

**Northern Ireland Practice and Education Council  
for Nursing and Midwifery**

**DEVELOPMENT OF A  
MATERNITY SUPPORT WORKER  
PROGRAMME  
FOR NORTHERN IRELAND**

**Final Report**

Published by the Northern Ireland Practice and Education  
Council for Nursing and Midwifery (NIPEC)

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS FROM THE CHAIR OF THE STEERING GROUP**

In January 2009, a Steering Group was convened to take forward the development of a regional maternity support worker programme for Northern Ireland. I would like to thank the Chief Nursing Officer, DHSSPS for his support for this important initiative.

As Chair of the Steering Group, I acknowledge the support and contributions of its members, who actively participated in all aspects of the development of the programme and related work.

I am also grateful for the significant contributions made by the HSC Trust Nursing and Midwifery Workforce Leads, Heads of Midwifery, and midwives from the Health and Social Care Trusts, all of whom demonstrated a high level of commitment to the work involved.

I particularly wish to acknowledge the work of the staff from the Nursing and Midwifery Education Unit in the Beeches Management Centre, who took responsibility for developing the programme. This involved substantive work, and their assistance in producing a high quality document is greatly appreciated.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the staff of NIPEC, who provided highly valued input and support.



Glynis Henry  
**Chair, Steering Group**

## **1.0 BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 A number of activities taken forward in Northern Ireland in recent years have influenced developments in relation to the skills mix of the workforce providing maternity services. An Audit of Acute Maternity Services, which reported in 2006, recommended that the Department of Health and Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) should reassess the opportunities for continuing to extend the skills of midwives. A further recommendation was that a review should be undertaken of the scope for enhancing the midwifery skill mix on acute maternity wards. Subsequent to this, a Steering Group was set up by the DHSSPS, with the remit to explore the skill mix required to provide holistic, women-centred care. The review, published in 2008 (DHSSPS, 2008) concluded that there was a need for a regional and consistent approach to the on going development in skill mix in the maternity services in Northern Ireland.
- 1.2 A number of recommendations were made by the review group, including the development of the role of the Support Worker for the maternity service, and the development of a regional Maternity Support Worker (MSW) job description. It was also recommended that a group should be set up to determine the training requirements for MSWs in Northern Ireland.
- 1.3 It was agreed by the Chief Nursing Officer and the Chief Executive of NIPEC that NIPEC would take forward work with the Trusts and the Beeches Management Centre to facilitate the development of the programme for Maternity Support Workers in Northern Ireland. The outcomes of the above mentioned *DHSSPS Review of the Skill Mix within the Maternity Services* (DHSSPS, 2008) would form the foundation for the developments.

## **2.0 STEERING GROUP**

- 2.1 A Steering Group, facilitated by NIPEC, was set up to take the work forward. In order to ensure that key stakeholders were involved in the developments, nominations for membership of the Steering Group were sought from the DHSSPS, Health and Social Care (HSC) Trusts, Beeches Management Centre, and Queen's University, Belfast. This took place between December 2008 and January 2009. The membership list is attached at Appendix One.
- 2.2 The first meeting of the Steering Group was held on 12<sup>th</sup> January 2009. It was agreed that Glynis Henry, Nursing and Midwifery Workforce Lead (Southern HSC Trust), would chair the Steering Group Meetings and that NIPEC would facilitate the meetings and take forward any required actions. The Terms of Reference were agreed by the Steering Group members; a copy is attached at Appendix Two. Three further meetings of the Steering Group were held during 2009, with the final meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> February 2010.

2.3 It was agreed at the first meeting that the outputs for the work would include: regional Maternity Support Worker Job Descriptions for adoption by all HSC Trusts; and, the development of a Maternity Support Worker Preparation Programme for implementation by all Trusts and facilitated by the Nursing and Midwifery Education Unit of the Beeches Management Centre. Two sub-groups were established to take forward the work:

- A sub-group chaired by Nikki Patterson, Nursing and Midwifery Workforce Lead (Belfast HSC Trust), to develop proposed Maternity Support Worker Job Descriptions; membership is attached at Appendix Three;
- A sub-group chaired by Teresa Barr, Assistant Director of Nursing and Midwifery (Beeches Management Centre), to develop proposals for a Maternity Support Worker Programme; membership is attached at Appendix Four.

### **3.0 DEVELOPMENT OF REGIONAL JOB DESCRIPTIONS**

3.1 As indicated earlier the report of the *DHSSPS Review of the Skill Mix within the Maternity Services* (DHSSPS, 2008) recommended the development of job descriptions for the Maternity Support Workers in Northern Ireland to ensure consistency across the HSC Trusts in the continued development of the role. The sub-group was convened in February 2009 and work was taken forward to develop proposed indicative Band 2 and Band 3 job descriptions.

3.2 The job descriptions for proposed Band 2 and Band 3 Maternity Support Workers were developed by the sub-group between February and May 2009 and were presented to the Steering Group in May 2009 for approval. The job descriptions were agreed and copies are attached at Appendix Five.

3.3 It was agreed that the proposed Band 3 job description would be processed for Agenda for Change job evaluation on a regional basis, to make provision for consistency in banding awards across all Trusts. The job description was subsequently evaluated at Band 3.

3.4 It should be noted that the proposed Band 2 job description was not processed for Agenda for Change job evaluation since these posts are already well established in each Trust and job evaluations had already taken place within the implementation process of Agenda for Change. The Band 3 posts, in the main, represent a new development.

### **4.0 DEVELOPMENT OF A MATERNITY SUPPORT WORKER PROGRAMME FOR NORTHERN IRELAND**

4.1 It was agreed at the Steering Group meeting in May 2009 that the programme would be completed and approved at the September 2009 meeting. It was also confirmed

that the programme would be developed using the NVQ framework, in accordance with DHSSPS requirements.

- 4.2 The NVQ framework requires programmes to be developed from a range of compulsory core units and selection from optional units - the latter being chosen to enable the Support Worker to acquire the competencies required for his/her role. Additional units can also be undertaken to enable the Support Worker to acquire new competencies relevant to role. It was agreed that the NVQ 3 programme that had already been developed and implemented by the Southern HSC Trust for preparation of Maternity Support Workers should be used as the basis for development of the regional programme.
- 4.3 The current NVQ 2 preparation in Northern Ireland for health care support workers was endorsed as appropriate to Band 2 support workers in the maternity services. It was agreed that the sub-group would focus on developing an NVQ 3 programme for Maternity Support Workers, who would work at a level as identified within Agenda for Change band 3 support worker roles. It was noted that Agenda for Change job profiles also made provision for a Band 4 Maternity Support Worker who would be trained at a level higher than NVQ 3 and who undertook a wider range of competencies at a higher level than was envisaged for the Maternity Support Worker in Northern Ireland.
- 4.4 Work was taken forward by the chair of the sub-group in March 2009; difficulties were encountered in terms of staff being released to attend meetings. At the Steering Group meeting held in May, it was agreed that sub-group activities would be taken forward to develop the programme for submission to the Steering Group by September 2009.
- 4.5 Whilst the programme was being developed it was noted that the National Leadership and Innovation Agency for Healthcare (NLIA) had developed an All Wales Maternity Support Worker programme in collaboration with Skills for Health (Wales) and RCM (Wales). This is a taught, structured programme providing theoretical knowledge within credit based units mapped to National Occupational Standards (NOS) and the Knowledge and Skills Framework (KSF). The credit based units were accredited by the Open College Network (OCN) Wales and Edexcel. The Welsh programme had also been mapped against NVQ units. Following discussions at the May 2009 Steering Group meeting, it was agreed that the Maternity Support Worker Programme being developed by the sub-group would be mapped against the Wales programme, particularly in relation to the underpinning knowledge.
- 4.6 Due to further unforeseen circumstances, notably the local response to Pandemic Flu, there was some delay in the development of the programme. The draft programme was presented to the Steering Group in November 2009 and was approved at the February 2010 meeting. The programme includes the agreed NVQ units, together with a clear description of the maternity context and the underpinning knowledge required by support workers working in the maternity services.

4.7 It was also agreed that the Skills Passport developed by NHS Education Scotland (NES) (2008) for Maternity Support Workers in Scotland would be adapted and used to enhance programme delivery. Approval has given by NES for amendment. The Skills Passport uses the following traffic lights system to identify appropriate skills for Maternity Support Workers:

- Red skills - not to be undertaken by the Maternity Support Worker
- Amber skills –will require further training
- Green skills - ideal for a Maternity Support Worker

The Steering Group considered that the addition of this element to programme delivery would be useful for students, mentors and employers. The final content will be agreed with Steering Group members.

4.8 Discussion took place at the Steering Group meeting in November 2009 regarding the delivery of the programme. Three options were considered, as follows:

- Delivery of the programme through the training units already established in the HSC Trusts with input from the Beeches Management Centre in relation to the underpinning knowledge. The Trusts would be required to provide all elements of the delivery of the programme, including assessors
- Delivery of the programme by the Beeches Management Centre, with each Trust providing their own assessors
- Delivery of the programme by the Beeches Management Centre, supported by peripatetic assessors whose work would be co-ordinated through the Beeches Management Centre.

Further to this discussion, the DHSSPS notified the Chair of the Steering Group that it would fund two peripatetic assessors for one year from commencement of the programme. In the light of this development, it was agreed that the third option in the above list would be adopted and that the Beeches Management Centre would convene a group to make the necessary detailed arrangements with the Trust Nursing and Midwifery Workforce Leads and Heads of Midwifery.

4.9 The process of approval of the programme also needed to be established. It was noted that the Southern Health and Social Services Trust (SHSCT) was an approved NVQ Centre for Maternity Support Worker training. To expedite matters, the Steering Group agreed that the Beeches Management Centre would work in collaboration with the SHSCT to facilitate approval for commencement of a programme by June 2010.

4.10 It was agreed that the final documents, including the final report and the programme document, would be published by the end of March 2010.

## **5.0 CONCLUSION**

The programme of work taken forward in relation to this initiative will assist in supporting the Northern Ireland agenda in relation to skill mix in the maternity services. The publication and adoption of indicative job descriptions, and an agreed approach to preparation of Maternity Support Workers, will facilitate consistency across all HSC Trusts.

## REFERENCES

Department of Health (2003). *Agenda for Change*. London, HMSO.

DHSSPS (2008). *Review of Skill Mix in Maternity Services in Northern Ireland: Final Report*. Belfast, DHSSPS.

NHS Education, Scotland (2008). *Maternity Care Assistants in Scotland: A Skills Passport*. Edinburgh, NHS Education, Scotland

## Membership of Steering Group

<b>Belfast Health &amp; Social Care Trust</b>	
Nicki Patterson	Co Director Nursing, Workforce Planning & Development
Ruth Clarke	Maternity Service Manager/Head of Midwifery
<b>Northern Health &amp; Social Care Trust</b>	
Allison Hume	Assistant Director, Head of Nursing Workforce and Planning
Mary Maxwell	Head of Midwifery & Gynaecology
Gillian Morrow	Practice Development Midwife
<b>South Eastern Health &amp; Social Care Trust</b>	
Caroline Lee	Assistant Director of Nursing, Workforce Planning
Zoe Boreland	Lead Midwife
Linda Davison	Organisation & Workforce Development Consultant Human Resources
<b>Southern Health &amp; Social Care Trust</b>	
Glynis Henry (Chair)	Assistant Director of Nursing, Workforce, Development & Training
Anne Donnelly	Delivery Suite Manager/Supervisor of Midwives
Heather Davidson	Project Co-ordinator, Maternity Care Assistant
<b>Western Health &amp; Social Care Trust</b>	
Brendan McGrath	Assistant Director of Nursing, Workforce Planning & Modernisation
Maureen Miller	Lead Midwife
<b>Beeches Management Centre</b>	
Teresa Barr	Assistant Director of Nursing & Midwifery Education
Eileen Pollock	Senior Education Manager - Midwifery
Judith Goodall	Nurse Education Consultant
<b>Queens University Belfast</b>	
Ann Nolan	Teaching Fellow (Midwifery & Family Education)
<b>DHSSPS</b>	
Denise Boulter	Nursing Officer, Midwifery & Children's Services
<b>Skills for Health</b>	
Shauna Doherty	Interim Director
<b>NIPEC</b>	
Lesley Barrowman	Senior Professional Officer

### Terms of Reference for the Steering Group

1. To oversee and keep under review the development of the preparation programmes for maternity support workers.
2. To establish a work programme for the development and accreditation of programmes.
3. To consider reports from working groups convened to take forward specific elements of the work programme.
4. To approve the curriculum for the preparation programme/s and make arrangements for accreditation.
5. To keep key stakeholders informed regarding progress.
6. To produce and publish a Final Report including recommendations.

**Membership of Sub-Group for Regional Job Description**

Nicki Patterson (Chair)	Belfast Health & Social Care Trust
Ruth Clarke	Belfast Health & Social Care Trust
Mary Maxwell	Northern Health & Social Care Trust
Zoe Boreland	South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust
Linda Davison	South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust
Heather Davidson	Southern Health & Social Care Trust
Maureen Miller	Western Health & Social Care Trust
Teresa Barr	Beeches Management Centre
Ann Nolan	Queen's University Belfast

**Membership of Sub-Group for Development of Maternity Support Worker Programme**

Teresa Barr (Chair)	Beeches Management Centre
Eileen Pollock	Beeches Management Centre
Judith Goodall	Beeches Management Centre
Margaret Rogan	Belfast Health & Social Care Trust
Mary Maxwell	Northern Health & Social Care Trust
Zoe Boreland	South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust
Heather Davidson	Southern Health & Social Care Trust
Maureen Miller	Western Health & Social Care Trust
Ann Nolan	Queen's University Belfast

## Regional Job Descriptions

### INDICATIVE GENERIC JOB DESCRIPTION MATERNITY SUPPORT WORKER BAND 2

#### Indicative Job Description

Title of Post	Maternity Support Worker
Grade of Post	Band 2
Reporting to	Ward Manager/Team Leader
Responsible to	Head of Midwifery
Location	Maternity services - Trust wide
Hours of work	37.5 hours or pro rata as required

#### Job Summary/ Main Purpose

The post holder is required to help and support midwives to provide a high standard of care to women, their partners and babies before, during and after birth, under the direction of a registered midwife.

#### Main duties/responsibilities

##### Communication

- Deal courteously with women, relatives, visitors, chaplains and others with whom they come in to contact in the course of their duties
- Communicate effectively with women and others taking in to account their clinical conditions and differing levels of ability to understand
- Observe and report any changes in the women's physical or emotional condition or behaviour to midwifery staff
- Ensure any instructions regarding women and baby's treatment and diet are carried out and recorded as directed
- Maintain confidentiality at all times regarding women and staff
- Record and/or pass on messages to the Midwife in charge as required
- To establish working relationships with all grades of staff and disciplines ensuring the maintenance of good communication.

##### Personal and People Development

- Participate in the Trust's personal performance and development review process and comply with the Trust's appraisal system
- Attend staff induction and participate in training of self and others and avail of other learning activities as requested to maintain competence in the Maternity Support Worker role

- Share best practice with others

### **Health, Safety and Security**

- Participate and co ordinate housekeeping duties including cleaning of labour rooms, cleaning women's bed space and maintaining a tidy and clutter free environment in line with Trust Infection Prevention and Control Policies
- Be aware of the risks of identity confusion when caring for babies and diligently follow Trust and local policies and procedures to minimise these risks
- Report any accidents and incidents to midwifery staff and assist in investigation of same, verbally and in writing as required
- Comply with health and safety policies and statutory regulations
- Contribute to a safe environment within the risk management and clinical governance strategies
- Comply with Trust policies, procedures, guidelines, protocols and codes of conduct
- Contribute to the effective and economic use of resources and the maintenance of all equipment including reporting of faults
- Ensure that uniform is worn correctly and personal hygiene is of a high standard
- Work within own role in emergencies and summon help when required
- Assist with chaperoning staff for intimate procedures

### **Service Improvement**

- Contribute to effective team working
- Co – operate with off duty scheduling so as to ensure that adequate staffing and optimum use of workforce is achieved
- Demonstrate commitment through regular attendance, efficient completion of duties and participation in department and teamwork activities
- Ensure that an adequate level of supplies and equipment are maintained

### **Quality**

- Work within own role adhering to current legislation, policies and procedures
- Assist in the reception, admission and discharge of women
- Assist midwifery staff in the delivery of person centred care
- Carry out assigned duties under the direction of a registered midwife in such a way as to ensure that care is of a high standard
- Co – operate with colleagues to ensure that harmonious relationships are developed and maintained within the Trust
- Reports all complaints immediately to Ward Sister/Team Leader

### **Equality and Diversity**

- Adhere to current legislation on equality and diversity
- Present a positive image of self and the organisation and treat others with dignity and respect
- Recognise and report any discriminatory practice

### **Provision of Care and Promotion of Health and Well Being**

- Assist in the teaching and demonstration of basic parenting skills on a one to one basis and in group sessions
- Actively contribute to supporting mothers in the prevention of ill health e.g. smoking cessation

- Re – enforce key health messages delivered by the midwifery staff in all encounters with women, relatives and visitors
- Supporting women towards self care and independence during pregnancy and following delivery including personal care
- Support women with their chosen method of infant feeding in accordance with Trust Policy
- Assist midwifery staff in the delivery of care as indicated in individualised care plan.
- Report significant changes in women's progress to midwifery staff
- Provide physical and emotional support to women.
- Provide support for women who are experiencing bereavement
- Accurately record and report care activities undertaken to the midwifery staff

This job description is not meant to be definitive and may be amended to meet the changing needs of the Trust

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## **INDICATIVE GENERIC JOB DESCRIPTION MATERNITY SUPPORT WORKER BAND 3**

### **Indicative Job Description and Indicative Job Specification**

Title of Post	Maternity Support Worker
Grade of Post	Band 3
Reporting to	Ward Manager/Team Leader
Responsible to	Head of Midwifery
Location	Maternity services Trust wide
Hours of work	37.5 hours or pro rata as required

#### **Job Summary/ Main Purpose**

The post holder is required to help and support midwives to provide a high standard of care to women, their partners and babies before, during and after birth.

Following appropriate training, the Band 3 Maternity Support Worker will have the skills, knowledge and competence to work with minimal supervision and using their initiative undertake, on a frequent basis, a range of tasks and roles delegated<sup>1</sup> by the midwife, the majority of which will involve direct care to women, their partners and babies.

#### **Main duties/responsibilities**

##### **Communication**

- Deal courteously with women, relatives, visitors, chaplains and others with whom they come in to contact in the course of their duties
- Communicate effectively with women and others taking in to account their clinical conditions and differing levels of ability to understand
- Observe and report any changes in the women's physical and emotional condition or behaviour to midwifery staff
- Ensure any instructions regarding women and baby's treatment and diet are carried out and recorded as directed
- Maintain confidentiality at all times regarding women and staff
- Record and/or pass on messages to the Midwife in charge as required
- To establish working relationships with all grades of staff and disciplines ensuring the maintenance of good communication
- Ensure accurate and comprehensive completion of women and babies records including, where required entering data on to maternity computer systems

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<sup>1</sup> In accordance with the DHSSPS CNAC delegation framework.

## **Personal and People Development**

- Participate in the Trust's personal performance and development review process and comply with the Trust's appraisal system
- Attend staff induction and participate in training of self and others and avail of other learning activities as requested to maintain competence in the Maternity Support Worker role
- Provide induction training and support to new and existing Maternity Support Workers
- Share best practice with others

## **Health, Safety and Security**

- Participate in and co ordinate housekeeping duties including cleaning of labour rooms, cleaning women's bed space and maintaining a tidy and clutter free environment in line with Trust infection prevention and control policies
- Be aware of the risks of identity confusion when caring for babies and diligently follow Trust and local policies and procedures to minimise these risks
- Report any accidents and incidents to midwifery staff and assist in investigation of same, verbally and in writing as required
- Comply with health and safety policies and statutory regulations
- Contribute to a safe environment within the risk management and clinical governance strategies
- Comply with Trust policies, procedures, guidelines, protocols and codes of conduct
- Contribute to the effective and economic use of resources and the maintenance of all equipment including reporting of faults
- Ensure that uniform is worn correctly and personal hygiene is of a high standard
- Work within own role in emergencies and summon help when required
- Assist with chaperoning staff for intimate procedures

## **Service Improvement**

- Contribute to effective team working
- Co – operate with off duty scheduling so as to ensure that adequate staffing and optimum use of workforce is achieved
- Demonstrate commitment through regular attendance, efficient completion of duties and participation in department and teamwork activities
- Ensure that an adequate level of supplies and equipment are maintained

## **Quality**

- Ensure all documentation completed is in accordance with NMC standards for Record Keeping
- Work within own role adhering to current legislation, policies and procedures
- Assist in the reception, admission and discharge of women
- Assist midwifery staff in the delivery of person centred care
- Carry out assigned duties under the direction of a registered midwife in such a way as to ensure that care is of a high standard
- Co – operate with colleagues to ensure that harmonious relationships are developed and maintained within the Trust
- Reports all complaints immediately to Ward Sister/Team Leader

## **Equality & Diversity**

- Adhere to current legislation on equality and diversity
- Present a positive image of self and the organisation and treat others with dignity and respect
- Recognise and report any discriminatory practice

## **Provision of Care and Promotion of Health and Well Being**

- Assist in the teaching and demonstration of basic parenting skills on a one to one basis and in group sessions
- Actively contribute to supporting mothers in the prevention of ill health e.g. smoking cessation
- Re – enforce key health messages delivered by the midwifery staff in all encounters with women, relatives and visitors
- Supporting women towards self care and independence during pregnancy and following delivery including personal care
- Support women in their chosen method of infant feeding in accordance with Trust Policy
- Assist midwifery staff in the delivery of care as indicated in individualised care plan.
- Report significant changes in women's progress to midwifery staff
- Provide physical and emotional support to women.
- Provide support for women who are experiencing bereavement
- Accurately record and report care activities undertaken to the midwifery staff
- Prepare women for elective caesarean section
- Undertake vital signs including routine post operative observations following uncomplicated surgery e.g. elective caesarean section
- Support the midwife by assisting with theatre duties and aspects of instrumental delivery including<sup>2</sup>: -
  - To undertake the duties of the runner in theatre
  - To assist in positioning of women for procedures
  - To assist with setting up of instruments, using an aseptic technique
  - Checking of swabs, needles and instruments during and post procedures
  - Appropriate application and connection of equipment e.g. diathermy, suction
  - Monitoring and ordering surgical general and sterile services stores
  - Cleaning, preparing and setting up of the theatre environment

This job description is not meant to be definitive and may be amended to meet the changing needs of the Trust

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<sup>2</sup> Local arrangements in respect of working arrangements for theatre will determine if Maternity Support worker undertakes these duties.

**INDICATIVE GENERIC JOB SPECIFICATION  
MATERNITY SUPPORT WORKER BAND 3**

<b>FACTORS</b>	<b>ESSENTIAL</b>	<b>DESIRABLE</b>
Skills/Abilities	<p>Ability to use initiative and carry out duties with minimal supervision</p> <p>Ability to provide a high standard of care and to develop own knowledge and practice</p> <p>Ability to work collaboratively as part of the multidisciplinary team</p> <p>Ability to recognise and deal with stressful/unforeseen situations</p> <p>Excellent interpersonal skills and the ability to relate to people of all ages and backgrounds</p> <p>Caring approach and empathy to women's needs, with an understanding of the need to maintain dignity, privacy and confidentiality</p> <p>Ability to complete documentation accurately and legibly</p>	Basic keyboard skills
Qualifications & Experience	<p>To be eligible for trainee Maternity Support Worker Programme, individuals must have successfully completed their 6 month probationary period plus 6 months experience in a maternity setting.</p> <p>Appointment to Maternity Support Worker Band 3 post will be dependent on successful completion of NVQ Level 3 programme within a 2 year period from commencement of the programme.</p>	Previous experience of NVQ
Knowledge	Understanding of the role of the Maternity Support Worker in providing a high standard of maternity care	
Other requirements	<p>Flexible approach to working patterns</p> <p>Available to work shifts across the 24hr period 7 days/week</p> <p>Ability to carry out the full range of duties required of the post</p> <p>Satisfactory attendance record</p>	

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