

EALING COUNCIL

FOSTERING SERVICE

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

2022/23

1. INTRODUCTION

Ealing Council Fostering Service is required under the Fostering Services England Regulations 2011 and National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services to produce a Statement of Purpose. This statement of purpose contains a range of information on how the service is structured and the aims and objectives of the Fostering Service within the context of the overall Children's Service.

It is intended as a useful source of information for Foster Carers, Supervising Social Workers, Children's Social Workers and young people. The aims and objectives of the Statement of Purpose should be child focused and show how the service will contribute to the achievement of positive outcomes for all children.

The Statement of Purpose is underpinned by the Adult and Children Social Care Workforce Strategy (2022-25) and The Children in Care and Care Leaver Placements Sufficiency Strategy (2023-26).

Ealing Fostering Service operates in accordance with the principles outlined in the:

- Children Act 1989
- Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011
- Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2013 (amendments to the Children Act 1989)
- Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards 2011
- Children Act Guidance and Regulations Volume 4: Fostering Services 2011
- Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010
- Care Planning and Fostering Regulations(Amendments) 2015
- The Disability and Equality Act 2010
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000
- Training, Support and Development Standards (TSD) for Foster Carers

A copy of this will be provided to OFSTED and be available to:-

1. All staff working for the fostering agency
2. Foster carers
3. Any child placed with foster carers
4. Any parent of a child placed with foster carers
5. It will also be published on the Fostering Service website

The Fostering Service will ensure that the service is conducted in a manner that is consistent with this statement.

2. OVERALL AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE FOSTERING SERVICE

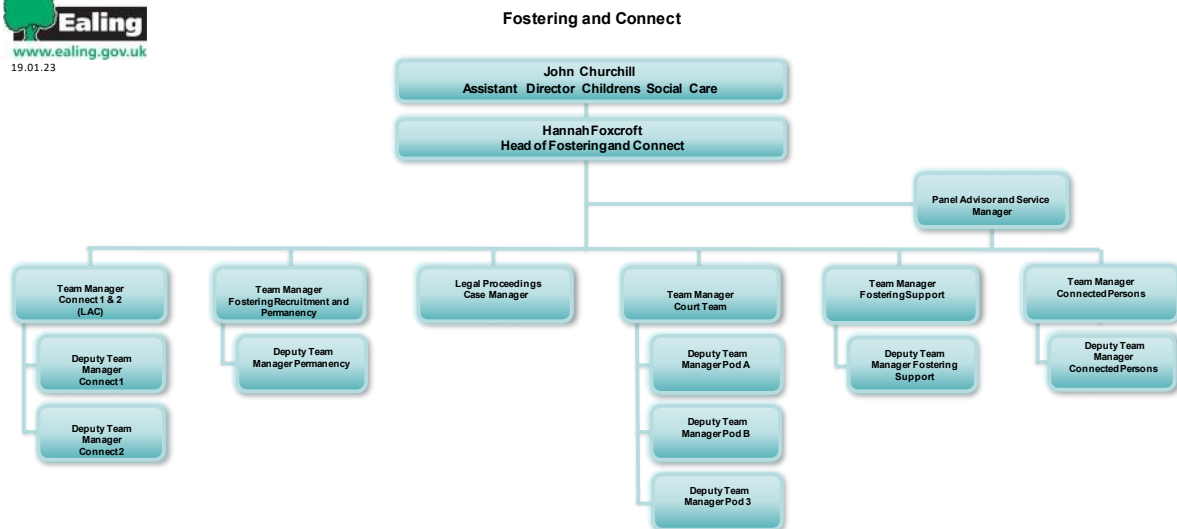
The Fostering service has a unique role and distinct function within the wider Connect Service. The Fostering team members both supervising social workers and recruiting social workers, aim to work together to ensure the provision of a wide range of placements, through our in-house resources and through private and voluntary providers.

Crucially the fostering service works in collaboration with the Children Looked After Social Workers and Court social workers who are all co-located, and with our MAST (Multi Agency Support Teams) who work with children living at home and who are newly accommodated, to ensure the welfare of all children placed. We work collaboratively with each other and together with other professionals within and outside the council to achieve the best outcomes for Looked After Children in Ealing.

The aims and objectives of the service are:

1. To provide a safe and secure environment for Children who are Looked After by Ealing Council where each child will be nurtured and encouraged to achieve their full potential.
2. Placements must meet the emotional and developmental needs of children including their racial, cultural, linguistic, and religious and any other additional needs. Additional support services may be required to meet all of the child's identified needs.
3. Siblings will be placed together, unless there is an assessed reason for them to be placed separately, if this is the case, a robust contact plan will be established.
4. Unnecessary and multiple placements moves and breakdowns will be avoided.
5. Consideration will be given to the child's educational needs in deciding placements.
6. A foster placement will be considered for all Looked After Children giving due regard to the needs of the child and the child's wishes and feelings.
7. To promote and develop high standards in the placement of children.
8. To ensure that the needs of Looked After Children are matched and met within the placements made, and that any additional services necessary are provided to meet the child's identified needs if they are not all available within the placement.
9. To ensure that all avenues of the child remaining with his/her birth family or extended family/connected persons network are considered, providing that this is consistent with the child's welfare.

3. FOSTERING SERVICE MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE



All social workers, managers and deputy managers hold a social work qualification and are registered with Social Work England. Other staff within the service have relevant skills and experience to meet the requirements of their duties and responsibilities.

The Head of Service for Fostering is responsible for the strategic management of the Fostering Service. The Fostering Supervision and Support service is embedded within the Connect Service, the service comprises:

- Recruitment and Assessment
- Family Finding & Permanence
- Supervising and Support
- Connected Persons Assessment

In addition, the service works closely with the Access to Resources Team, whose prime responsibility is to source placements for Looked After Children.

A Business Support Team supports the Fostering Service and a Practice Support Officer is located within each Connect Team.

4. FOSTERING RECRUITMENT AND ASSESSMENT TEAM

This team undertakes all publicity and marketing to recruit foster carers. The team undertakes preparation and assessment of all short-term and long-term foster carers.

4.1 Aims and Objectives

The team aims to recruit and assess a minimum of 10 new foster carers/households every year who can meet the diverse needs of Ealing's children and young people. A key focus for the team is to raise awareness within the local community of the need for Ealing to recruit new foster carers for local children of all ages, ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds.

A variety of mediums are used to promote fostering recruitment, including social media advertising, marketing in the local press, outreach work, distribution of information leaflets to key community venues. Proactive and assertive outreach is undertaken and specific targeted recruitment activity with community organisations.

4.2 Structure

The team is based at Perceval House and is line managed by the Head of Service Fostering.

The team consists of:

- Team Manager
- 2 Social Workers
- Carer Co-ordinator
- Marketing Co-ordinator

4.3 Roles and Responsibilities

Marketing

- To market the service within the stated aims and objectives in accordance with the Recruitment strategy, using a variety of techniques, which include:
- Consultation with existing and potential foster carers, key figures in the community and the general public.
- Research, which includes national research and demographic study based on local information.
- Liaison with diverse local community groups through outreach work and events e.g. Mosques, Temples, Churches and Lesbian & Gay Community.
- Advertising in the local and specialist press.
- Social Media platforms and digital marketing techniques.
- The Foster Carer Finder Bonus Scheme rewards approved carers who recommend someone in their network to become an approved foster carer. Carers receive £250 in high street store vouchers upon approval.

- To provide a professional, co-ordinated approach to all response mechanisms and materials and maintain a consistent visual appearance to all items respondents receive.
- To make effective links with the local community.
- To produce all materials in plain English avoiding jargon and where necessary to provide information in other languages.
- To communicate in a welcoming and friendly manner with a customer care focus.

Recruitment.

- Recruitment of short-term foster carers in accordance with the procedure for children and young people aged 0 – 18. Recruitment is targeted to meet the diverse needs of Looked after Children.
- Recruitment of long-term foster carers for specific children and young people between the ages of 7 – 14. Extending this age range for young people with disabilities, who require a permanent home within a family setting.
- Information sessions for prospective foster carers are held on a monthly basis rotating between day and evening sessions. Attendees receive an information pack with hand-outs from the presentation and other relevant literature and promotional materials. Existing foster carers co-facilitate these sessions.
- Preparation groups for prospective foster carers are co facilitated by Social Workers and foster carers. These ensure that participants are suitably skilled to provide high quality care to the children and young people placed with them, the preparation training is regularly refreshed to ensure the most engaging, informative and positively challenging training is delivered. The aim is to facilitate 4 groups per year.
- The content of each group is set within an equalities and anti-discriminatory framework and covers the following topics:
 - Motivation
 - Understanding the assessment process Support networks
 - Role and expectations of foster carers
 - Understanding of children's needs
 - Challenging stereotypes of families, different alternatives to families
 - Child protection, Children's rights Children Act, Human Rights Act Safe caring
 - Managing challenging behaviour Diversity
 - Parenting capacity Attachment and separation Health & safety Introduction to PACE/DDP

Assessment

- Health and safety checks are undertaken in line with the Health and Safety guidance notes and are carried out with all foster carers by staff experienced and proficient in this area of work.
- Form F assessments are undertaken with all foster carers. The assessments are undertaken in line with CoramBAAF 'Form F assessment'. The assessment covers areas as laid out in Schedule 3. Social workers will complete assessments within the required 4 months for a Stage 2 assessment.

Annual Foster Carer Reviews

- Annual Foster Carer's Reviews are Chaired by a Fostering Independent Reviewing Officer who is managed by the Quality Assurance Team and so independent of the Fostering Service. The Independent Reviewing Officer chair reviews and collate information about the practice standards of the department and the fostering service. Regular meetings take place between the FIRO and the Head of Service and other managers to consider themes and issues that have been identified and agree changes where necessary to ensure continuous practice development.

5. CONNECT SUPERVISING SOCIAL WORKERS

Fostering Supervision and Support team is made up of seven full time Supervising Social Workers and two part time social workers, One Deputy Team Manager and a Team Manager. SSW's provide support and supervision to all approved Foster Carers. All SSW's are suitably qualified and experienced in Fostering Social Work. The team accessed clinical support for Foster Carers from the In-house Psychology service.

In addition, the SSW's hold Monthly support groups for foster carers and regular workshops to support foster carers to complete their TDS portfolio's, and are involved in support with training.

5.1 Aims and Objectives

The team aims to provide a professional management, supervision, training and support service to foster carers and their families to enable them to provide high quality, safe and effective care to children/young people looked after by Ealing. This is to be achieved through providing opportunities for foster carers to gain the necessary skills, knowledge, information and advice in order to meet the needs of children and young people. Emphasis is given to meeting the emotional needs of the children especially when behaviours may be challenging.

5.2 Structure

The Connect Service works in a hybrid way and is based at Perceval House and are line managed by the Head of Service for Fostering and Connect

The Fostering Support Team consists of:

- Team Manager
- Deputy Team Manager
- Supervising Social Workers
- Clinical Psychologist (attached to the team)
- Practice Support Officer

In addition, the team works closely with the Designated LAC nurses, Designated Doctor for Looked After Children, and the Virtual School.

5.3 Supervision and Support of Foster Carers

Support to Foster Carers is offered within the context of the Brighter Futures model of practice. Pertinent to the services for Children Looked After are the principles based on an understanding of developmental trauma and informed by Dyadic Developmental Practice (DDP).

Fundamental to this model is the relationship foster carers have with the children and young people that they care for. Foster carers are guided by the multidisciplinary support of the Connect service, incorporating Looked After Children's Social Workers, Supervising Social Workers and a Clinical Psychologists.

In addition, the Clinical Psychologists are accessible for consultation with foster carers and to assist in practical strategies to manage children's' behaviour and stabilise placements, preventing breakdown.

Foster carers attend an 18 week course, 'Nurturing Attachments', facilitated by psychologists and social workers, which is a therapeutically informed parenting approach based on the principles of DDP, which compliments the approach of the service and has resulted in foster carers feeling more supported and as a result placement stability has improved.

Supervising Social Workers and Fostering Managers will;

- Undertake regular supervisory visits to foster carers' homes and make telephone contact in between visits. Support levels are agreed with the foster carer and reviewed in supervision.
- Undertake supervising social work visits to Kinship Foster Carers/Connected Persons who are temporarily approved as Regulation 24/25 carers whilst they are still being assessed by a Social Worker in the Kinship Team.

- Ensure information held on carers is up to date, including all statutory checks, composition of the household and foster carer reviews.
- Ensure all foster carers receive up-to-date policies and procedures included in the foster carers' handbook and ensure that foster carers are aware and compliant with policy and guidelines as set out in the Foster Carers' Handbook and with the Foster Carers Health Handbook.
- Ensure any concerns about the care of children are addressed and procedures followed when allegations and complaints arise.
- Ensure home visits include inspection of the home environment and standard of care offered to the child.
- Monitor the foster carer's training and support needs, identifying and understanding the carer's strengths and vulnerabilities. The carer's development is facilitated by the Supervising Social worker/foster carer relationship and mutually agreed objectives are set for the year and written into an annual development plan
- Undertake the foster carer review annually, giving the opportunity to formally appraise the carer and plan for the forthcoming year.
- Maintain the foster carer file, this should include records of supervisory meetings. Information about children in placement must be recorded on the child's electronic file.
- Progress financial and insurance requests and payments on behalf of carers.
- Ensure the carer has all the appropriate LAC forms and that the Placement Agreement Meeting is held within the required timescales.
- Progress placements and ensure that occupancy levels are maintained to the optimum level.
- Maintain and provide information on the availability of in-house placements and to ensure the Access to Resources Team have all necessary information about foster carers to aid the decision-making process.
- Operate a duty system during office hours and an Out-of-Hours support service to foster carers.
- Facilitate monthly support group meetings and encourage foster carers to attend.
- Monitor the development of the child in placement and keep up to date with the progress of the child's Care Plan. To ensure that placements continue to meet the child's needs and that any difficulty that the foster carer has in meeting the child's needs is addressed.
- Communicate regularly with the child's social worker and participate in Group Supervision discussions when children in placement are discussed, undertake joint visits to the placement.
- Attend regular Permanency Planning meetings and liaise with the child's Family Finding Social Worker as necessary.

- Attend the child's Statutory Reviews and Planning Meetings where necessary.
- Complete a Change of Circumstances form upon any change in a foster placement, to facilitate up-to-date maintenance of the database of children in placement.
- Ensure that the service is compliant with the Fostering National Minimum Standards.

5.4 **Training and development of carers**

- Provide a comprehensive training programme that meets the training and development needs of carers. An integral element of foster carers understanding of developmental trauma and their attendance on the comprehensive 18 week Nurturing Attachments training programme that is offered to all Ealing foster carers.
- Identify gaps in carers' skills, knowledge and experience and identify training and other development opportunities to address these gaps.
- Facilitate and encourage progression through the foster carers' progression scheme where appropriate.

5.5 **Financial Support**

- Ealing's foster carer allowance scheme will continue to be regularly reviewed. This provides a career structure for foster carers and links the fee banding to skills, experience and training. The allowances are paid in 2 parts:
 - The allowance
 - The fee
- All carers receive the allowance in respect of each child in placement. Carers who meet the criteria to receive the fee and training enhancement receive these payments.
- Foster carers are paid on a weekly basis and receive a remittance advice detailing the payment, as well as an annual statement of allowances paid.

6. **CONNECTED PERSONS FOSTERING SERVICE**

The Connected Persons Team is based at Perceval House within the Connect Service and is line managed by the Head of Service for Fostering and Connect. The Assessing Social Workers in the Connected Persons Team undertake all assessments of Kinship Foster Carers/Connected Persons and Prospective Special Guardians

6.1 **Structure**

The team consists of:

- Team Manager

- Deputy Team Manager
- Parenting Assessor
- 5 Assessing Social Workers

6.2 **Roles and Responsibilities**

- To complete fostering assessments of all Kinship foster carers/Connected Persons
- To provide support and advice to MAST teams on undertaking Kinship assessments for temporarily approved Regulation 24 foster carers.
- To complete all assessments of kinship carers where children are looked after or the case is in care proceedings and/or an interim supervision order has been made
- To complete all SGO assessments including private applications
- To co-ordinate the allocation of assessments to other Social Workers across the service or independent social workers to complete any work that cannot be completed by the Kinship team
- To ensure statutory checks are completed on kinship carers/connected persons in assessment.
- To ensure any concerns about the care of children whilst carers are still being assessed are addressed and procedures followed when allegations and complaints arise.
- To ensure home visits include inspection of the home environment and standard of care offered to the child.
- To progress financial and insurance requests and payments on behalf of carers.
- To ensure the carer has all the appropriate LAC forms and that the Placement Agreement Meeting is held within the required timescales.
- To monitor the development of the child in placement and keep up to date with the progress of the child's Care Plan. To ensure that placements continue to meet the child's needs and that any difficulty that the foster carer has in meeting the child's needs is addressed.
- To attend the child's Statutory Reviews and Planning Meetings when necessary.
- Family finding social workers will undertake family finding for children who require a permanent foster placement. Their role is to robustly progress plans to ensure that children are placed in high quality fostering placements that meet their assessed needs in a timely manner.
- To ensure that the service is compliant with the Fostering National Standards.

7. **BUSINESS SUPPORT**

The role of the Business Support team is to provide support to the social workers and managers within the teams. This is provided by:

The Panel Coordinator who is responsible for administering the Fostering Panel by ensuring the meetings are properly coordinated and that accurate minutes are recorded. The Panel Coordinator ensures that the decisions are recorded onto the database and that all the notifications are signed, issued and stored on file.

Practice Support Officers are attached to the teams and are responsible for providing effective business support to the teams they are attached to. They coordinate Group Supervision, compile monitoring reports, data cleansing, updating the database, issuing letters and carrying out statutory checks. The officers are also responsible for processing annual foster carer reviews by updating the management information systems and specific team reports. They also undertake a range of other tasks and duties to provide support to Social Workers.

In addition, Business Support provide duty cover to ensure there is sufficient support on a daily basis by processing invoices, issuing travel warrants incoming post and assisting the workers with IT support training and answering general enquiries.

The Finance Business Support Officers are responsible for making weekly payments to Ealing approved foster carers. The officers ensures that the database records are kept up to date to ensure that the correct payments are made on time. All payments are paid weekly in arrears.

A Deputy Support Manager is responsible for maintaining and updating a budget forecasting spreadsheet, on all placements. The spreadsheet is sent to the Finance Team and Responsible Managers monthly for budget forecasting and monitoring.

8. ACCESS TO RESOURCES TEAM (ART)

8.1 Aim

ART provides a single access point for placements for Looked After Children (LAC), Care Leavers and SEN school placements. It provides a cohesive approach to placement planning and enables the Department to make best use of internal and external resources. It allows the service to make gains in terms of the procurement of value-for-money services from the Private and Voluntary sector, whilst ensuring that the highest standards of care are given to 'looked after' children and young people.

8.2 Structure

ART is line managed by the Deputy Head of Service, Children and Adult's Operations, but works closely with the fostering service. The team consists of the following posts:

- Senior Integrated Commissioning Manager
- Senior Commissioning Officers x 2
- Commissioning Officers x 6

8.3 **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE TEAM (ART)**

The Duty Service

- The service processes all referrals for the placement of 'Looked After' children, semi-independence placements, specialist education placements and placements for children with disabilities. Placements are sought from a wide range of agencies.
- Placements are identified from within the existing 'in-house' provision or from preferred and accredited external resources, which meet Looked after Children's identified needs and which reflect best value. These include;
- In-house fostering service Independent Fostering Agencies Private & Voluntary Residential
- Residential family assessment centres Secure provision
- Semi-independent and Care Leavers placements Independent Residential & Day Special schools Domiciliary Care
- The service responds to resource enquiries and information requests, and will provide consultation and advice.
- The service is responsible for identifying appropriate placements; obtaining statutory and regulatory checks; negotiating initial placement costs and additional costs; and ensuring that the completed Placement Agreement accurately reflects the agreed package.
- The service maintains a list of accredited resources and seeks to maintain relationships with those resources in order to ensure they are able to meet the changing requirements and needs of the 'looked after' population. It has up-to-date knowledge of acceptance criteria, referral system and care practices.
- The service investigates complaints and concerns about external resources, reports on these and makes recommendations as to further action. The service maintains information on complaints concerns and care standards issues.
- The service participates in the Private & Voluntary Panel (P&V). Requests for expenditure are processed and information about case plans and cost information is provided. The team works closely with the Business Support Team to ensure compliance in terms of negotiated packages and invoices.

Contract monitoring/Commissioning Alliance

- The Commissioning Alliance team undertakes the contract management of providers that have met the conditions to join the WLA Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) contract.
- The CA collates data from CarePlace and providers to provide oversight and compliance to Key Performance Indicators outlined in the contract, including Ofsted ratings.

- The CA team liaises with external providers that have joined the CA IFA contract, and develops preferred provider relationships to encourage further providers to join the contract.
- The team visits providers that have joined the CA IFA contract to complete regular provider performance review visits.
- The service reviews placements made via the CarePlace system, using collated data to support contract monitoring across CA IFA contract providers.
- The service oversees the suspension and barring process for CA IFA contract providers, using the WLA Suspension and Barring Policy. This includes placing of safeguarding alerts within the CarePlace system to notify users of pending investigations.

9. SPECIALIST SUPPORT SERVICES

9.1 Virtual School

Ealing Virtual School maintain a close relationship with foster carers and advises on a wide range of education matters. This team of specialist teachers assists and advises on school admissions, liaison with schools, advise Social Workers on PEP's, general attainment issues and any other matters related to education. The primary aim of this service is to improve the educational outcomes of looked after children. The service also provides education- related enrichment programmes and activities for young people during school holidays and foster carers are encouraged to support young people living locally to attend these activities, as well as weekly Study Support sessions. The team also provides targeted and specific support to individual children.

Foster carers receive regular training on education issues delivered by Virtual School teachers.

9.2 Health

There are two nurses for Looked After Children and a Designated GP, in addition, the Medical Advisor to Adoption and Fostering Panel is available for consultation on health issues.

10. COMPLAINTS AND ALLEGATIONS

The fostering service responds to complaints and allegations in respect of foster carers. This procedure is laid out in the policy 'Dealing with allegations and complaints against foster carers.' Information about how to make a complaint is included in the foster carers handbook and in the information pack for young people.

11. PRINCIPLES OF THE FOSTERING SERVICE

To ensure:

- that staff are well trained and competent in delivering a quality fostering service;
- that there are clear lines of accountability and management of the service;
- that all staff and carers have a valid satisfactory DBS check;
- that the service operates within the framework of equality of opportunity;
- that the service recognises and values the diverse nature of the community it serves;
- that all placements are monitored and supervised;
- that staff and carers receive support and supervision
- that the health, educational and social needs of children are met within placements and life chances of children enhanced;
- that allegations against carers/staff are investigated under departmental procedures
- that systems are in place to monitor the department's needs in terms of placement. This information is used to inform recruitment and contracting with providers;
- that all foster placements provide a safe, secure environment for children placed;
- that children will be matched with carers who are best able to meet the identified needs of the child;
- that life skills and opportunities are made available to all children appropriate to their age and developmental needs;
- that the service is committed to meeting and enhancing the learning and developmental needs of staff and carers;
- that the service has a clear strategy for the support of foster carers ensuring each foster carer has access to a supervising social worker;
- that the service ensures that there are comprehensive and up-to-date records on all children placed and all foster carers including recording of potential foster carers in the recruitment process. This information is accessible in line with data protection regulation;
- that the service has clear administrative records and financial management systems pertinent to the running of the service;
- that the service operates a fostering panel that provides a quality assurance role with regards to the recruitment and review of foster carers and foster placements. The panel will ensure that the welfare and safety of children is paramount in all decision making;
- that the service ensures there is a range of safe and appropriate placements for Looked After Children in Ealing
- that placements within or close to the Borough are sought, which can best meet the child's needs with local support.

12. USEFUL CONTACTS

Ealing Fostering Connections

Perceval House 2SE
14- 16 Uxbridge Road
Ealing, W5 2HL
Tel: 0800 731 6550
Email: fosteradopt@ealing.gov.uk

Fostering Network

87 Blackfriars Road
London, SE1 8HA
Tel: 020 7620 6400
info@fostering.net

The Independent Review Mechanism

Unit 4, Pavilion Business Park Royds Hall Road
Wortley, Leeds LS12 6AJ
Tel: 0113 202 2080 / 0845 450 3956
Website: www.independentreviewmechanism.org.uk
Email: irm@baaf.org.uk

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