



Annual Corporate Customer Feedback Report

2021/2022

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Council operates a Corporate Complaints policy and procedure which is overseen by the Customer & Cultural Services Division. Complaints, compliments and comments are managed through the corporate Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system, Oracle Service Cloud. Any member of staff can record complaints and compliments through the corporate intranet using the online form. Customers can log complaints, compliments and comments online or can request them to be recorded through their preferred access channel.
- 1.2 Service Cloud holds records of all complaints, compliments and comments and is used to manage the status and timescales of corporate complaint handling within the organisation. The related data is also analysed to identify trends and lessons learned to help us to improve our services and the customers' experience.
- 1.3 Complaints about Adults Social Care and Support and Children's Services, including Children's Special Educational Needs (SEN) are dealt with by the Adults and Children's Complaints Team. There were 34 further complaints; Children's Services (33) and Adults Social Care (one) that were investigated through this team. Further information can be found in the end of year reports for both Children's & Adults Services.

2. Corporate Complaint Process

- 2.1 The Corporate Complaints policy is reviewed and updated annually. The procedure is as follows:
 - **Stage one**, complaints are investigated and responded to by the appropriate service area. Complaints should be responded to within a maximum of 20 working days. Where complaints are considered more complex, with the agreement of the customer and of the appropriate Head of Service or Complaints team a complaint may be responded to within 30 working days.
 - **Stage two**, if a customer remains dissatisfied with the response that has been given a complaint is escalated to the final stage of the complaint's procedure. The appropriate Head of Service or senior officer will review the complaint and the stage one response and respond to the customer within 10 working days or for more complex complaints within 20 working days, in agreement with the customer.

3. Summary of complaints and compliments we received

- 3.1 619 complaints were received for 2021/2022, a decrease of 31 (4.8%) compared to the previous year when 650 were received.

Of the 619 complaints received 80 (12.9%) progressed to the second and final stage of the complaint's procedure compared to 67 (10.3%) in 2021/2022.

- 3.2 The complaints team review all complaints logged and it was identified that a further 160 complaints had been logged which had been cancelled and were recorded as service requests with the agreement of the customer.
- 3.3 The preferred access channel for customers to make a complaint continues to be digital with online forms (33.8%) and emails (25.5%), telephone (38.8%) and post (1.8%). Customers are encouraged to use the online methods where possible.
- 3.4 The Council also offers a translation and interpreting service for users of Council services where the first language is not English or due to a disability or impairment, the customer requires alternative formats such as British Sign Language or large print. We have had no requests for the year 2021/2022.
- 3.5 Key trends for the year were:
- There has been a decrease in the number of complaints received.
 - There has been an increase in complaints escalated to stage 2.
 - Service areas that provide services to all residents received the most complaints as forecast and reflected in previous years.
 - 59.9% of all customers choose dissatisfaction with service delivery as the main reason for complaint.
- 3.6 957 compliments were received in 2021/2022, compared to 1104 for the previous year, a decrease of 147 (13.3%).

Table one shows complaints and compliments for the last three years. The proportion of complaints compared with compliments is reasonably constant at around 40:60 complaints to compliments.

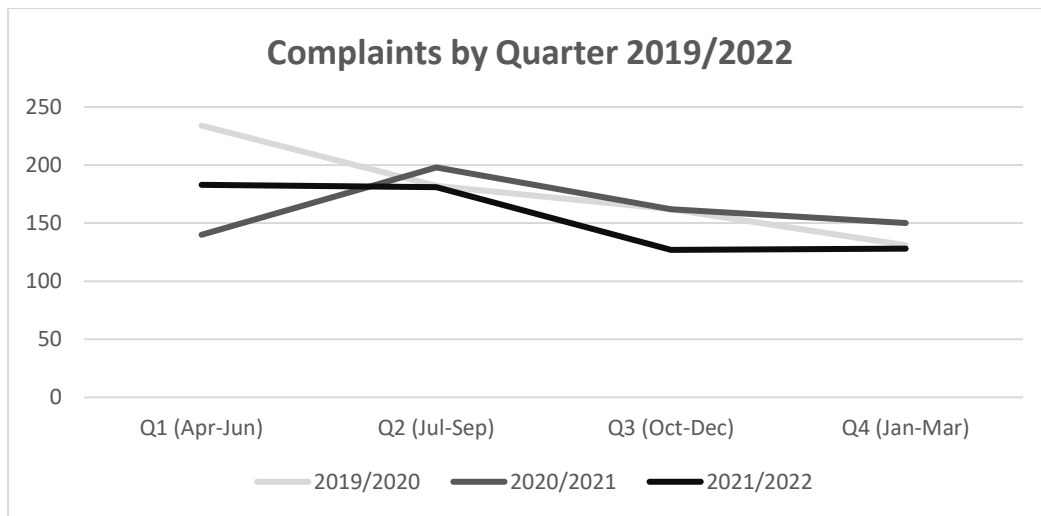
Table One: Complaints and compliments by year 2019/2020 to 2021/2022

	2019/20	%	2020/21	%	2021/22	%
Complaints	709	35.8	650	37.1	619	39.3
Compliments	1273	64.2	1104	62.9	957	60.7
Total	1982		1754		1576	

4. Corporate Complaints Quarterly Service Area Analysis

- 4.1 Analysis has helped us to understand how and when complaints are received, it allows us to monitor the impact on seasonal services and trends in service delivery. To demonstrate this, complaints numbers have been broken down further. Graph One shows complaints received by quarter.

Graph One: Complaints by Quarter 2019/2022



- 4.2 There has been a decrease in complaints compared with previous years, with quarter three seeing the biggest decrease. This is despite some contentious sustainable travel schemes carried out by our Highways Services and an increase in contact across customer contact channels post recovery from Covid 19 and cost of living.
- 4.3 Planning Design and Engagement mainly planning services saw the biggest increase in quarter one with 19 more complaints than the previous year, this continued into quarter two with an increase of eight complaints. These related to time taken for applications to be approved and lack of communication from officers. This was an issue the service area were fully aware of and have actively addressed. The reasons have principally been in relation to high levels of case management which impacted on capacity to provide regular updates to applicants. Whilst this is communicated it's not always been accepted by the customer. Council customer service training modules have been identified as part of training requirements during staff one to ones and the Head of Service has committed to completing a Planning Design and Engagement Services Customer Charter in the year 2022/2023. Whilst at early stages, initial feedback from 2022/2023 has suggested a decrease in related complaints and has seen compliments on customer service within the team.
- 4.4 Highways Services had an increase in quarter one by 11 complaints as a result of different road closures/road works and customers not receiving any correspondence associated with works being carried out by other organisations. In quarter two there was a decrease of 10 and quarter three a decrease of 16, for these two quarters the reduction related to traffic and parking.
- 4.5 Parks, grass, shrubs and trees had an increase in quarter one with it being the start of the peak season. 15 complaints were received compared to six the previous year. It is important to stress that this service trend does fluctuate and is very much influenced by weather and growing conditions depending on the year.

- 4.6 Income and Awards had an increase in both quarters two and three by 10 complaints each. During 2021/22 this area was still feeling the effects of Covid on their workload. They were dealing with the administration of various business grants and reliefs, the administration of the Self Isolation payment scheme and an increase in workloads across all service areas, this also included an increase in contact from customers requesting flexible payment arrangements for council tax and a higher than average benefit caseload.
- 4.7 Complaints received related mainly to council tax enquiries where customers had been referred for falling behind with their payments and feedback regarding the tone of the formal liability /reminder letters. Most of what is included in these is governed by legislation therefore difficult to amend.
- 4.8 Waste & Recycling – quarter three had a decrease of 22 complaints from the previous year, mainly related to 15 less complaints for household waste recycling centre.
- 4.9 To help put the level of complaints into context, table two shows some of the activities undertaken by key service areas which tend to be the subject of complaints, with the number of complaints received.

Table Two: Key Council Activities 2021/2022

Service Areas	Activity level	No of Complaints
Waste & Recycling		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Household waste & recycling collections (refuse, garden waste, mixed recycling, glass) 	11,426,520	190 (.0017%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bulky Waste available collections 	4,852	6 (0.12%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visitors to Household Waste Recycling Centre 	118,235	23 (0.02%)
Income & Awards		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council tax bills issued 	174,000	76
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New HB claims paid 	631	(0.04%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New CTR claims paid 	2330	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administration of business grant schemes 	Awarded eligible businesses in the region of £60.8m	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administration of the Self Isolation Payment Scheme 	Awarded eligible residents in the region of £2.1m	
Streetcare		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintained grass (m²) 	8,5 m ²	38
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintained hard ground (m²) 	4,2 m ²	(% N/A)
Planning & Building Control		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning Applications 	2,888	74
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building Control Applications 	1,368	(1.39%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial Notices* 	1,077	

Service Areas	Activity level	No of Complaints
Customer & Cultural Services Solihull Connect Number of contacts by channel <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact Centre • Walk in Centres • Digital: Email / Webforms / Chat 	276,255 6,587 22,474 21,172	23 (.007%)
Cemeteries & Crematoria <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cremations and burials • Memorial headstone permits • Scatters • Grave reserves • Reassignments • Memorial sales 	3625 691 457 201 41 241	25 (0.99%)
Registration Service <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Births, Deaths and marriages 	2,061	3 (0.15%)
Libraries & Arts Services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visitor numbers 	130,087	2 (.002%)
Parks Area of maintained shrubs (m ²)	540,750	34 (% N/A)
Traffic & Parking <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of Council owned spaces • Highways Maintenance Significant Highway schemes implemented 	4418 Six new pedestrian crossings and one junction upgrade 35 Traffic Regulation Orders HS2 new highway layouts Commonwealth Games HS2 Road Safety fund Community Liveability Programme Berkswell Village Improvements Cycle schemes on Blossomfield Road, Meriden & Knowle Borough wide Cycle Parking Fillongley Bridge Deck Replacement– Sprint Phase 1	81 (% N/A)

*Initial Notices are issued by private companies to advise that they have been engaged to manage Building Regulations compliance.

5. Categories of Complaint

5.1 Complaints are categorised so that we can understand why customers complain. The categories for complaints are provided in Table three. The top three reasons are the same as for previous years:

- Service delivery
- Decision making (policy)
- Impoliteness, rudeness, unfairness, bias or prejudice

Table Three: Categories of complaints

Complaint reason	2019/ 2020	% of total	2020/ 2021	% of Total	2021/ 2022	% of Total
Dissatisfaction in service delivery	441	62.2	364	56.0	371	59.9
Dissatisfaction with the way we apply policy, a decision or a procedure	169	23.8	199	30.6	156	25.2
Impoliteness, rudeness, unfairness, bias or prejudice	71	10.0	54	8.3	63	10.2
Refusal to answer reasonable questions, misleading or unsuitable advice	23	3.3	27	4.2	26	4.2
Inappropriate use of personal information	5	0.7	6	0.9	3	0.5
Total	709	100%	650	100%	619	100%

5.2 Complaints indicating dissatisfaction with service delivery represented the greatest proportion at 59.9%, an increase of 3.9%.

5.3 25.2% of complaints related to dissatisfaction with the way policy or a decision was applied, a decrease of 5.4% on the previous year.

5.4 10.2% complaints were made because of impoliteness and rudeness, of which 29 (46%) related to Waste & Recycling for Amey crew and 12 (19%) for Highway Services for parking enforcement officers. There was one complaint received with regards to racism by a Parking Enforcement Officer. There were no other complaints logged under this category to do with bias or prejudice.

6. Complaint Timescales

Table four shows the complaints resolved by complaint stage and timescale.

Table Four: Complaint Resolution Timescales 2021/2022

	Complaints at Stage 1	Complaints at Stage 2
Resolved in 15 days	301	
Resolved in 20 days	495	
21 – 30 days	102	
Over 30 days	22	
Stage 2 in 20 days		77
Stage 2 over 20 days		3
Total	619	80

- 6.1 Of the 619 complaints registered at stage one, 494 were responded to within the 20 days, 102 were identified as complex or needed further time to investigate and responded to within 20 to 30 days in line with the policy timescales and with the agreement of the complainant. 22 complaints exceeded 30 days and a breakdown by service area is provided in table five.
- 6.2 Of the 80 complaints escalated to stage two, 77 were responded to within 20 days with three complaints that went over the 20 days. The complaints team continued to work with the co-ordinators during this period. A breakdown by service area and reasons for exceeding timescale is provided in table six.
- 6.3 If at stage one or two a complaint is more complex, the deadline can be extended and should be negotiated with the customer and agreed by the Corporate Complaints Lead.
- 6.4 The complaints team monitor all complaint timescales to identify those approaching target completion, the complaints system will also send automated reminders to officers investigating complaints. The complaints team will liaise with the relevant co-ordinators and where necessary speak to the relevant investigating officer or Head of Service where timescales are a concern.
- 6.5 There are a number of reasons for a complaint to exceed timescale including:
- A. Complexity of the complaint: complaint relates to multiple services, requires monitoring or site visits.
 - B. More information needed from the customer which caused a delay in being able to start the investigation.
 - C. Delay in completing the complaint on the system even though a response has been sent to the customer.
 - D. Poor response time management of the complaint by investigating officers

Table Five: Complaints exceeding 30 days at stage one by Service Area

Service Area Team	Total Stage 1 out of SLA	A	B	C	D
Regulatory Services	1	1			
Planning Design & Engagement	4				4
Highways Services	2				2
Income & Awards	1		1		
Parks, grass, shrubs & Trees	2	1			1
Streetcare	2				2
Resources	1				1
Customer & Cultural Services	3			2	1
Growth Programmes	2	1			1
Neighbourhood Services	2				2
Public Health	2	1	1		

Table Six: Complaints exceeding 20 days at stage two by Service Area

Service Area Team	Stage 2 out of SLA
Parks grass shrubs & trees	1
Regulatory Services	2

- 6.6 The three complaints that exceeded timescales were monitored and the complaints team continued to work with these areas to ensure responses were sent out and customers were kept informed.
- 6.7 It is important to note that one of the highest service areas to receive complaints, Waste & Recycling, dealt with all complaints at stage one and two within the timescales.
- 6.8 Despite consistent reminders we are finding some complaints are being responded to outside of the timescales and we will continue to work with the areas concerned and provide on-going training and support.
- 6.9 The complaints team continues to work with co-ordinators to ensure responses where possible are sent within timescale, and customers are kept informed with deadline extensions.
- 6.10 To mitigate the impact of poor response time to the customer and to support investigating officers there is an automated reminder system as part of the complaints process as well as reminders from the complaint co-ordinator.

7. Learning from Complaints

- 7.1 One of the most important outcomes of investigating complaints is to learn from them. Categories of learning are used so that we can understand how feedback can be used to improve or shape services in the future. Table seven shows the categories recorded after a complaint has been investigated.
- 7.2 In line with the Council's legal obligations under part seven of the Immigration Action 2016, the Council's complaint procedure has incorporated a measure in which a customer can make a formal complaint to the Council, should any member of the public feel that a customer-facing council officer has insufficient fluency in spoken English in the performance of their role. Since the implementation of the Act, we have received no complaints in relation to this category which is a positive indicator on the quality of English fluency used by staff employed in the team.

Table Seven: Categories of learning recorded

Learning Category	2019/2020		2020/2021		2021/2022	
	No.	% of total	No.	% of total	No.	% of Total
Improve revised service delivery process	283	39.9	254	39.1	324	52.3
Customer comments included in review of how policies & procedures are applied to inform decision making	199	28.1	211	32.5	121	19.5
Improvements in communication	172	24.3	145	22.3	124	20.0
Review behaviours and/or training needs for individuals or a team	54	7.6	40	6.1	48	7.8
Review of confidentiality procedures. These should be carried out in accordance with the Data Protections Act.	1	0.1	0	0.0	2	0.4
Total	709	100%	650	100%	619	100%

- 7.3 The following learning categories were identified as part of each complaint's outcome and a summary of the trends:
- Improve service delivery process – predominately relate to Waste and Recycling with complaints relating to missed collections, crew behaviour, not returning bins correctly and/or blocking access.
 - Customer comments included in review of how policies and procedures are applied to inform decision making – majority relate to Highways Services with regards to roadworks around Solihull which include resurfacing and new cycle lanes. Parking services received 10 which relate to enforcement officers.

- Improvements in communication – All areas have identified improvement from complaints for this learning category:
 - Majority for Planning Design & Engagement, predominantly relating to poor communication from officers and not responding to emails.
 - Income and Awards mostly relate to not receiving automatic correspondence sent about council tax accounts and not receiving replies to emails.
 - Waste & Recycling with majority relating to HWRC booking system with customers unaware they need to book or thought they had booked but didn't receive confirmation.
- Review behaviours and/or training needs for individuals or a team – Relate to Waste & Recycling crew behaviour and Highways Services where all but three complaints relate to traffic enforcement officers.

7.4 The complaints team run quarterly reports on recorded learning and work with service areas to discuss how this has been implemented to ensure service improvements.

7.5 As an important part of the response to customers, officers will advise of any learning and how it is intended to be implemented. Learning is part of the recorded outcome of all complaints. The complaints team will work closely with officers to monitor where learning is identified to ensure that it is followed up.

7.6 Examples of learning from complaints investigated during 2021/2022 have been included as appendix 3.2 alongside two case studies to show how a complaint is investigated from start to end, including how we learn from complaints.

8. Complaints by Ward

8.1 To gather a further insight into complaints table eight shows complaints by Ward in which the complainant lived. This enables us to see if there are any new trends or exceptions to trends that could be analysed further. Whilst ward reporting is an important insight into complaints activity, it is often difficult to identify any particular trends.

Table Eight: Complaints by Ward

Ward	2019/ 2020	% of Total	2020/ 2021	% of total	2021/ 2022	% of total	% of the borough's population
Out of borough customers or no address given	126	17.8%	172	26.6%	137	22.1%	
Elmdon	51	7.2%	31	4.8%	35	5.7%	5.9%
Silhill	49	6.9%	34	5.2%	29	4.7%	5.7%
Shirley South	44	6.2%	32	4.9%	35	5.7%	5.8%
Blythe	44	6.2%	33	5.1%	43	6.9%	6.8%
St Alphege	43	6.1%	33	5.1%	36	5.8%	6.4%
Knowle	36	5.1%	30	4.6%	24	3.9%	5.2%
Smiths Wood	36	5.1%	28	4.3%	25	4.0%	5.9%
Shirley West	34	4.8%	35	5.4%	42	6.8%	5.9%
Shirley East	33	4.6%	28	4.3%	24	3.9%	5.6%
Bickenhill	32	4.5%	31	4.8%	28	4.5%	5.9%
Meriden	31	4.4%	17	2.6%	24	3.9%	5.9%
Dorridge & Hockley Heath	30	4.2%	30	4.6%	21	3.4%	5.3%
Lyndon	27	3.8%	32	4.9%	28	4.5%	6.4%
Kingshurst & Fordbridge	27	3.8%	30	4.6%	12	1.9%	6.2%
Chelmsley Wood	25	3.5%	18	2.8%	17	2.7%	6.1%
Olton	21	3.0%	21	3.2%	33	5.3%	5.9%
Castle Bromwich	20	2.8%	15	2.3%	26	4.2%	5.2%
Grand Total	709	100%	650	100%	619	100%	

- 8.2 There has been a decrease in customers logging complaints where no address has been provided. An address does not need to be provided to investigate a complaint.
- 8.3 Kingshurst & Fordbridge have seen a big decrease, analysis has shown these are related to less waste and recycling complaints. Complaints for Olton and Castle Bromwich increased and predominantly relate to waste and recycling. Blythe also had an increase and mainly related to waste and recycling, planning services and Income and Awards.
- 8.4 Waste and Recycling officers will liaise with the area supervisor to understand the issues and monitor will take place with support provided for the collection crews (if required) until collections are being carried out in a satisfactory manner.

9. Compliments

- 9.1 957 compliments were received in 2021/2022, a decrease of 147 (13.3%) compared to 1104 compliments received in 2020/2021. Table nine shows the top five service areas to receive compliments.

Table Nine: Compliments Service Area Top Five

Service Area	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022
Highway Services	427	531	425
Customer Services	610	294	322
Waste and Recycling	79	134	96
Streetcare	48	66	27
Public Health	2	5	19

- 9.2 Compliments are shared with service areas quarterly and at year end. Customer Services share compliments received as part of a staff monthly local brief.
- 9.3 All service areas are encouraged to log compliments on the corporate system even if a local log is kept.
- 9.4 Highway Services received a high volume of comments in 2020/2021 for a high standard of service with wildlife ways projects.
- 9.5 Table 10 shows the reasons for receiving compliments. The majority of compliments were made for named employee helpfulness at 71.9%, increased from 64% during 2020/2021. High standard of service has decreased to 13.5% from 20.3% in 2020/2021.

Table Ten: Categories of Compliments

Category	2019/2020	% of total	2020/2021	% of total	2021/2022	% of total
Named employee helpfulness	980	77.0	707	64.0	688	71.9
High standard of service	165	13.0	224	20.3	129	13.5
Helpfulness of service	106	8.3	121	11.0	119	12.4
Other	22	1.7	52	4.7	21	2.2
TOTAL	1273	100	1104	100	957	100

10. Customer Comments

- 10.1 Customer comments are captured where a customer has a suggestion for service improvement or is not happy with the way we are currently delivering a service or policy and indicate they do not want to log a formal corporate complaint. 68% of comments are received by telephone following a customer enquiry, email (19%) and web (10%).
- 10.2 Customer comments are shared with all relevant service areas for learning and improvement suggestions. In cases where a customer has requested a response this will be provided by the service area responsible.
- 10.3 Table 11 shows the number of comments recorded over the last three years.

Table Eleven: Number of comments for last three years

	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022
Number of comments	945	1070	808

- 10.4 Table 12 shows the service areas that received the most customer comments. Majority of comments relate to Waste and Recycling which is consistent with previous years.

Table Twelve: Top Service Areas receiving the most comments

Service Area	Total
Waste and Recycling	353
Highway Services	122
Income and Awards	76
Customer Services	55
Streetcare	50

- 10.5 Key trends of customer comments registered in 2021/2022 relate to:
- Waste and Recycling – Various comments made about all services with 56 comments regarding visiting and accessing Bickenhill HWRC, overall complaints have decreased.
 - Highway Services – Various comments with regards to dangerous/obstructive parking and parking charge notices issued.
 - Customer Services – Various comments with regards to wait times and the phone message whilst waiting.
 - Income and Awards – Mostly relate to letters received (council tax/benefits). The wording and tone is found to be intimidating, please see comments in point 4.7. Council tax online portal not user friendly.
 - Streetcare – Majority of comments regarding grass cutting, not cut often enough, grass not removed after cutting and standard of cut. Litter schedule not often enough.

11. Local Government Social Care Ombudsman

Each year the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) provides feedback to Local Authorities about the complaints it has received about them in the past year. The feedback is for both Statutory and Corporate Complaints and can be found in Appendix 3.3.

- 11.1 For the year 2021/2022 the LGSCO received 26 corporate complaints. 22 for Economy and Infrastructure and four for Income and Awards.
- 11.2 Three complaints were upheld, two of these related to Planning Service and one for Waste and Recycling.

12. Looking Forward

- 12.1 During 2022/2023 the complaints team will continue to focus on timescales and improve support and training for those areas struggling with complaint response timescales. An informal pilot has been carried out on complaints timescales so that data can be analysed to look at reducing the standard stage one timescale to 15 working days.
- 12.2 Work with service areas and continue to provide them with quarterly performance information/data and comparisons for improvements.
- 12.3 It is important to extend the understanding on the make-up of the community who use the complaints and compliments service and how council services can be made more inclusive. One positive way of doing this is by introducing equality monitoring. The online complaints form and the Oracle Service Cloud system are being developed for the use of collecting equality monitoring data.
- 12.4 Refresher training for investigating officers and head of services on effective complaints handling. The LGSCO are offering a wide variety of virtual training.
- 12.5 To develop and carry out customer surveys to gather feedback on complaints handling.

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