A new beginning?
A Guide to the National Plan for Music Education in England

with comments from
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National conference, March 2012
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A new beginning?
A guide to the National Plan for Music Education in England

The National Plan for Music Education in England was published by the government on 25 November 2012.

This Music Education UK special supplement combines a guide to the Plan with invited comments from a wide range of individuals and organisations with an interest in the future of music education.

What is the National Plan?
It’s a ‘flexible template’ for how music education for children and young people aged five to eighteen will operate in England, in and out of schools (although it doesn’t alter the National Curriculum for Music*). It could potentially affect everyone working with young people in music: Primary school classroom teachers, Secondary school music teachers, community musicians, independent music organisations and others in the voluntary sector, orchestras and other music groups and youth/community workers.

It’s the government’s formal response to the Henley Review into music education, published earlier this year and commissioned by the Department for Education (DfE) and Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS).

We’ve been here before: isn’t it just another music education report that won’t make any difference?
Well, for once this plan heralds some big changes for music education: a shake-up of the way the various parts of the sector work and, most importantly, work together. You can run but you can’t hide.

Big changes? Like what?
The biggest change is to the Music Standards Fund. This was the money that was ring-fenced for music education and distributed to Local Authorities for activities run by their Music Services (instrumental/singing teachers, county music groups/ensembles, music centres). It’s gone.

The Standards Fund, gone... really?
It’s gone but it’s replaced by ring-fenced money to encourage more joined-up music education. Darren Henley’s report said that ‘the best music education comes from partnership; no one teacher, performer, school, organisation, group or body has all of the requisite skills to deliver every part of a rounded music education to every child’. So the money won’t go directly to Local Authorities or Music Services. Instead, it’ll go to partnerships of providers – ‘hubs’ – in each Local Authority area or across areas. They could be made up of anyone working with young people in music – from schools to community musicians to peri-patetic teachers – and it’s expected that most will involve Local Authorities and those who are funded nationally for music education e.g. orchestras.

Doesn’t sound that different from what’s already happening.
Henley found – as we knew – that music education across the country was patchy: excellent in some areas, poor in others and lots of variables in between. This plan attempts to address that by laying down clear requirements, focussed on outcomes for young people.

Core roles are to provide:
• access to large-scale/high-quality music experiences for pupils via professional musicians/venues – may include publicising opportunities available to schools, parents/carers, pupils
• CPD for school staff, particularly to help deliver curriculum music, as well as leadership
• an instrument loan service (discounted or free for those on low incomes)
• access to large-scale/high-quality music experiences for pupils via professional musicians/venues – may include publicising opportunities available to schools, parents/carers, pupils

Hubs will be driven by what’s needed rather than by what individual organisations want to provide. They’ll need to find out what young people want and need, and deliver it. Then they’ll need to audit this regularly with the help of Arts Council-funded ‘Bridge’ organisations. Also, Ofsted, in their inspections, will be asking what difference hubs have made to music in schools.

Hubs will need to ‘consider how to engage and inspire [pupils] ... and then stretch their boundaries so they experience a range of musical genres and activities’. They’ll also need to break down barriers for certain groups – e.g. those defined as SEN, LAC, NEET and others – through innovative approaches to teaching and making music and free/subsidised activities where needed.

Sounds good on paper but what will hubs actually DO?
There are four ‘core’ roles, which are compulsory and which the DfE funding is to be spent on, and three ‘extension’ roles which most hubs are expected also to deliver, with DfE and other funding: Core roles are to provide:
• weekly learning of instruments through Whole Class ensembles for a minimum of a term (but ideally a year) for every child aged 5-18
• opportunities to play in ensembles and perform
• clear progression routes which are available and affordable to all young people
• regular singing opportunities including choirs and vocal ensembles for every pupil as a result of a singing strategy (possibly drawing on support from Sing Up! or the Voices Foundation)

Extension roles are to provide:
• CPD for school staff, particularly to help deliver curriculum music, as well as leadership
• an instrument loan service (discounted or free for those on low incomes)
• access to large-scale/high-quality music experiences for pupils via professional musicians/venues – may include publicising opportunities available to schools, parents/carers, pupils

Hubs can provide services directly or link schools to other providers (e.g. a local freelance musician).

So some hubs can get away with the bare minimum? – still sounds a bit patchy to me.
Well, the idea is that hubs won’t want to or be able to ‘get away with’ the bare minimum because partnership and accountability will be in-built. But it will take a massive shift: new ways of thinking and in some cases a shedding of territorial attitudes and competition for funding. And yes, there will inevitably still be differences across the country.

And how much money is available?
Ah, there’s the rub. There’s less (no
surprises there then). It’s still ring-fenced and it still comes from the DfE. But it’s a dramatic cut: 27% over three years. The idea is that partnership working will mean a leaner, more cost-effective service: with ‘back office savings’ as well as more chance of drawing in funding from ‘Local Authorities, cultural organisations, businesses, trusts, foundations and philanthropists’ (not forgetting that there’s already the significant amount of money that comes from parents via music tuition fees). So the figures look like this (although the plan extends to 2020):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011/12</td>
<td>£82.5 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012/13</td>
<td>£77m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013/14</td>
<td>£65m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014/15</td>
<td>£60m</td>
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But that doesn’t mean anything if we don’t know how much our area will get. There’s still uncertainty about exactly how much money will be available, because it’s expected (hoped) that there will be fewer hubs than local authority areas – i.e. through a hub working across more than one area (there may be casualties).

The amount will be based on how many pupils there are in an area, with extra money for pupils who have free school meals. For some areas this may well be a temporary financial buffer. As a result, the historical imbalance in funding between areas will have been completely turned around by 2014-15.

Not all of the quoted amounts will go to music hubs. Some of the money will be used for In Harmony Sistema England (which will be extended), the National Youth Music Organisations (which government say represent the ‘pinnacle of achievement’), the Music and Dance Scheme, and to pay the Arts Council to manage the fund.

**Who can get hold of the money and where from?**

For the first time, Department for Education money will be held and distributed by the Arts Council of England (ACE) who will also hold hubs to account if they fail to achieve their objectives (and, apparently, so will pupils, parents and schools). There will be an ‘open application process’ which will focus on outcomes for pupils, partnership working, and economies of scale.

**So it’s all about cutting funding, moving around money and making Music Services more accountable. What about teachers and other music educators at the coalface?**

In theory, you’ll have a much stronger voice. Rather than being passive recipients of Music Service activities, schools/groups of schools will have strong representation on the hubs. You’ll also get greater access to the skills, talents and resources available in an area. Ultimately, the hubs are there to make sure that your pupils/participants get better results from the funding that’s available for music education. School-to-school support (particularly Secondary schools and feeder Primaries) is also part of this.

But it’ll be all down to how effectively and willingly the people and organisations in your area work together. Also, how well the hubs can advocate their work to your head/senior management team (they need to help teachers to ‘better embed music teaching within a school’s overall strategy’ and advocate ‘the importance of music education to school leaders’).

The other good news is all around training and professional development for teachers. For Primary school teachers just starting out – and any others wanting to develop their skills – there’ll be new Initial Teacher Training modules. Included will be help to ‘better enable them to network and get support from developing music education hubs’. For teachers as well as the wider workforce, the hubs will offer professional development opportunities and access to local expertise and networks – and there’s an emphasis on helping with music technology. For the wider workforce, there will also be a music educator qualification developed by the Arts Council and Creative and Cultural Skills.

**And for young people?**

Hopefully, more inspiring, relevant, music opportunities: a continuation or development of existing opportunities in schools, based around their needs, which will be well communicated to them and their parents; better, clearer pathways and progression routes taking account of the types of music they choose to pursue, the ways they want to learn, the methods of accreditation for their achievements and what they want out of it. There’s a table in the plan (pages 13-15) that sets out exactly what pupils should expect.

**Do say …**

The government really believes in the transformative power of music and it’s great that we’ve got ring-fenced money and what could be a revolutionary way forward.

**Don’t say …**

It’ll all fall apart when music comes out of the curriculum*.

**Stylistic acknowledgement:** The Guardian

*The National Curriculum Review was due to report in early 2012 but this has been delayed.

### Timescales

#### 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17 February</td>
<td>Deadline for hub applications to Arts Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late April</td>
<td>Announcement of successful hubs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 April</td>
<td>Arts Council ‘Bridge’ organisations fully operational – will work with Arts Council to align their work in cultural education and help hubs with signposting, networks, needs audit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April-Sept</td>
<td>Soliciting of hub proposals for any areas not covered by successful hubs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May-Aug</td>
<td>Hub funding negotiations/agreements/business plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Aug</td>
<td>Hub funding begins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer</td>
<td>Teaching Agency will develop the new ITT module in music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>Music education hubs start operating, take forward Music Services’ work</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 2013

| By 2013 | Suite of new qualifications including ‘music educator’ developed by Arts Council and Creative and Cultural Skills |

Music Education UK guide to the National Plan for Music Education: January 2012 | nationalmusicplan.com
Matt Daniels, CEO, Sound It Out

The launch of a National Plan for Music Education is a significant indication of the government’s understanding of the power of music to engage and transform our children and young people’s lives. This plan sets out a radical restructuring of resources and activity, placing the importance of partnership working at the heart of development and delivery and I welcome this.

The NPME places emphasis on the provision of a continuum of experience, education and learning both in and out of school alongside a strong emphasis on workforce development and training. This, I also strongly welcome.

The mixed economy of partnership detailed within the plan shows a trust and commitment to a much wider level of engagement across the music education sector. This Plan harnesses new and innovative ways of working in challenging economic times with a more level playing field between a range of partners to offer a comprehensive, diverse, quality offer to our children and young people. It’s a good start! www.sounditout.co.uk

Dr Alison Daubney, Research fellow and music teacher trainer, University of Sussex

What the plan has done is thrown down the gauntlet to the music education community to reconsider the ways in which music education can be made more meaningful and connect with young people’s lives in and out of school. It is crystal clear that this government recognises the value which an excellent music education can contribute young people’s development. The plan gives a sense of understanding of the breadth of music education and, notably, credence to the principle that music in school is the central cog from which other opportunities develop. The plan recognises routes for excellence and highlights the needs of the marginalised and vulnerable. However, the challenge is to provide an inspiring and worthwhile experience for all in order to deliver the excellent aspirations of this document. This is the opportunity for us to work together, using our reflections of the past to shape our offer for the future. We need to take risks, promote pedagogic understanding and workforce development and ensure sustainability. A tall order in times of economic hardship but also, as Gavin Stride pointed out at the 2011 FMS conference, ‘an opportunity for real change’. www.sussex.ac.uk

Kathryn Deane, Director, Sound Sense

Hubs were unfinished business from the Music Manifesto five years ago. At Sound Sense, we see a lot of potential in the plan to complete this task as we’d originally envisaged it.

We like the emphases on inclusivity, on starting from a young person’s wants and needs and on genuine collaborative partnerships – all strong values of the non-formal sector.

We don’t like the timidity of the roles hubs are required to play: we can’t see anything about the importance of creative music-making in general (nor in the section on music technology), for example. And the model for young people’s musical progression is still limited: where would the progression route be for a beatboxer, MC or rapper, for example? Or for work in the creative industries generally?

We reserve judgment on the proposed qualified music educator qualification. Sound Sense members are already faced with a raft of qualifications they can take for working in music education with young people, for working with older people, in the criminal justice sector, in lifelong learning and elsewhere and we want to ensure any additional qualification is a help not a hindrance to those whose work includes non-formal music education with young people. www.soundsense.org

James Dickinson, Head of Service – Hertfordshire Music Service

I am delighted and relieved that the plan is finally published. The core roles for hubs are clear and straightforward and I feel from a Hertfordshire perspective that the plan gives us a platform on which to place the best of our existing activity whilst also giving us the opportunity to recognise and value our partnership work and develop and grow ambitiously. It will enable us...
to transform areas of our business in line with the musical aspirations and ambitions of our children and young people. The plan gives music education a moral purpose that must be embedded at the heart of each hub. Access and opportunity cannot and must not be limited to those with the financial means to do so and for this commitment, the plan should be applauded, particularly in these challenging times.

There is a word of caution however. The plan will be seen by many as a green light to go into collective inward discussion and protectionism. Yet too many children go without the life-changing experience of music-making. All our discussions must begin and end with what is best for those who rely on us to deliver. So lets be brave, be bold and embrace the opportunity we have.

www.hertsmusicservice.org.uk

Philip Flood, Director, Sound Connections
This is an extremely good plan and I am pleased to see it acknowledge the needs of young people who are in challenging circumstances and who face particular barriers, whether physical or socio-economic.

It is important that partnerships between a range of providers are valued as key to the success of hubs. I am concerned, however, that given the reduction in funding, the extension activities, and even some of the core work, will not be achievable.

I’m delighted to see singing at the core of the plan and that the role of technology is acknowledged.

I welcome the development of a music educator qualification for practitioners and hope that the non-formal and community music sectors are fully drawn into this process. It also excellent that quality CPD is recognised as an urgent issue.

I would ask that the impartial experts who will make up the monitoring board include someone with direct experience of working with young people and that the advisory groups for hubs include young people on them.

It is good to see that the Take it Away scheme has been opened up to young people but I am concerned that many from deprived backgrounds will still not be able to afford an instrument.

Finally, I’m delighted that the case studies reflect the full range of music-making opportunities for young people.

www.sound-connections.org.uk

Professor Susan Hallam, Dean of the Faculty of Policy and Society, Institute of Education, University of London
The Importance of Music is truly inspirational in its vision for music education in England. Michael Gove, Ed Vaizey and Darren Henley are to be congratulated on their insight in recognising the importance of music education and setting out a long-term plan for its delivery.

What is surprising is that those who have made England a world leader in music education (as is acknowledged in the foreword) are not those to be charged with its oversight. The implementation of the plan is to be managed by Arts Council England (ACE) although they have a clear conflict of interests here as ACE-funded National Portfolio Organisations are eligible to apply.

Formal accountability for the funding will be via ACE with a National Plan monitoring board set up. This will include a small number of impartial experts and will be chaired by and answerable to Ministers. Will this include music educators? Responsibility for music education, one of the greatest success stories in English education, is apparently passing from the DfE to ACE. Let’s hope that they can deliver!

www.ioe.ac.uk

Tony Haynes, Composer; Director, Grand Union Orchestra
One of the oddest things about the plan is the role of the Arts Council – in being given responsibility for selecting from competing bids and devising accreditation for music education. These are surely outside the Arts Council’s brief and it has no particular expertise in this field.

It is questionable in any case whether such accreditation is necessary or desirable and it could lead to serious anomalies. A school teacher who has been on a weekend course at the Guildhall may be deemed more qualified than a tabla player born in India who has been performing and teaching in Britain for 30 years.

Indeed, the whole question of the involvement that Black, Asian and other minority ethnic musicians could or should play in music education has not been properly considered and this is crucial to the plan’s otherwise admirable ambition to provide a wide range of ensemble opportunities for young musicians.

The question of diversity runs even deeper. There is a worrying tendency to homogenisation in music education, promoting a common set of values that it is difficult to challenge.

Only if it manages to hitch a variety of creative, progressive and artistically sound and effective ideas and individuals to its bandwagon will the Plan succeed.

www.grandunion.org.uk

Nick Howdle, Director of Programmes, Youth Music
Pretty good I think! This plan’s success will depend on the spirit in which we all breathe life and meaning into it. Henley spawned a period when people talked to each other less. I hope the plan reverses this.

I can see how our programme fits but am wary that Youth Music’s money can’t reach all those who need it.

So far, there have been two ‘wow!’ moments for me. Firstly, ‘Pupils’ needs might be assessed by ...’ (P17 para 35) – in terms of its balanced consideration – but whilst the plan references consulting...
young people, it doesn’t appear in the ‘Evidence expected’ on P31.

Secondly, great to see reference to the real world of work. With ACE and links to Creative and Cultural Skills (CCS), we stand a much better chance of an integrated link to creative industries.

Hurrah! Someone finally remitted with qualifications for creative practitioners – please talk to those who’ve explored it before!

Some progression elements are susceptible to narrow interpretation. There will be thousands of pupils who are exceptionally talented and for whom music is way more than a ‘worthwhile pastime’ but won’t attend a CAT, MDS school or NYMO! If the plan wants progression in a variety of styles, genres and directions, will CPD for teachers help identify this?

It’s a tall order for a September start – we’d better get cracking. 

Mark Jaffrey OBE, Think Again Media (previously Music Manifesto Champion)
This is exactly what we wanted as a government response to the Music Manifesto recommendations all those years ago – except, of course, the funding cut. Now, we finally have a plan we can interpret, use and, if needed, campaign to improve. And there is plenty in it to excite and dismay in equal measures.

I am pleased to see that music technology’s power is finally being recognised and that the needs of key categories of children, notably SEN and Gifted and Talented, will be addressed. The workforce development proposals also feel positive.

What may have the biggest lasting impact on the music education sector is that Arts Council England (ACE) has been written into the heart of delivering music education. ACE’s new role gives it increased formal authority and ‘soft’ power with which to ensure that the type of dynamic partnerships we envisaged in the Manifesto come about.

Expect to see mergers, casualties and ‘super hubs’. This may be a very good thing if the outcomes are better and it may be needed to sustain the impact of budget cuts. Time will tell.

But all this is the sub-plot. As I read the report, I found a few key concerns. The first is whether moving the Fund allocation process from the DfE to ACE is symbolic of a distancing of the subject of music from the DfE’s corridors of power? Whatever the plan says, the biggest challenge is to convince large numbers of Head teachers to invest in music and to support their music teachers in their classrooms. If we can mobilise school leaders, we’ll insulate children from any forthcoming removal of their obligations regarding music in the National Curriculum. The question we must ask is whether the National Plan will help this happen?

www.thinkagainmedia.co.uk

David Price OBE, Project Leader, Musical Futures and Learning Futures; Consultant; Senior Associate at the Innovation Unit

Some welcome shaking up – but, like most coalition pronouncements, it seems to espouse self-determination with an irresistible nudge to the preferred direction of travel.

Whilst the intention of the hubs concept is laudable, there seem to be two major flaws in the proposed execution: first, judging hubs by their ability to provide Whole Class instrumental access isn’t compatible with the amount of funds available. Even on current levels, it’s just not possible to reach every child via Wider Opportunities. The second is that hubs will be, by design, very different in construction and, no doubt, in terms of the quality of the experience they provide. So it seems inevitable that the previous ‘patchiness of provision’ will continue.

Young persons’ needs analysis is essential (for hubs) but the funding for In Harmony has increased – where’s the needs analysis there?

The Music and Dance Scheme remains ‘the pinnacle to which all children can aspire’ – actually, no. Do the needs analysis – you’ll see that X Factor eats it for breakfast. The ‘nudge’ here is that playing in an orchestra/ensemble is a civilising force and one which presumably the 25% who become unemployed will aspire to. Meanwhile, the contemporary creative industry routes (where there are real jobs) don’t even get a mention.

And how much of the money available will be required to support ACE in holding hubs to account? More expensive nudging, I fear.

www.davidpriceblog.posterous.com

Dr Jonathan Savage, Reader in Education, Institute of Education, Manchester Metropolitan University

The NPME is a better document than I had hoped for. It contains many aspirational statements that encouraged me. I am pleased with the general assertions about music and what it can do in the lives of our children. However, the devil is in the detail. Will these policies result in a reinvigorated model of music education which builds on our traditional strengths and empowers us to work together in new ways? Will our fragmented music education community be able to work together in partnership?

We have a significant challenge on our hands. Recent history has shown that we are not good at working together in this joined-up way. We are a disparate musical ensemble in need of coordination, leadership and direction. Where will this coordination, leadership and direction come from? I’m not sure. And I don’t think the NPME knows the answer to that either.

More specifically, the NPME is shy about the most important factor that will ensure music education remains strongly embedded within our schools: the National Curriculum Review. By not stating, unambiguously, the imperative of Music remaining part of the National Curriculum, the NPME will be overshadowed by the decisions Ministers
make in response to the Review. The fight is yet to come.

www.jsavage.org.uk

Jackie Schneider, Teacher, Poplar Primary School and St Teresa’s, London Borough of Merton

It is brilliant to read that every school MUST provide good quality music lessons, plus choir and ensembles, for ALL pupils. However, this is completely undermined by the rider: ‘subject to the national curriculum review’ which is widely expected to ditch music.

Without music on the national curriculum or part of the English Baccalaureate, what pressure is there on Heads to ensure music is taught? As it is, I know of many schools that fail to provide any music provision for their pupils. Music will only flourish if we win the hearts and minds of senior staff and governing bodies.

I am perplexed by the obsession with ‘hubs’. I get excellent support and guidance from my Local Authority partnership with Merton Music Foundation. I’m worried that the hubs will eat up money that could otherwise be spent on school music.

The 27% cut in funding over the next three years whilst bedding down a complex new structure rings alarm bells but I’m delighted to see the funding formula will be referenced to free school meals. Absolutely delighted to see music education for teachers addressed and the role of music technology highlighted. Finally, fantastic to see YouTube cited as a great resource. Many of us have ongoing battles with our Head teachers to get this unblocked at our schools.

www.poplarday.blogspot.com

Josh Smith, member of Sound Connections’ Wired4Music young persons’ council

There are a lot of merits to the plan. It is commendable in its aspirations to offer every school child the chance to learn an instrument and to counter the current inequalities. It is also positive to see continued support of bold programmes like Take It Away scheme is welcome, although the price of more expensive instruments will still be prohibitive for some. The plan sensibly recommends that hubs raise extra funding from charities and private funding – however, hubs in more affluent Local Authorities will find it easier to secure funding than hubs in poorer areas.

I fear that due to so much being dependent on the National Curriculum review, the real effects of the plan are as yet unclear. The plan should mean a greater variety of options for young people but it remains to be seen whether our voices will be heard.

www.sound-connections.org.uk

Mark Taylor, Director of Music, Simon Balle School

Perhaps we should be happy. Perhaps we should celebrate? Having read the plan, we have for the first time a plan for music. Something from the government that sets out their opinion. It is positive – they value music. It sets out what we, as a sector, should be doing. We have some funding. Music has a place in education and an important one. Now the challenge is with us, in music education. We need to stop moaning, pull together and get on with it. Fast.

www.simonballe.herts.sch.uk

Katherine Zeserson, Director of Learning and Participation, The Sage Gateshead

There are certainly reasons to be cheerful – having a plan at all is a very good thing. The core focus on hubs is exactly what the last ten years of cross-sectoral development should have generated, the language of inclusion is welcome, the CPD proposals are positive and it makes a start at recognising the need for a fresh approach to music technology.

There are weaknesses – the musical perspective reads narrowly; proposed progression destinations are unrealistically limited; there’s a surprising lack of interest in music’s relationship to other subjects (and to the wider cultural learning landscape) and little attention to the value of music as a route to employment. It’s not clear how the classroom and the broader opportunities connect and there’s a lack of comment on pedagogy and practice beyond the (welcome) focus on quality – however, this is probably wise as it leaves space for creative determination and development of inclusive music-making programmes. I do believe that skilful strategic leadership and entrepreneurial management delivering a passionate vision for children and young people as autonomous music-makers could transform this plan into a meaningful musical revolution – it’s entirely up to us and our courage, wisdom and leadership.

www.thesagegateshead.org

Photo credits: photo of Katherine Zeserson courtesy of Mark Savage; photo of Kathryn Deane courtesy of Andy Howe

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Munira Mirza is responsible for advising the Mayor of London on his strategy for youth and culture in the capital

James Frankel is an Adjunct Faculty member at Teachers College Columbia University where he teaches courses on music technology

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