommodation. We will review our position in three months, but of course if circumstances change during that time then we will bring that date forward.

The pause will not affect the almost 18,000 people who have already applied under the super sponsor scheme but have not arrived yet. Anyone who receives a visa and wishes to do so should continue to travel to Scotland, where they will be warmly welcomed.

Temporary accommodation

As above, over 7000 displaced people from Ukraine have already arrived in Scotland, with thousands more expected to make the journey in coming months. The Scottish Government and local authorities have been working tirelessly to arrange suitable temporary accommodation for those sponsored by the Scottish Government, to ensure that those arriving have a safe place to stay while they wait to secure other accommodation.

With the temporary accommodation supply reaching capacity, the Scottish Government and local government have taken a creative approach to securing additional safe and suitable accommodation, including hotels and university campuses. We have also recently taken the decision to charter a passenger ship, to provide an additional 739 rooms for six months from July. The ship will offer displaced people safe accommodation, complete with restaurants, child play facilities, shops, cleaning and communal spaces, until they can move into their own homes or into Scottish households suitably sized and located once the appropriate person and property checks have been completed.

Matching with temporary hosts

The Scottish Government thanks all those who have expressed an interest in temporarily hosting people displaced by the current conflict. Those homes are still very much needed. Indeed, we are keen to see more people in Scotland volunteer as hosts if they think that they can provide a welcoming home for a displaced person or family, and will develop plans for a further campaign in coming weeks.

All 32 Scottish local authorities are working to conduct the necessary person and property checks for volunteers in Scotland who, having signed up initially for the UK Government scheme, have continued to express interest in hosting displaced people. Once checks have been completed, if the offer is deemed suitable, these hosts' details are uploaded onto the national matching service database, so that displaced people can be offered the opportunity to move into their homes.

The matching process has so far proceeded more slowly than we would have liked, and we are aware that some volunteer hosts have expressed interest but have not yet been contacted, while others are still awaiting the outcome of checks. The Scottish Government is grateful to volunteer hosts for their generosity, and their

patience. We are working closely with local authorities and with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) and doing all we can to speed up the matching process and increase the numbers of displaced people moving into host accommodation, including enhancing teams to boost capacity.

The Scottish Government and local authorities have agreed a deadline of mid-end July 2022 to complete all checks on their current caseloads of volunteer hosts.

Matching is by its nature an intensive process with multiple, often highly sensitive conversations required with both the displaced person and a potential host. Many factors have to be taken into account. Even when a household passes the necessary checks, not all properties will be suitable for all displaced people (for example, an available single room may not be appropriate for a displaced family with children). Officials need to take account of the preferences of the displaced person: for example, we know that some families have been reluctant, for personal or work reasons, to stay outside the Central Belt. And of course, both hosts and displaced people may experience changes of circumstance that means a particular match is no longer viable.

Longer-term accommodation

Volunteer host arrangements are only intended to last from 6-12 months. While Ukraine remains at war, helping displaced people to move out from their host families into longer-term accommodation is of course critical to ensuring their safety and wellbeing for the three-year term of their UK visas and beyond.

This is a humanitarian crisis that requires a whole of Scotland response. The Scottish Government is working closely with local authorities and with COSLA to explore creative solutions to bring forward long-term accommodation.

For example, in June the Wheatley Housing Group, Scotland's largest social landlord, pledged to make available 300 homes to local authorities across Scotland to house displaced people from Ukraine. In North Lanarkshire, the local council is refurbishing a number of tower blocks which had been scheduled for demolition, and which will provide substantial volumes of homes for displaced people from summer 2022 onwards.

We are actively seeking additional proposals from local councils, including for capital investment, to ensure that all displaced people in Scotland can find housing that meets their needs while they are with us.

Funding

This illegal war in Europe has created a need for a humanitarian response of a scale never before seen in Scotland. Ensuring that people arriving from Ukraine have a safe, secure and supported beginning to their lives here is a huge undertaking and we have already committed around £60 million to ensure people have appropriate temporary accommodation on arrival. These costs will of course continue to rise as we welcome additional displaced people in coming months.

We have also made available £11.2 million in funding to help local authorities increase their teams to help people with temporary resettlement into communities across Scotland, and also to invest in making improvements to housing stock so that there are more homes available for Ukrainians to move into. We have also provided a further £1.3 million to the Scottish Refugee Council to enable it to increase its capacity and extend invaluable help and support to arriving Ukrainians, many of whom will have experienced significant trauma.

In addition to funding from the Scottish Government, local authorities will receive £10,500 per person from the UK Government to support displaced people to have access to health and social care services, get support into employment and with claiming benefits, and be assisted in integrating into their local communities. Further UK Government funding is also available to help local authorities in providing early years, primary and secondary education.

We are seeking urgent confirmation from the UK Government that the £10,500 tariff paid to local authorities should be applicable from the point of people's arrival in Scotland rather than from when they move into longer-term accommodation.

People who host Ukrainian displaced persons under the Scottish super sponsor Scheme will also receive £350 per month 'thank you' payments. Those payments are made by local authorities from UK Government funding.

Other schemes for displaced people from Ukraine

Family Scheme

The Ukraine Family Scheme allows applicants to join family members in the UK. Ukraine Family Scheme visa holders are able to live, work and study in the UK, and access public funds.

While the UK Government has not published data on the number of people who have arrived in Scotland through this route, we know that of the 28,700 people who have arrived in the UK via the Ukraine Family Scheme, some will have joined family in Scotland. In addition to those who have arrived under the Homes for Ukraine sponsorship routes, our local authorities are also providing vital services to support people who have arrived under the Family Visa Scheme. However, the UK Government does not provide any funding for this. We have repeatedly called on the UK Government to reconsider their position, and provide parity of funding no matter the route someone arrives through.

There remains a clear need to provide resource where it is required, no matter which route a person reaches safety through, to reflect the unique impact of the various schemes' implementation on local areas and communities. Any areas that already have a strong Ukrainian diaspora are more likely to be welcoming people through the family route, and will feel the disadvantage of the lack of parity of funding acutely.

Extension Scheme

The Ukraine Extension scheme allows people who hold a valid UK visa, or held one that expired on or after 1 January 2022, to extend their visa to stay in the UK.

The Ukraine Extension Scheme has gone some way to help existing Ukrainian residents in Scotland. However, it does not allow individuals to bring family over from Ukraine, and only applies to those with a recent visa. Further, as the Ukrainian Extension Scheme does not provide a route to settlement, Ukrainians wishing to remain in the UK are being asked to make an unreasonable choice between their visa and their safety. We continue to call on the UK Government to provide a clear humanitarian, not administrative, solution that alleviates distress and offers support to those who need it most.

Seasonal Workers

Ukrainian seasonal agricultural workers play a vital role in soft fruit and vegetable production in Scotland. As a result of the conflict, there are a range of issues which are likely to be of concern to Ukrainian workers and it is essential that they receive urgent support to navigate these. The Scottish Government has committed £41,000 to fund a Worker Support Centre to provide an enhanced package of advice and practical support to Ukrainian seasonal horticultural workers. This Worker Support Centre follows models used around the world to offer temporary migrant workers advice and support in times of crisis, and is delivered by JustRight Scotland.

Conclusion

The Scottish Government is pleased that Scotland has, to date, been able welcome over 7000 displaced people, 4,666 of them under the super sponsor scheme. We are set to welcome an additional 9,000-18,000 people in coming months.

We first said that we would aspire to take 3,000 people and then our population share, and we are pleased that we will be welcoming many more thousands of people as part of the response to the illegal war which has seen so many millions of Ukrainian displaced.

By pausing the super sponsor scheme temporarily, the Scottish Government seeks to ensure that those displaced people who are already here, and those who will arrive in the coming months, will be safe, secure and supported for as long as they need, after the dangers they have faced at home.



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