

Royal Lancaster Infirmary Maternity Unit

18th March 2024

1pm – 3pm



Disclaimer: This report relates only to the service viewed at the time of the visit and is only representative of the views of the staff, visitors and patients who met members of the Enter and View team on that date.

Contact Details

Address

Royal Lancaster infirmary
Ashton Road
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Point of contact:

Fiona Ducksbury (Delivery Suite Ward Manager)

Date and Time of our Visit:

18th March 2024
1pm – 3pm

Healthwatch Lancashire Authorised Representatives:

Steve Walmsley (Engagement Team Leader)
Sue Edwards (Senior Engagement Officer)
Olu Olusina (Healthwatch Lancashire Volunteer)

Introduction

Healthwatch Lancashire is the independent public voice for health and social care in Lancashire and exists to make services work for the people who use them. We believe that the best way to do this is by providing the people of Lancashire with opportunities to share their views and experiences.

Healthwatch Lancashire has statutory powers to listen, act, challenge and gather feedback to improve local services and promote excellence throughout the NHS and social care services.

To help achieve this Healthwatch have a statutory power to 'Enter and View' health and social care services that are publicly funded. The purpose of an Enter and View is to listen to people who access those services and observe service delivery.

Following the Enter and View visit a report is compiled identifying aspects of good practice within the service visited along with any recommendations for any possible areas of improvement.

As we are an independent organisation, we do not make judgements or express personal opinions but rely on feedback received and objective observations of the environment. The report is sent to the service provider providing an opportunity to respond to any recommendations and comments before being published on the Healthwatch Lancashire website at:

www.healthwatchlancashire.co.uk

The report is available to members of the public along with the Care Quality Commission (CQC), Healthwatch England and any other relevant organisations. Where appropriate Healthwatch Lancashire may arrange a revisit to monitor the progress of improvements and celebrate any further successes.

General Information

Badger Notes

Throughout this report there is mention of the Badger Notes app. This app allows people to view their maternity, child or neonatal records in real time.

[Badger Notes - Access your healthcare records](#)

Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Lancashire would like to thank patients, relatives, staff and management, for making us feel welcome and for taking the time to speak to us during the visit.

What did we do?

Healthwatch Lancashire Enter and View Representatives made an announced visit to Lancaster Maternity Unit on Monday 18th March 2024 and received feedback from:



Pre-visit research

Prior to the visit, Healthwatch Lancashire representatives contacted a member of the management team to ask about the facilities, services offered and how women and families are supported.

Healthwatch Lancashire representatives also visited the service website to review information available to women and families about services available.

One to one discussions with patients and their relatives

During the visit, Healthwatch Lancashire representatives spoke with patients and their relatives about their experience of the service, and the care and treatment delivered by the staff.

Discussions with members of staff

Healthwatch Lancashire Representatives spoke with members of staff about their experiences working at the service. Questions centred around support for patients, celebrating good practice and any improvements staff felt could be made at the unit.

Observations

Along with viewing the available facilities, observations were made throughout the visit. This included patient and staff interactions, accessibility measures in place throughout the unit and the condition and cleanliness of the facilities.

Summary

Healthwatch Lancashire Representatives viewed the facilities that were available around the Women's centre at Lancaster Royal Infirmary, where the Maternity Unit is located. This included the Delivery Suite, Ward 17 for Antenatal and Postnatal patients and the Antenatal Clinic. The visit focussed on listening to the experiences of people who were using the Antenatal services at the hospital.



Overall, the feedback received from patients was positive including compliments about the quality of care and attentive support that was offered by staff. Communication and information was praised; with patients reporting that they felt informed to make choices throughout their maternity journey. Relatives and partners, especially, felt that they were included and informed about decisions that were being made about the care of the mother and baby.

Staff were observed to be courteous and knowledgeable about the needs of the patients that they served. There was a calm and relaxed atmosphere observed in all areas that Healthwatch Lancashire Representatives were shown.

Healthwatch Lancashire were informed that there were developments planned for some areas of the unit. These improvements included the movement of a desk in an entrance area and to make access to the Bereavement Suite more secure and refreshing the décor in some areas of the unit, including the corridor areas.

Staff felt these developments would improve patient safety and make the experience of attending the service more cohesive and straightforward, particularly for those attending the delivery suite.

Service Overview

Location and public access



The hospital is part of the University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Foundation Trust and patients from North Lancashire and the South Lakes area can access services at this site.

The unit is in the Women's centre on the main thoroughfare at the hospital. There were two entrances to the centre that patients could use.

A dedicated drop off point was available for patients, and it was explained that expectant families used this if they were attending the delivery suite or for other appointments. The drop off area was partially obstructed by scaffolding at the time of the visit, but patients were still able to access this facility.

Services available



The unit consists of a delivery suite, one ward that looks after Antenatal and postnatal patients, a neonatal unit, and an antenatal clinic. Patients could be referred to the Antenatal Ward if required. Day assessment visits were also conducted at in the unit. Obstetrician appointments, heel prick tests and midwife appointments were available.

The Antenatal Clinic was found on the ground floor and patients booked in at a central reception desk for all appointments and were directed to an appropriate waiting area.

The birthing suite comprised seven rooms which could be used by parents during labour. A Birthing pool is available for use if requested. Other aids to assist with labour included birthing mattresses and stools. Community midwives will discuss options with patients about the use of these facilities as part of the birthing plan. An operating theatre was available for planned caesarean sections.

Located on ward 17 was the postnatal and antenatal wards which consisted of four bays, each holding four patients. Private side rooms were available as needed. Each room and bay had an electronic bed that could be adjusted as needed.

Appointment Management



Patients can be referred into the service provided by Community Midwives and GPs, this is accessed on the hospital webpage (see appendix 1). A triage facility was in place for parents to be seen and assessed before being booked with either a midwife or consultant. At the time of the visit, a number of patients had booked a scan at the same time as their clinic appointment so they could discuss the

results of their scan with the midwife/consultant. Patients could be accompanied to these appointments by their partner, friend or relative.

Enter and View observations

General Access and Appearance

The entrances to the unit were level access with automatic doors. The entrances, corridors and communal areas all were seen to be clean and free from clutter.

Patients and visitors at the Delivery suite and Wards were required to use an intercom system to gain access to the areas.



Upon arrival, a member of staff asked Healthwatch Lancashire representatives about the nature of the visit, once identification was shown and they were made aware as to the purpose of the visit, the member of staff appeared satisfied that there were no safeguarding concerns. (Recommendation 1).

There was a relaxed atmosphere throughout the visit with patients arriving to their clinic appointments.

Hand painted murals were throughout the unit which made the setting appear welcoming and relaxed. Healthwatch Lancashire were shown a range of murals

for parents to use to take photos with their newborn and others were used to convey information about the maternity journey. The ward manager explained that they were in the process of updating some of artworks to freshen them up, particularly in the ward area where they appeared in need of some refreshment due to faded colours and wear and tear.

There was a reception desk at both entrances to the unit, with a reception area and seating area formed the main reception area. Throughout the visit there was a member of staff on this desk on hand to deal with enquiries.

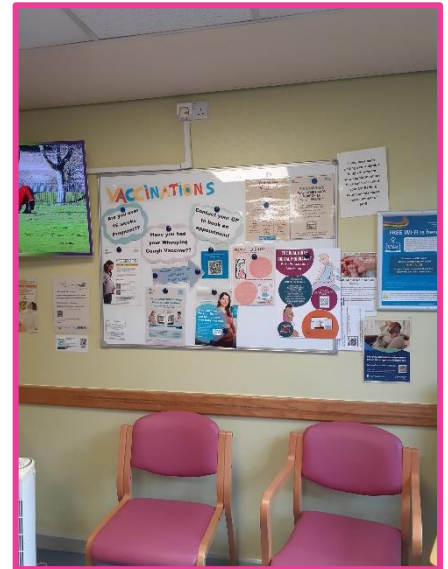
The reception desk at the other entrance was out of use due to being repurposed as part of the development of the site. It was explained to Healthwatch Lancashire representatives, that this area was to be converted into a waiting area for patients. There were no notices at this entrance to inform patients about where they needed to report to.

Signage at the two entrances was clear and easy to read in a standardised format of white writing on a blue background and directed patients to the different areas of the centre. However, it was not always clear, when moving between these areas, where patients needed to go, and some patients were

observed asking staff and Healthwatch Representatives where they needed to report to for their appointment.

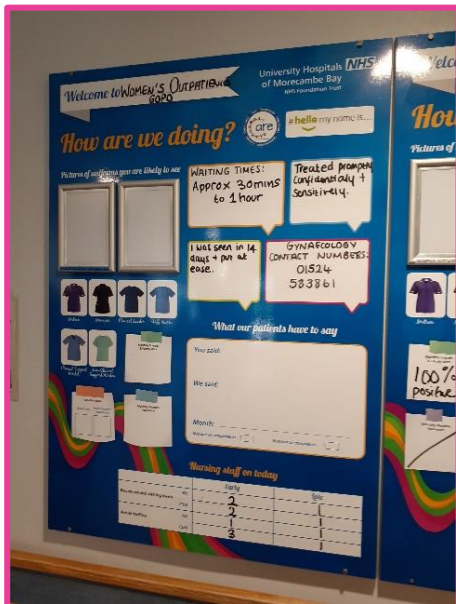
Rooms and facilities were had clear signs on them to identify their purpose. However, there were examples noted around toilet areas, signs were high on the ceiling and not in the eyeline of patients. Some examples of signs and notices were observed throughout the visit which were not always clear to read. (Recommendation 2).

It was explained by a member of staff, that leaflets were available for people who use English as an additional language and provided at appointments. Within the waiting areas no additional leaflets in other languages could be seen. (Recommendation 3).



Internal Environment and Waiting Areas

Patients were directed to the most appropriate waiting area by member of staff upon arrival. The two waiting areas were clean and free from clutter, with a choice of seating available for patients who needed different size chairs. Provision was made for children and toddlers in one waiting area with some toys available. These were able to be wiped clean by staff once used.



Noticeboards and leaflets were available to inform patients about breastfeeding support, vaccinations, PALs, Maternity and Neonatal Voices Partnership (MNVP) and The Care Quality Commission. It was noted that some displays featured Healthwatch Lancashire branding but it was out of date and displayed a telephone number which is no longer in use (Recommendation 3).

There was a wide selection of information around the unit for patients to use. Large noticeboards were used to share information about different areas of the department, including which staff were on shift. It was noted that there was a section of this display dedicated to explaining the different uniforms that staff wore to inform patients about the roles that staff performed in the centre.

Additional Facilities

Toilet areas were seen to be clean, stocked and well maintained. Emergency pull chords were present in all toilets, and within reach of people using the facility. On ward 17 there was a bath which women could use to bathe on their own or with support from staff.

Patient Interactions



Healthwatch Lancashire observed several interactions between staff and patients throughout the visit. Patients attending antenatal appointments were collected by a Midwife or consultant and taken to their consulting room.

Due to there being two waiting areas, it was noted that staff had to go to both areas to call patients into their appointments, and patients were called more than once. (Recommendation 4).

Staff were seen to treat patients with respect and dignity, and ensured that their needs were being met, providing water, and answering enquiries. One patient was observed approaching the reception desk with a complex enquiry related to the arrangements for their next appointment which was handled in a sensitive manner a staff member.

Staff were also observed responding to an instance, where a baby had vomited on the floor, and this was acted upon quickly and sensitively by a member of staff who cleaned the area in a timely manner. (recommendation 1).

It was also observed that one patient was lost and in the wrong area of the centre. A member of staff aided the patient and directed them to the appropriate area of the hospital.

Patient Involvement

Posters were situated throughout the Women's Unit informing patients how to provide feedback to the CQC and Healthwatch Lancashire.

Display boards displaying patient feedback were located at entrances to different areas around the unit with recent feedback using the "You said, We did" model. The number of compliments and complaints was displayed to reflect how the service responded to patient feedback.

There were opportunities to provide feedback about the Badger Notes app on posters in waiting area. This included their overall experience of using the app and any improvements needed.

There were no physical opportunities, such as compliments slips observed in the unit for patients to leave their feedback about care and staff. (Recommendation 5).



Patient feedback

Healthwatch Representatives spoke with **thirteen** patients during the visit. Four were in the Antenatal ward but had experience of the Antenatal clinic.

Please describe your experience here so far

All thirteen patients commented that their experience had been positive at different stages of their pregnancy journey. One patient highlighted how all appointments they had, had been well organised. They mentioned that they had experience of appointments with community teams which could sometimes be delayed.

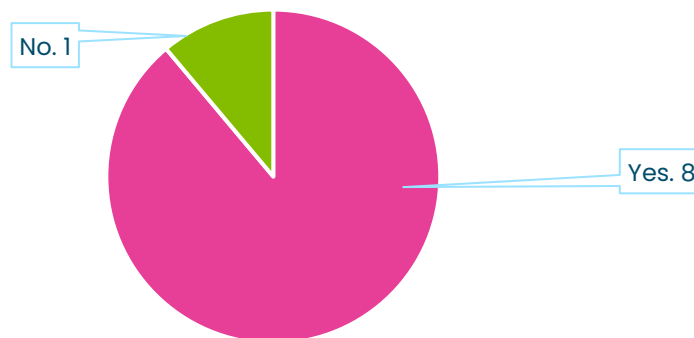
“The communication is really good and appointments are always on time.”

Another patient explained that they had felt that the care and support they received from staff at the unit was good and that staff were also approachable if they had any queries.

“Everything here is absolutely amazing.”

Other patients commented on how their visits were a pleasant and relaxed experience.

Have you received information you need in a way that is easy for you to understand?



Feedback regarding communication and information was largely positive with most patients commenting that the information that they received from staff was easy to understand. One patient highlighted that they had received excellent support from their Community Midwives more than the hospital but this was due to how their appointments had been planned.

“Midwife led care is excellent, we’ve been very well informed whenever possible.”

Two patients who spoke English as a second language explained how the service provided an interpreter to assist with communication at appointments which made things easier for them.

“Anything that we needed to know was interpreted to us.”

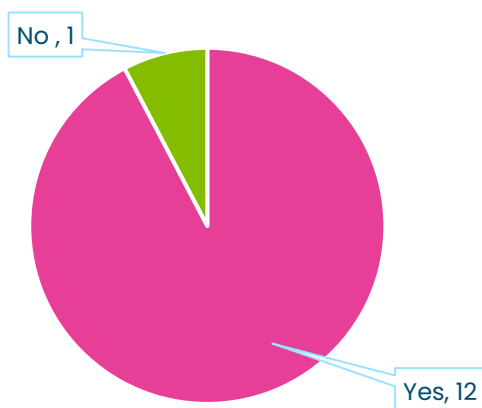
Three patients complimented the Badger Notes system for its convenience and how it meant that all records were in one place. One patient mentioned how it was easier than having to remember to bring a book to appointments.

Two patients commented that they felt that Badger Notes was not a suitable alternative to using a book. One patient raised the concern that they felt sometimes there was information missed out on the app. Another patient commented that it was not very accessible for them as they relied on letters over technology and that the language used on the notes was not always patient friendly.

“The language is not always patient friendly. I have had to ask a Midwife about what things mean.”

They mentioned that they had experienced this issue on more than one occasion, and it was not just related to the notes from the hospital. (Recommendation 6)

Have you felt informed in any decisions about your care?



One patient explained that they were not involved in all decisions relating to their care due to their medical circumstances. They had previously been involved in Antenatal care at another hospital Trust and the appointment they were attending at the time of the visit was their first interaction at Royal Lancaster Infirmary.

Twelve patients explained that they had been involved and informed about the decisions that were going to be made, with one patient describing how staff had presented them with options and opinions to inform their choices.

“Its been my choice overall. They give their opinions but it is my choice.”

Two patients commented that their partners were involved in decisions about their care.

Do you have a birthing plan in place?

Eleven patients explained that they had a birth plan in place. One patient had been informed at the beginning of their pregnancy that they would require a planned C-section to give birth which had been clearly explained to them.

Other comments from patients included how their birth plans had required alteration due to medical circumstances, but they felt that they were mostly aware of what was going to happen when it came time to give birth.

One patient said that they were unsure due to unexpected complications that were being monitored.

“I know the plan but what it will be, I am not sure.”

Two patients who did not have any plan in place were in the process of making one with clinicians.

“I haven’t yet, I have received some questions on Badger Notes which we will talk about at my next appointment.”

They mentioned that they had started to think about their wishes and they were hoping to use the resources given to them to help them decide what they wanted to do.

One patient explained how they had made a decision to change their plans and had been given guidance to make this choice.

“I’ve just changed it and they have support me making this decision.”

Have you felt that your physical and mental wellbeing has been supported?

All patients who provided feedback, complimented the support that was offered to them throughout their maternity journey.

One patient explained how they never felt like they were asking unnecessary questions and that staff took time to explain things to them appropriately. Another patient provided an example of when they required support with their mental wellbeing which had been addressed by their Midwives and Consultants.



A further patient said that their wellbeing was assessed at every opportunity which was reassuring to them.

“They are always checking on how I am feeling.”

They explained how they felt that if there was a problem they would be offered support to assist them.

Do you know who you can contact if you need any additional support or information?

All thirteen patients explained that they felt that there was someone they could contact if they needed additional support. Healthwatch Lancashire Representatives explored this with patients to find out how this information was conveyed to them. One patient explained that they had all the contact information they needed available on Badger Notes. Another patient mentioned that they were given a contact sheet and they felt reassured that they would be able to contact someone for support if they needed.

“If we weren’t sure we know we could ring the hospital and they would advise and support us.”

One patient mentioned that they did not like to rely on support from the hospital and felt that they needed to contact their Community Midwife instead of the staff at the hospital because they were so busy.

Is there anything else you would like to share with us today about care you have received throughout your pregnancy journey?

All the patients spoken with complimented the care they received throughout their pregnancy journey with the attitude of staff and their approachability being praised in comments.



“The interpersonal staff process is exceptional.”

One comment described the responsiveness of staff to meet patient needs.

“The responsiveness in meeting our needs is great and tailored to individuals.”

They gave examples of how the staff had responded to things they had experienced during their journey and praised how matters were resolved quickly.

There was a concern raised by one parent who received care with their newborn that,

“It is too hot.”

They had explained that a consultant had taken the temperature of their baby and informed them that they had a high temperature, they felt that the ambient temperature was a contributing factor which was something that could easily be remedied by staff (recommendation 7).

Relative Feedback

Healthwatch Representatives spoke with **two** relatives at the visit.

Both relatives explained how they felt that their partner had been supported throughout the journey and that they were involved in decisions relating to the care that their partner received. One explained that they were able to attend appointments with their partner which meant they knew what was happening and what actions were going to be taken.

Staff feedback

Healthwatch received feedback from **three** staff members during the visit.

Do you feel supported to carry out person centred care?

All members of staff felt that they were able to carry out person centred care. One member of staff explained how they tried to make sure that staff were able to get to know the families that they were working with. They provided an example of how Badger Notes helped with information sharing especially when transferring from Community Midwives to the Antenatal Clinic at the hospital.

Do you feel that there are enough staff available to meet the needs of your patients?

Two of the three staff spoken with felt that there was not always enough staff available to meet the needs of patients. They mentioned that the pressures that came with their role sometimes meant that they did not feel they were always able to have amount of face-to-face time that they would like with families. They felt that the unit could be better staffed (recommendation 8).



“More midwives would allow for longer appointments and provide better care”.

They explained that this was not just a recruitment matter, but it was related to how staff were utilised.

What is currently working well?

Two members of staff explained that the use of technology to support families and other professionals was working well. One example was given about how Badger Notes could be transferred between Trusts and had helped them work with a patient who was attending on the day of the visit who had come from another part of the country. Technology was also discussed as being one way that more effective observations could be recorded.

“Having tablets to record patient obs means we have more time at the bedside.”

A comment was made about the vaccination clinics that were run by the hospital in order to prevent some illnesses.

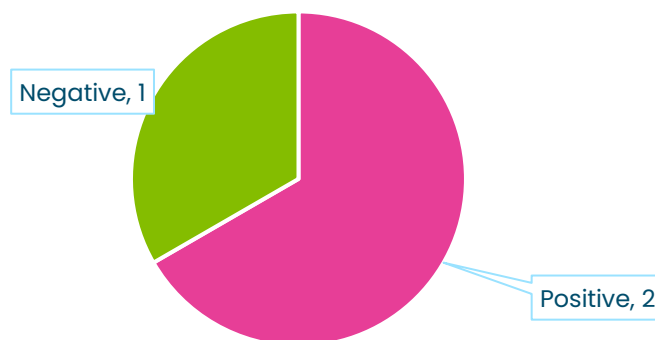
“I feel that the women get good service from us, and this is reflected in the feedback we receive.”

One member of staff explained how Community Midwives and Transitional Care nurses were a positive method of reducing Neonatal admissions and provide better support.

“On Community, I am autonomous and have the support to provide woman centred care.”

What is your experience of working here?

Two members of staff explained that they had a positive experience of working at the unit. One comment praised the supportive management team that allowed them to carry out their roles well.



Two members of staff mentioned that they did experience issues with their workloads. One commented that they were able to manage it but there were some stressful days. One said that they were,

“Often frustrated, I can’t keep on top of my workload.”

Are there any changes that can be made to improve the patient and family experience?

Several suggestions were made by staff on ways that the patient and family experience could be improved. Comments included the need for the staffing on areas to be improved particularly with administration to assist with referrals and transfers (Recommendation 8).

“We need a Ward Clerk available 7 days a week.”

There were examples given about improvements that have been planned for the facilities which were currently being assessed and enacted. One member of staff mentioned how the intercom system needed updating as they had some concerns about patient safety with the current system on the upstairs ward.

“A better intercom to allow safer opening of the door on Ward 17 is needed.”

One suggestion given related to simple methods to make patients more comfortable by having water available for patients. They explained that patients can request water, but it should be more freely available for patients to access. (Recommendation 9).

Another suggestion was related to educating patients about the issues that are caused by non-attendance of appointments.

“A letter with a breakdown of the cost to the NHS would ease the pressure on clinic sizes and reduce waiting times.”

They felt that there needed to be some work done with patients to inform them about the importance of attending appointments to share the benefits that attending appointments could bring to them. They also felt that informing patients about the consequences of non-attendance at appointments was needed as it a detrimental impact on their ability to deliver a good service to patients.

Recommendations

The following recommendations have been formulated based on observations of the environment and feedback gathered from patients and staff.

1. Celebrate the positive feedback and best practice highlighted in findings regarding care and attention from staff towards patients, by discussing and sharing this report in team meetings and briefings
2. Utilise standardised signage throughout all areas of the unit to ensure that all signs are visually accessible
3. Carry out a regular review of information with patient involvement to ensure that information on display is relevant, up to date and available in a range of languages
4. Ensure that patients know which waiting area to wait or investigate the implementation of an electronic patient alert system in waiting areas
5. Provide comments and compliments slips for patients to provide feedback on the service
6. Ensure that updates on Badger Notes are accessible to patients without the use of jargon where possible
7. Act on feedback from patients about their comfort during their visit, particularly around temperature of the building
8. Consult staff about ways to improve workstreams to reduce pressures
9. Consider installing a water machine or drinks facility for patients to use

Appendices

1. <https://www.uhmb.nhs.uk/our-services/services/maternity-services/our-specialist-midwives>

Provider response

Recommendation	Action from provider	Timeframe	Comments
Celebrate the positive feedback and best practice highlighted in findings regarding care and attention from staff towards patients, by discussing and sharing this report in team meetings and briefings	Report will be shared. Celebrated within 3 minute brief Shared at unit meetings		
Utilise standardised signage throughout all areas of the unit to ensure that all signs are visually accessible	Ward managers to review signs and posters.		
Carry out a regular review of information with patient involvement to ensure that information on display is relevant, up to date and available in a range of languages	Engagement with MNVP		
Ensure that patients know which waiting area to wait or investigate the implementation of an electronic patient alert system in waiting areas	Ward manager to review how patients are allocated to which waiting area.		

Provide comments and compliments slips for patients to provide feedback on the service	We use QR codes now as the trust stopped using paper. QR posters to be increased in each area.		
Ensure that updates on Badger Notes are accessible to patients without the use of jargon where possible	Reminder to medical staff about patient friendly documentation		
Act on feedback from patients about their comfort during their visit, particularly around temperature of the building	Currently on risk register		
Consult staff about ways to improve workstreams to reduce pressures	Staff are encouraged to voice their ideas for change and service improvement through unit meetings and labour ward forum. They raise concerns about pressure through the daily safety huddle.		
Consider installing a water machine or drinks facility for patients to use	Unable to install water machine due to Infection prevention Drinks machine in main entrance.		

Any other comments



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