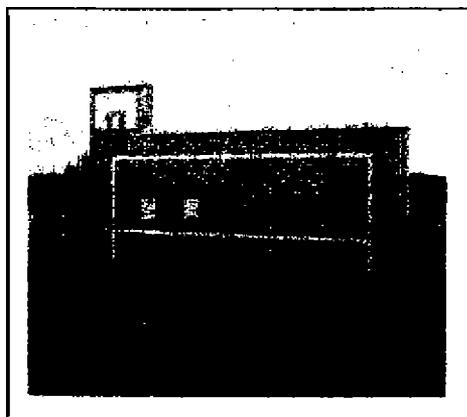
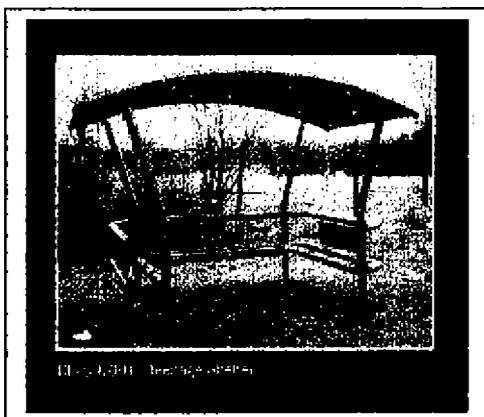


Youth Shelters

A problem solving approach

by Roger Hampshire and Mark Wilkinson



Tilley Award - Abstract

The Problem

In many locations throughout the Thames Valley Police area there had been examples of youth disorder. For the purpose of this document, three case studies in particular are referred to. The responses evolved as a result of complaints of youths committing damage, graffiti and/or exhibiting anti-social behaviour. In each case a scanning process was undertaken to identify the underlying causes of the problem.

The damage, graffiti and anti social behaviour were not the cause but the effect. This effect was as a result. of the lack of facilities available to the youths who were causing problems within their own communities. Although the local authorities concerned may have invested heavily in play parks for children they had not provided adequate facilities for youths. As a result, many youths were `hanging around' shop areas, bus stops or other local venues which had an adverse affect on other members of the community.

The initial response by the police who were called to deal with the problems mentioned were often ineffective in providing long- term solutions. The short term solution of moving the youth on is not effective as they merely moved back as soon as the police had left as such, this process did no more than frustrate everyone involved.

The Response

By adopting a problem solving ethos and working in partnership of which the youths involved formed a part, each problem was individually actioned with the creation of a facility similar to a bus shelter or band stand, designed for the youths and sited in a sensible location. This provided them with a place in which they were seen as stakeholders.

The Overall Impact

A reduction in the problems of anti-social behaviour, damage and littering has been phenomenal. This has resulted in a reduction of police time and resources being deployed to deal with problems and a reduction of expenditure by local authorities in repairing damage and clearing litter. Overall this has improved the quality of life issues for the community and has identified how important it is to involve the youths in our communities to work together in a problem solving ethos.

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The main project **document** is the major part Of a booklet which is currently being **published** and distributed to all Police Forces throughout the United Kingdom. The authors of the document will also be **attending** the 2nd Problem Oriented Policing Conference later this year to provide a range of workshops in relation to the provision of youth shelters.

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Foreword

When I was a 14 year-old growing up in York, I was lucky — I could walk to a coffee bar which was open every evening (run by an ex-school teacher). As far as I was concerned the coffee was irrelevant, but I could meet my mates, attempt to chat up girls and listen to good music. I went there virtually every night for several years. There was no pressure on me to do anything in particular there, but I think it helped me to grow up without putting others or myself at too much risk. Therefore I pity the youths I see these days in many parts of the country, huddled shivering outside the chip shop or the off-licence. In such exposed public spaces they are both offensive and offended against by adults who regard them as threatening "yobbos". But what are they supposed to do — stay at home in *their* bedrooms and catalogue their stamp collections? There *are constructive* solutions to the "hanging out" problem, quite literally, through the construction of youth shelters and this well researched guide will tell you all about it.

Henry Shaftoe

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The problems with youths

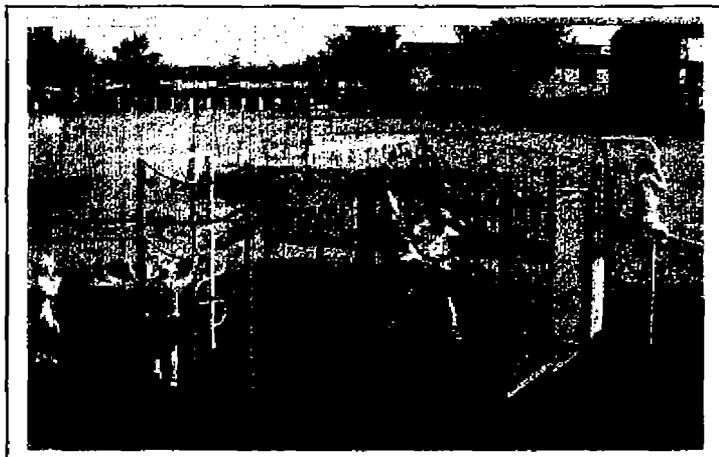
Many people in a local community view groups of youths as being frightening and blame them for damage, graffiti and nuisance behaviour. To some people three or four youths sitting on a park bench or at a bus stop appear intimidating. This can effect everyone's quality of life and causes conflicts between generations.

Local councils provide play equipment for young children, yet often spend vast sums repairing damage to it following abuse by older children. Complaints about youths congregating near shops and community buildings, or playing ball games among the houses and cars are frequent and difficult to resolve. No ball game' signs are put up, but can they be enforced? The problems become exaggerated and the public expects enforcement of the rule, but the cause of the problem has been ignored,

The police are called to deal with these problems but often are ineffective in providing long-term solutions. The short-term solution of moving the youths on is not effective as they merely move back as soon as the police have left. This process does no more than frustrate everyone involved. These conflicts can escalate and result in more serious offences against people and their property.

Young people resent being seen as a problem and often consider themselves as the victims. They complain about a lack of facilities and often wish to be involved in finding solutions to the problems.

Excellent facilities now, but where will they play and meet in a few year's time? Will they been seen as children and tomorrow's future, or a group of vandals?



Nowhere to go

"Hanging out' is part of the natural process of growing up, an intermediate stage between the comfort and protection of a child's home environment and the complete independence of adult life. If we do not cater for this need to hang out by offering (in consultation with young people) suitable locations and structures, then young people will continue to frequent places not intended for this purpose. This will result in confrontations and complaints.

The peak age for offending is about 15. Clearly most first offences are committed at an even younger age. The risk of being drawn into crime is at its highest during the early teenage years. If young people don't have a place of their own to go to, it may increase the risk of minor damage that hanging out in places not intended for them results in. This can lead to a spiral of anti-social behaviour and the start of a criminal record.

Youths often congregate in the play area they grew up in. However, they now feel little respect for the equipment and are more likely to damage it rather than play on it. It is not 'cool' to merely sit on a toy 'pink elephant' unless you can bash it against the ground or twist its trunk off. So why don't we ask youths what facilities they would like and where they should be located? In cases where young people have been asked, their requirements are often surprisingly modest -- just somewhere dry where they can meet their friends.

The problem caused by the gap in local recreational facilities covering the adolescent years is frequently increased by the lack of free alternatives that are open for real use. Clubs and youth organisations, although popular, tend to open for a few hours each week, which means youths have to find something to do for the rest of the time.

Young people need to socialise and become integrated into their communities. If we do not facilitate this process we may be storing up problems for the future.

The solution

Adults tend to assume that adolescents need youth clubs and other structured (and expensive) activities. But ask young people what they want and they will tell you:

"Somewhere to go that is safe and where we often won't get hassled."

"A place of our own away from adults."

Somewhere to kick a ball about, a place to meet friends."

It may be that often they would like a simple shelter with seating, in a safe place. It is important to choose the right location. The opportunity to supervise a younger brother or sister on adjacent toddlers play equipment, while remaining in the area close to home, could have advantages.

Asking young people what they want and then involving them in providing it increases the chances that it will be used and looked after.

What is a youth shelter?

It is a structure a for the social needs of youths a sheltered place to sit and talk. Sports equipment could be included, and a litter bin is often asked for to help keep the area tidy. The roof provides shelter from the elements, but most shelters are open on one or more sides.

A 'teenage village' from Wickstead Leisure Limited.



Base Leisure's teenage shelter.



Possible benefits of a youth shelter project include:

For youths

- a place to go and meet that is non-confrontational
- + facilitates young people's development stage of learning about independence and socialising
- ownership and pride in their neighbourhood
- constructive rather than destructive experience
- remove a possible first step towards criminality
- reduce boredom if associated with sports facility
- team games provide a physical outlet for emotions and energy
- improved employability of project team.

For the community:

- reduced damage, graffiti, crime and fear of crime
- enhanced community harmony
- child play areas remain undamaged and useable.

There is also potential for the following problems:

- + gangs could dominate the shelter
- availability of drugs and under-age drinking
- conflicts between groups about use/abuse
- litter and maintenance cost - who pays? some parish councils may be reluctant to commit themselves
- noise and annoyance to nearest residents
- graffiti, obscenities
- the next generation will need to be given ownership
- not easy to link to, other education or youth service activity.

Don't expect it to solve many of the broader issues - this is one idea to help with some common problems, but it is more effective to use several approaches at

the same time than to rely upon one. For example if drugs are a problem in the area, tackle that issue as well. A youth shelter may experience some of the above problems, but aren't those problems going to occur anyway? Shelters will not necessary encourage the problems, as alternative locations to congregate will always be found.

Best process ideas

- appoint a youth out-reach worker
- « try a 'planning for real' exercise (where local people work on a site model to identify the best location and layout)
- seek sponsorship from local commerce and businesses which could benefit from reduced problems
- involve local schools.

If you include schools, here are a few suggested school – based activities:

- design competition
- an English language class can write a questionnaire and letters to potential sponsors
- maths students can evaluate the data
- the debating society can help run the 'planning for real' exercise
- geography students can survey the potential sites
- technical drawing students can do scale drawings of the five best design ideas
- the sixth form can go on work experience placements to departments in the local authority where the idea needs processing (this could speed up decisions)
- also consider involving youths on local authority sub-committees.

Lighting

When consulted for one proposed shelter, 75 per cent of youths expressed concern about the safety of the location for a meeting place. Lighting may provide an increased level of safety and increase the usability of the shelter, but it would also make the shelter and its users more visible, and light pollution is an issue for rural areas. It should be the end users (ie the young people) who decide if it needs to be lit or not. We would expect most young people to like one side or section illuminated, or it may be better to light the main path to the shelter, and only indirectly light the shelter itself. The local authority will probably be concerned by the cost of getting power to it, and this may be a constraint on its location.

Case studies

(supporting evidence)

Marcham Oxfordshire

In 1987 the village of Marcham near Abingdon had the usual problems with youths hanging around the local shop. As a result of complaints from the community and a number of wasted 'police hours' in a futile effort to try and address the problem. With the lead of the Parish Council the youths were spoken to try and establish what the root causes were. The youths answer was a place of their own. As a result a concrete bandstand, shelter/meeting place was designed and built, decorated by the youths and sited beside the children's play area. Since then problems of anti-social behaviour have been reduced and the children's play area is hardly vandalised. The 'youth shelter' is six-sided, with seats and high walls on two sides. The open design was a request of the youths. Every few years it needs redecorating as generations grow up. New teenagers are provided with the materials to redecorate it and therefore take on ownership of it. A litterbin is provided and the area around the shelter is normally litter free. One security type light was installed, which rarely gets vandalised. The shelter was strong and as vandal resistant as possible. The stanchions are round and made of steel – fireproof and difficult to damage or climb. The undersides of the roof are free of handholds, while the bench seat is solid and wide enough to sit on but not wide enough to lie on. During the day it doubles as a shelter to watch cricket as the youths requested it to be placed next to the local cricket field.

Marcham Youth Shelter



Banbury, Oxfordshire

Cherwell District Council (North Oxfordshire) and the local police community Beat Officers became aware that within four of the largest local authority estates in Banbury, lay a problem with youth disorder. Complaints from the residents in excess of 200 were recorded by the local authority over a two-year period. The nature of the complaints ranged from nuisance, disorder, litter, vandalism and general unsociable behaviour. The persons responsible were mainly youths from the locality. As a result of careful analysis of the problem it became apparent that the main cause of the problem was the lack of facilities for the youths. A joint agency approach involving the youths, youth service, local authority and the police resulted in the installation of four specially designed sports and recreation facilities. Each unit has an enclosed basketball court, which also serves as a five-a-side football pitch. On the outside there is a basketball net and a seating area. The facilities are floodlit until 10 pm. The units cost approximately £40,000 each and have been placed on the large council estates, which have a reputation for problems. The council's leisure department states that the facilities are very popular, and used as a recreation and gathering area. It has also recorded a dramatic reduction in complaints from residents about youths and anti-social behaviour. The cost of repairs to young children's play equipment has dropped by 25 per cent, saving £10,000 in the first year. Older youths and adults, on occasions, use some of the seating areas on a Friday and Saturday until 2am for meeting, eating and drinking. This does not cause a nuisance to local residents because they are far enough away from the housing. However, the next morning the area is littered with beer cans, fish and chip papers, which used to be deposited, all down *the street*, and *in* residents' gardens. Now, *the* council controls and manages the problem by only having to attend the one local location and clean *it up*, instead *of a whole street*. Complaints *from* residents *in these* areas about noise, litter and damage have dramatically reduced.

Cherwell District Council is installing more units, believing the expense to be fully justifiable in providing a much-needed facility. In less dense housing areas the council is just installing the 'seats' which are proving popular with *the youths* and adults during the day.

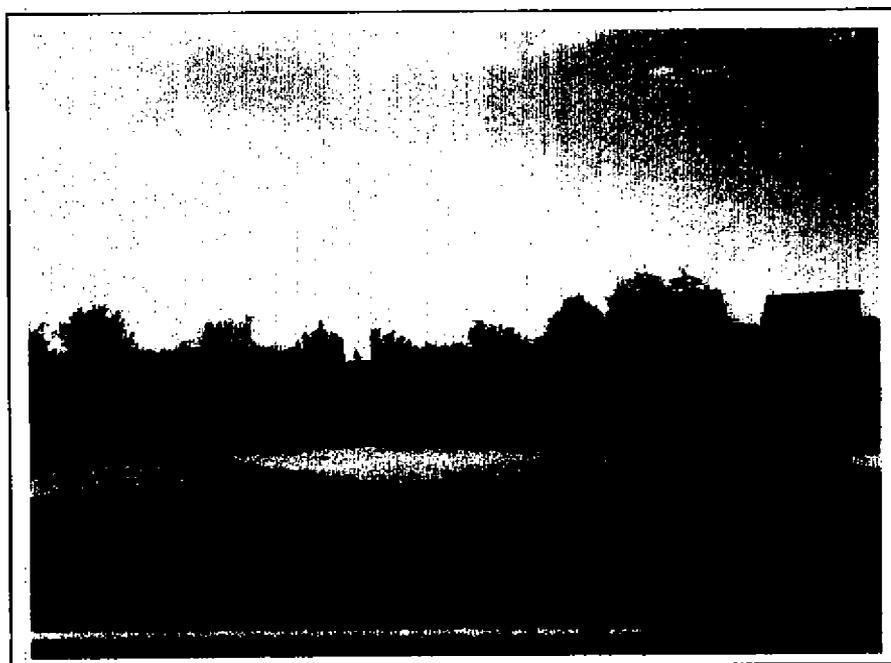
'Park Leisure' sports court and seats, as purchased by Cherwell District Council.



Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire

This problem solving approach took the form of an audit of sports needs and a survey of residents clearly identified ball games in residential areas as a problem. Frequently the council and police **received** phone **calls about nuisance behaviour** in the area. The Development Corporation acted upon the survey results and installed a wooden football wall, with cricket stumps and a basketball hoop.

A wooden bandstand with benches was built nearby to be used by anyone as a park bench with shelter. The only problem identified by the Parks Trust, which maintains the shelter and football wall, is the unexpectedly high level of use. The cost of maintaining the grass around the wall is higher than anticipated. Litter is now all in one place and, although unsightly, it is easier to clean up. The associated football wall is very popular and has not suffered from any damage throughout its three-year life. The shelter is used by all ages during the day and teenagers in the evening.



Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire

The problems in this area were reports of nuisance behaviour, damaged play equipment and conflicts over 'no ball game' signs. Some residents (those without children or living in end-terraced houses) wanted the 'no ball games' rule to be enforced. The signs are in fact very difficult to enforce: in one month the police received and responded to more than 100 nuisance behaviour calls.

Leisure and youth services interviewed youths and established the need for four play areas for the over 10s and one youth shelter. Following evaluation, it was established that the new play areas and youth shelter should pay for themselves in saved repairs alone in just four years. The cost of damage to the three play areas closest to the youth shelter is set out in the table below. The youth shelter was built near Haydon Hill Play Area in November 1997. Repair costs to play areas since have gone down by 90 per cent.

Repair Bills for	Haydon Hill	Denby Walk	Bedgrove Park	Total Cost
1994/5	£900	£270	Not built	£1,170
1995/6	£566	£196	"	£762
1996/7	£1,910	£2,536	£86	£4,532
April/Nov 1997	£800	£449	£1423	£2,672
Dec1997/ March 1998	30 pence	Zero	Zero	30 pence
1998/May1999	£69	£30	£179	£278

An SMP Meeting Point



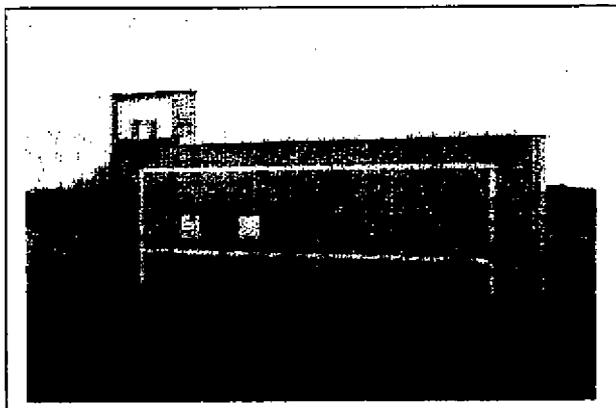
Other facilities

Play walls

Young children want to play football and it is easier to use a wall as the goal when only a few people are playing. When this wall is part of your home it is very annoying.

A simple wall to kick against can easily be incorporated into the

design of a youth shelter or a more elaborate sports facility. This simple provision will in itself reduce the nuisances in housing areas. A play wall can also include a climbing wall, a basketball hoop, and other activities. The above photograph is a multigames wall designed and built by the National Playing Fields Association.



Sport facilities

Basketball courts are also very popular in their own right and are a very flexible space that can be used for many other team games. Often when young people are consulted they ask for some sports equipment, but also somewhere to sit and watch. The key to success is providing something that the youths want, and not what we may think they want. There are more sources of funding for sports facilities than there are for youth shelters so consideration should be given to combining sports and seating areas.

Legislation

As a result of the Crime and Disorder Act, a duty has been placed on local authorities to consider Crime and Community Safety in most decisions they make. Housing developments may need to include a wider provision for recreation. There is also a provision for parish and town councils to spend money on crime prevention schemes. Section 31 of the Local Government Rating Act 1997 states: "A parish or community council may, for the detection or prevention

of crime in their area, install and maintain any equipment, establish and maintain any scheme, or assist others to install and maintain any equipment or to establish and maintain any scheme."

The process

Each specific solution might be different but the general process for arriving at that solution should follow the sequence below:

- clearly identify the problem
- if it involves young people, ask them how they see the problem and what the solution would be
- if they want a place to go would a youth shelter do the job?
- + ask them to set the design brief or draw it
- involve them in all the processes including work experience placements with the architects, planners, leisure department etc
- should it be lit at night?
- would they like it linked to some sports or team game facilities?
- involve the youths in the fund raising and building projects
- establish a method for giving ownership to the next group every year, by painting it, or raising more money for maintenance or further equipment.

Conclusions

Don't do it without:

- clearly identifying the local problems
- ensuring young people want it
- make sure the nearest residents will at least tolerate it.

The shelter may not be the most important product of the project; the process of involvement empowerment and training may do more for the young people involved than the shelter itself.

Evaluation indicators menu:

Problems and their costs.

When appraising the possible value of a youth shelter, it is worth doing a cost benefit analysis. It will cost money to build and maintain a youth shelter but it may cost more to do nothing, as shown below:

"No shelter" costs

Education	exclusions of offenders, reduced performance, early leavers
Housing department	complaints re: youths, ball games, damage to garages
Leisure department	damage to play equipment, litter, graffiti
Local authority as a whole	complaints from residents
Police	prosecutions, patrols, responding, investigation, poor youth relationship
Residents	groups 'hanging around', "fear of crime", noise, litter, ball games played against walls and fencing, loss of pride in area
Shop keepers	youths congregating, litter, graffiti, loss of trade, closure of business
Transport operators	damage to bus shelters, graffiti, complaints
Village hall	graffiti removal, youths congregating, annoyance to other users

Shelter costs

Construction	Consultation	Design
Land	Lighting	Materials
Maintenance	Planning	Staff training

For benefits see previous section.

Further advice and help can be found from a number of sources, for instance:

- Council officers can advise on National Lottery assistance
- National Playing Fields Association, play and youth facilities. Tel: 01203 694517
- Police architectural liaison officers
- Sport and leisure departments
- Youth service.

Funding sources:

Lottery Sports Fund

Tel: 0345 649 649

English Basket Ball Association

Thornccliffe Park Estate, Chapletown, Sheffield, S35 2PH.

Tel: 01142577211

Foundation for the Sports and the Arts (FSA)

Foundation for Sports and the Arts
Secretary to the Trustees, PO Box 20,
Liverpool, L13 1 H B. Tel: 0151 259 5505

Goaldiggers Charitable Trust

Administered by the National Playing Fields Association. Grants are provided for facilities for children and young people, in particular for schemes to provide and improve hard surface play area. Goaldiggers Charitable Trust 25 Ovington Square, London, SW13 1 LQ_ Tel: 0171 584 6445

The Football Trust

The Football Trust Walkden House, 10 Melton Street,
London, NW1 2EJ. Tel: 0171 388 4504

FundFinder

Fundfinder is a computer search that locates trusts and companies that give money to certain projects. The search provides the names of the trusts and where you can find details of their criteria. Copies of the books that contain the contact details are available from most council offices or libraries.

ComPanies

<p>These companies are just a few that supply equipment. The list is by no means exhaustive. Neither The Home Office nor the police service can endorse any particular company or its products.</p>	
<p>Base Leisure Limited Balshaw Heath, Bullbeggars Lane Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire, HP4 2RD. Tel: 01442 878737</p>	<p>Kompan 5 Holdom Avenue, Milton Keynes, MK1 1QU. Tel: 01908 642466</p>
<p>Lappset UK Ltd Lappset House, Henson Way, Telford Way, Kettering, Northants, NN16 8PX. Tel: 01536 412612</p>	<p>Park Leisure Limited Unit 2 Fairview Industrial Park, Ruckinge, Kent, TN26 2PW. Tel: 01233 733782 Fax: 01233 733578</p>
<p>Playdale c/o Geo. C Croasdale (Haverthwaite) Ltd, Haverthwaite, Ulverston, Cumbria, LA12 8AE. Tel: 01 5395 31 561</p>	<p>Record Playground Limited Shipyards Industrial Estate, Selby, YO8 8BR. Tel: 01757 703620</p>
<p>SMP(Playgrounds) Pound Street, Chertsey, Surrey, KT16 8EJ. Tel: 01932 568081</p>	<p>Steelway Fensecure Queensgate Works, Bilston Road, Wolverhampton, WV2 2NJ. Tel: 01 902 451 733</p>
<p>Sutcliffe Play Limited Sandbeds Trading Estate, Dewsbury Road, Ossett, West Yorkshire, WF5 9ND Tel: 01924 280028</p>	<p>Wickstead Leisure Limited Digby Street, Kettering, Northamptonshire, NN16 8YJ. Tel: 01536 517028</p>

Suggested reading:

- English Sports Council Guidance Notes

Multi-Use Games Hrcs

Planning Permission and Statutory Consents

Floodlighting

All above cost £3.00 each and are available by telephoning 0171 273 1500.

Books available at most local authorities.

- *A Guide to Company Giving*
- A Guide to the Major Trusts (Volumes I and 2)
- The Sports Funding Guide
- The Complete Fund-Raising Handbook

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