

GLASGOW'S HELPING HEROES

GHH: A VITAL SERVICE

Enabling our Armed Forces
community to thrive

An independent
review by:



UNIVERSITY of
STIRLING

Commissioned by:



Funded by:



FiMT
forces in mind trust

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 Well, it's gave me a.... a reason for living, that's maybe a wee bit extreme, but true... they gave me a reason to keep going. I went from really down to quite happy.”

- [GHH Beneficiary, interviewed for the study]

Glasgow's Helping Heroes, provides advice and support on issues affecting service personnel, veterans and their families in Glasgow, including assistance to address housing and homelessness, employability and training, financial issues, welfare benefits and health issues. The service was established in 2010 following a City Council review of the support provided to the Armed Forces community by the local council.

Glasgow's Helping Heroes (GHH) is a SSAFA, the Armed Forces charity service run in partnership with Glasgow City Council. Since its inception it has supported 2,210 veterans, service personnel and their families across the city. The service works closely with a range of organisations across the city, to deliver coordinated support and ensure that beneficiaries do not fall through the cracks between agencies.

The GHH team also has a range of experience and expertise in areas of particular importance for GHH beneficiaries, such as housing and financial support from Armed Forces benevolent funds. The team also draws on members' direct experience of military life, with some employees having served in the Regulars or Reserves. SSAFA believes that the GHH model is delivering transformative change for beneficiaries and that there is potential to replicate the approach in other areas, with a substantial Armed Forces community population. To provide evidence for any potential replication and better understand the essential elements of the model, SSAFA secured grant funding from Forces in Mind Trust and commissioned a rigorous and independently verified evaluation of the GHH service.

Researchers from the University of Stirling and Glasgow Caledonian University were commissioned to conduct the two-year evaluation into SSAFA's Glasgow's Helping Heroes service. The research aimed to analyse the impact of GHH on its beneficiaries and develop an improved framework for future monitoring and evaluation. The final report achieves these aims and identifies lessons and recommendations for GHH and for the wider sector.

The following is a summary of the research findings.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose of the report

This report is the final output from a two-year independent evaluation of SSAFA's Glasgow's Helping Heroes service. The research was carried out by the University of Stirling and Glasgow Caledonian University and funded by Forces in Mind Trust (FiMT).

Glasgow's Helping Heroes (GHH) is a holistic service providing advice and support on issues affecting service personnel, veterans and their families in Glasgow, including housing and homelessness, employability and training, financial issues, welfare benefits and health issues. GHH is operated by SSAFA, the Armed Forces charity, in partnership with Glasgow City Council, helping to meet the Armed Forces Covenant principle of ensuring that veterans are not disadvantaged by their time in service.

The research aimed to do two things. Firstly, to assess the impact of the GHH service, using a Social Return on Investment (SROI) analysis. And secondly, to support GHH in developing an improved framework for future monitoring and evaluation. This report provides the findings from both of these aspects, identifying lessons for GHH and also for the wider sector.

Evaluation of methodology

The research consisted of three inter-connected elements. Firstly, a Theory of Change model was developed to provide a framework for the evaluation. Secondly, the Independence Outcomes Star was introduced as a new approach to outcomes measurement within GHH, following an options appraisal. Lastly, a Social Return on Investment (SROI) analysis was conducted to evaluate the impact of the GHH service relative to its costs.

- Theory of Change (ToC) model was developed through a collaborative workshop with the GHH team, to clarify the intended outcomes from the service and the process involved. The model identified GHH's distinctive characteristics such as compassionate and knowledgeable staff, the accessibility of the holistic service, and a flexible, person-centred approach. It identified the activities of the service- such as helping with housing applications, the outputs of these activities for example is achieving a tenancy for beneficiary, and the outcomes for the beneficiary - a secure, comfortable home. In order to verify elements of the ToC model (as well as gathering data to inform the SROI research) eight in-depth interviews were carried out with stakeholders. The beneficiary perspective of the ToC model was verified as part of the 12 GHH beneficiary interviews.
- Outcomes Star selection and implementation. Building on the ToC, existing data collected by GHH was reviewed in detail, to identify which elements of the model were already being measured, with a particular focus on outcomes. The review informed an options appraisal exercise to assess alternative outcome measurement frameworks for GHH, leading to the adoption of the Independence Outcomes Star by GHH. Outcomes Stars are completed collaboratively by a key worker and their beneficiary on a periodic basis, in order to measure progress along a 'journey of change'. The Independence Outcome Star has six key outcome areas- finances, housing, health, activities, social life and wellbeing- which map very closely onto the outcomes identified through the ToC process.
- Social Return on Investment (SROI) the final element of the evaluation, and the core of this report. SROI methodology aims to capture the social and environmental impacts of a service, as well as economic value. Financial proxies are employed to represent non-monetary benefit. Building on the ToC and the review of existing data, it was decided to focus the SROI analysis primarily on four main areas of work and their directly associated outcomes- housing, finance, employment and wellbeing- as the most tangible outcomes. The omission of the other outcomes does not invalidate the SROI analysis- rather, it suggests that the ratio will be an underestimate since, whilst all costs are included, the SROI figure only covers a subset of the total social impact delivered. The calculations and the data used to identify robust financial proxies can be found in the full report.

Key findings

Social Return on Investment (SROI)

The primary finding from the evaluation is that GHH provides a vital service for vulnerable veterans across Glasgow, delivering substantial social impact. The SROI analysis which forms the core of this evaluation demonstrates the significant value for money that GHH delivers.

For every £1 invested in the service, GHH delivers £6.63 of social value.

Our sensitivity analysis illustrates a range of potential values from £3.81 to £11.16, but most importantly, outline analysis of data from previous years (pre-Covid years) indicates that the social value figure in 'normal' conditions would be around £11.68 for every £1 invested in the GHH service.

The true meaning of the SROI ratio can be seen through the personal impacts experienced by GHH beneficiaries. For many of the beneficiaries interviewed as part of this evaluation, the support they received was life-changing:

“Yeah, [GHH] totally changed my life. As I said my partner... I'm in a different house, she's in a different house but we've got on a lot better. If it wasn't for GHH I wouldn't be sitting here just now. I don't know where I'd be.” - (GHH beneficiary)

These social impacts do not just affect GHH beneficiaries, but also deliver benefits and cost-savings to public services. For example, by assisting beneficiaries to move away from homelessness, GHH saves money for Glasgow City Council in terms of homelessness provision and temporary accommodation. In addition, research evidence on the hidden costs of homelessness suggests that such work delivers significant savings for health and criminal justice services, which are heavily used by homeless individuals.

This wider impact often arises because GHH can span the boundaries between the Armed Forces world and civilian welfare systems:

“Certainly one of the gaps that it plugs for us is housing support because...one of the main issues still with veterans returning to the city and well, they're maybe not even returning to Glasgow, they'll be returning from service but choose Glasgow to return to and the housing regulations are incredibly complex... and hard to navigate...So it's really helpful for us, it's an enquiry we get quite a lot [and] we can say there's a housing expert there.” - (GHH Stakeholder)

GHH delivers life-changing support

Crucially, it is essential to recognise that the impact of a service such as GHH cannot be reduced to a single financial number. Whilst the SROI figure provides a valuable shorthand for social impact, no such summary can hope to capture the full range and depth of changes delivered for beneficiaries. As the qualitative evidence from the beneficiary and stakeholder interviews shows, GHH delivers life-changing support for some of the most vulnerable veterans, many of whom would not be reached by mainstream services, or would themselves be very reluctant to engage with non-specialist organisations.

The evidence from this evaluation suggests that there are a number of aspects of GHH's approach which are essential.

The key characteristics of the service can be summarised as follows:

- **Accessibility of holistic service**
- **Support to navigate public services and other aspects of civilian knowledge**
- **Expert knowledge of housing, welfare and other systems**
- **Person-centred, flexible support service**
- **Consistent and proactive communication**

Most of these service characteristics would be of value to any vulnerable beneficiary group. Whilst the notion of a person-centred approach which treats people with respect, care and empathy is common to many public and third sector organisations, the evidence from GHH suggests that services need to be tailored in specific ways to meet the distinctive needs of veterans. Understanding the impacts of Service life for some veterans lies at the heart of the success of the GHH model. SSAFA and the GHH team recognise that veterans can struggle with the complexity of the multiple bureaucracies of the civilian world, and that a combination of pride and the perceived differences between Service and civilian services can lead veterans to disengage, even when they have substantial needs. Having team members with Service experience, working alongside others with substantial expertise in civilian welfare systems such as housing, seems to be valuable – providing peer support and professional expertise under one roof.

Improving GHH's framework for monitoring and evaluation

The key development of interest beyond GHH was the introduction of the Independence Outcomes Star, following an options appraisal process. This particular tool is being adopted by an increasing number of organisations across the Armed Forces charity sector and therefore offers potential for wider impact analysis, beyond GHH and SSAFA. Although delays caused by the COVID-19 pandemic prevented a full analysis of Outcomes Star data from GHH, or incorporation into the SROI, the early data suggests that there is considerable value in using this tool to capture less tangible, but vitally important welfare outcomes for veterans.



👍👍 I think the best bit was...well one was not being judged, they didn't judge me whatsoever because, you know, I would hate for anybody to get in this state, but when you get to this state it's like you're embarrassed more than anything, but they didn't make me feel that way at all. They were there to help and do a job and that's exactly what they done."

- (GHH beneficiary interviewed for the evaluation study)

For every £1 invested in the service, GHH delivers £6.63 of social value

In normal conditions that social value would be £11.68 for every £1 invested in GHH*

12 GHH beneficiaries were interviewed for this evaluation study.

£1,658,891 is the annual present value of GHH's social impact based on the beneficiaries' data analysed.

Estimated 50,000 members of the Armed Forces community living in Glasgow ***

2,210 members of the Armed Forces community in Glasgow have been helped by GHH since 2010 ****

299 GHH beneficiaries' organisational data output was analysed during the data extraction period for the SROI calculations.**

8 stakeholder organisations were interviewed for this evaluation study:

- Glasgow City Council
- Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)
- Scottish Veterans Residences
- Crisis Counselling
- Rangers Community Foundation
- Veterans Housing Scotland
- PoppyScotland
- and Veterans Welfare Service.

* Figure generated using outline analysis of data from previous years (pre-Covid years)

** 1 October 2020 to 30 September 2021

*** 10% of Scotland's population live in Glasgow, surveys conducted by the MOD in 2016 and the Royal British Legion in 2014 suggest that the number of veterans living in Scotland is estimated to be around 220,000 and the wider Armed Forces community is around 530,000

**** The vast majority of veterans, service leavers, serving personnel and Forces families will not require support, GHH and SSAFA are there for those that do.

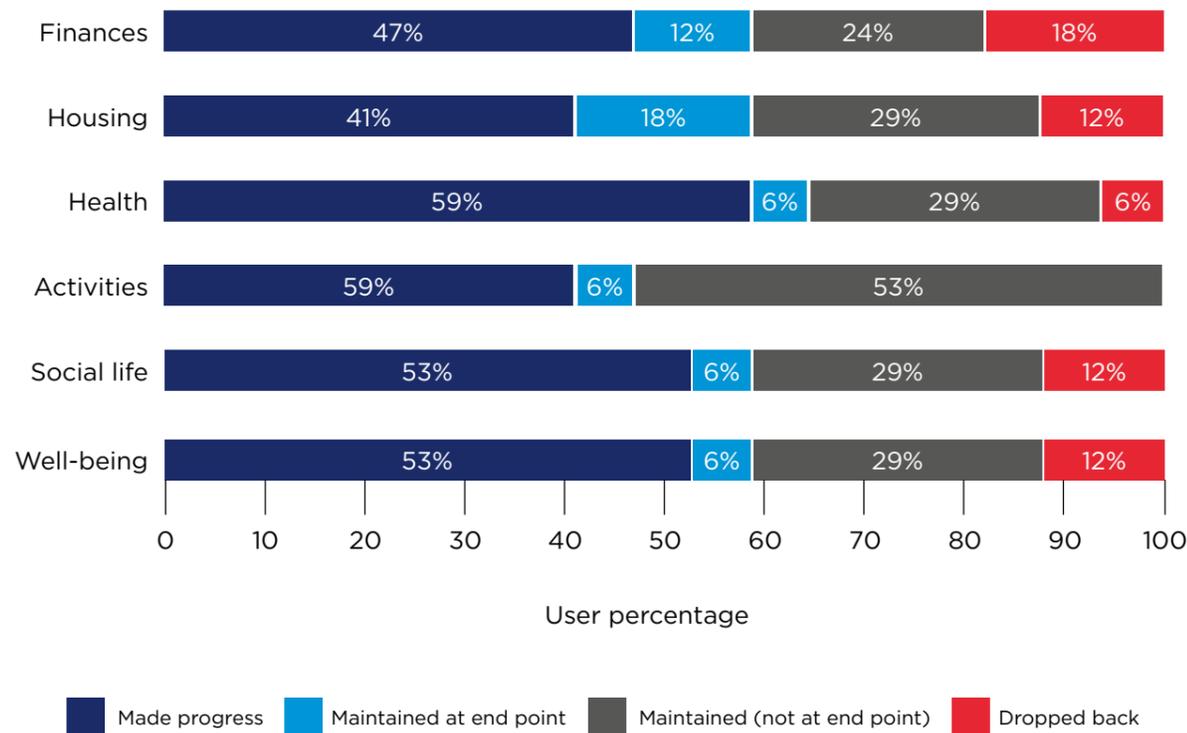
Purpose of the report

The Independence Outcomes Star was implemented within GHH, following an options appraisal process to identify a framework to more effectively capture all of the outcomes delivered for their beneficiaries.

Due to COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, the implementation of the Outcomes Star was delayed until Spring 2021, thus there is insufficient data to provide robust findings for this report. However the Independence Outcomes Star is now being used routinely with all current GHH beneficiaries, and 92 beneficiaries have been engaged with the process. A large majority (82%) have completed one Star. Standard practice is to complete a second Star with beneficiaries at the end of a short engagement, or after several months in a longer engagement, due to delay in introduction, most beneficiaries had not reached this point by the end of the data analysis stage of this evaluation.

Of those who had completed at least two stars, during the analysis stage the data indicates that GHH is enabling beneficiaries to progress along their journey in all outcome areas, with just a few beneficiaries experiencing setbacks.

HOW MUCH PROGRESS ARE PEOPLE MAKING IN EACH OUTCOME AREA?



Hazel*

Hazel is the widow of a Corporal in the Gordon Highlanders, who had served a full career. She had approached GHH because she was a bit behind with her rent and her fridge-freezer had broken down.

The GHH team rapidly discovered that Hazel had been struggling financially for some time – she was finding it difficult to make ends meet on a day-to-day basis and had been unable to buy any new clothes for at least three years. Drawing on funding from the Benevolent Funds, GHH were able to get Hazel back onto an even keel, paying off her rent arrears, buying a new fridge-freezer, and enabling her to buy food, new clothes and other items that she needed.

Beyond her immediate financial needs, the GHH team identified that Hazel’s mental wellbeing had been badly affected by her situation, and that this had been exacerbated by the loss of social contact during the pandemic. Recognising that Hazel had been unable to buy even basics for some time, GHH delivered some little extras:

“They went above and beyond... they even brought me down a couple of bags of cat food. When [GHH team member] came down with that cat food, he brought a little bag, he had a little bag with them and he says, I’ve brought you a little present to cheer you up a little bit, and it was five little glass things that you put tea lights in, so he brought the candles and a box of chocolates. And I was just like, oh, that melted my heart.”

From Hazel’s perspective, the monetary help transformed her financial situation and significantly reduced her stress level, but the key things were about how she was treated by the team:

“I think the best bits was...well one was not being judged, they didn’t judge me whatsoever because, you know, I would hate for anybody to get in this state, but when you get to this state it’s like you’re embarrassed more than anything, but they didn’t make me feel that way at all. They were there to help and do a job and that’s exactly what they done. [And the other] part I think was the constant letting me know what was going on - basically every week, sometimes twice a week they would phone and tell me where they were with getting [financial] help.”

**name changed to protect anonymity*

Key recommendations

The findings regarding the social impact generated by GHH and the crucial characteristics of the service which enable this impact, lead to a set of recommendations. There are no major changes amongst the recommendations. The core conclusion from the evaluation is that GHH is providing a service which is highly valued by beneficiaries, which delivers substantial social value in terms of outcomes related to housing, finance, employment, resilience and mental wellbeing.

These recommendations are directed primarily to GHH and SSAFA, but many of them will interest other organisations working to support members of the Armed Forces community.

a) Keep up the vital service.

The service in its current form is delivering excellent outcomes for veterans in need. Maintaining the key elements of the GHH approach outlined above is important, including relationships with key partners.

b) Explore possibilities for more expert support around employment.

Of the three main outcomes identified in the Theory of Change, employment is arguably the area where GHH could do more. Although the 2020-21 figures are clearly lower than usual due to the pandemic, there is still scope for greater focus on employment outcomes. Options for providing more expert support, either in-house or through external partners, may be useful as the employment market grows in the post-lockdown environment.

c) Utilise the Outcomes Star approach and data more widely.

Although it has not been possible to use the Outcomes Star data to any great extent within this evaluation, the early indications are that the process of completing Stars and reviewing the associated data should be valuable in continuing to refine the GHH approach. In addition, refining the administrative data collected on clients and ensuring a coherent fit with the Outcomes Star methodology will be important to maintain and further improve the quality of their service delivery. SSAFA should consider learning from this experience to use the Outcomes Star methodology more widely across its services.

d) Consider existing service provision.

The evidence from this evaluation suggests that the GHH model incorporates a number of characteristics which are essential in meeting the needs of vulnerable veterans. SSAFA should consider undertaking analysis to identify other areas of the UK where there may be unmet need for a holistic service like GHH, particularly in large cities where there are likely to be significant numbers of veterans. The data from the 2021/22 census is likely to be useful here.

f) Avoid extrapolating too much from the lockdown experience.

This evaluation highlights the way in which GHH was able to adapt quickly and effectively to the lockdown situation in 2020, moving to remote service provision and offering proactive support to the most vulnerable. However, the longer-term picture has demonstrated that there are limitations associated with losing face-to-face services, as some beneficiaries have struggled to ask for help or maintain contact. GHH and SSAFA need to strike a careful balance between maintaining the benefits of more online access and recognising its limitations. Further analysis of the preferred access routes for different veterans may be useful.

g) Create and promote across the military charity sector an outcome-focused data collection and evaluation approach to drive a cohesive approach to social impact measurement.

This project has highlighted the extent to which GHH has tended to collect data on activities, outputs and immediate outcomes, rather than identifying potential longer-term positive impacts on their beneficiaries. Although there have been some moves towards focusing on outcomes within SSAFA and across the wider Armed Forces charity sector, the overall picture remains inconsistent and patchy.

Building on the learning from this research, SSAFA want to work with Cobseo, Veterans Scotland and other service delivery partners to create and develop an outcome-focused data collection and evaluation approach which brings together organisations from across the sector to drive improvements and consistency in how social impact is measured. This should not necessarily aim to harmonise outcome measurement approaches, since the work and needs of each organisation will be distinct. However, there is a common understanding and agreement about the need to sharing learning around outcomes measurement and evaluation to demonstrate the dramatic difference that this support makes to people's lives.



Closing statements



SSAFA has always been incredibly proud of the holistic service provided by Glasgow's Helping Heroes (GHH), the support and assistance it provides to veterans, service personnel and military families in the city. Since GHH launched in 2010, we have witnessed the impact our work has in the feedback from our beneficiaries and the visible changes to their circumstances. But the insight was anecdotal; we needed an evidence-based evaluation of the service and an improved framework for monitoring our beneficiaries' outcomes going forward.

We therefore welcome the findings and recommendations of this independent evaluation report of GHH, conducted by researchers at the University of Stirling and Glasgow Caledonian University. That GHH is delivering a service with a Social Return on Investment as high as £6.63 for every £1 invested in the challenging times of Covid-19 is cause for celebration. The fact that in "normal conditions" this value could exceed £11 is testament to the quality of the support and provision the GHH team provide.

We are heartened by the recognition of this 'vital service' and that our core understanding of the impact of Service life for some veterans lies at the heart of GHH's and SSAFA's success. As life returned to a semblance of normality in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, GHH saw more requests for help getting into employment as job opportunities became available again, so our team is exploring ways to improve our offering to respond to this key issue.

SSAFA, and the wider military charity sector, has recognised that robust data collection and careful impact measuring are both crucial to ensuring effective service delivery, along with the importance of building our SROI measurement capability. Moving forward we will be using the Independent Outcome Star as a standard impact measuring tool with our GHH beneficiaries and we are currently investigating how we can apply these lessons to our other diverse support and welfare services.

I conclude by thanking Dr Steve Rolfe, Dr Fiona Henderson and their teams from the University of Stirling and Glasgow Caledonian University for their efforts in developing this SROI evaluation. We thank the report's funders, the Forces in Mind Trust, for recognising the importance of providing a rigorous assessment of the long-term impact that GHH delivers.

Finally, producing this assessment would not have been possible without the contributions of the stakeholder organisations GHH works closely with, or the views of our beneficiaries. We are humbled by their responses and how they described the impact of GHH's support on their lives. Reading that people say "if it wasn't for GHH I wouldn't be sitting here just now" or that the assistance they received gave them a reason for living, demonstrates poignantly why this vital service means so much, to so many.

Andrew Gregory
Chief Executive, SSAFA



Supporting rigorous assessment of service's impact

In an Armed Forces charity sector that numbers in excess of some 1,800 charities (2019) it is not surprising to find a diversity of support available covering employment, housing, community care and wellbeing, advice and advocacy and much more else besides. But despite the focus of some of these support services, many charities would note that often their clients reflect an array of needs in addition to the principal reason that caused them to present in the first place. Charities would also note the importance of community-based solutions in providing the most effective support and so it is axiomatic that a comprehensive knowledge of local support services and access to them is key.

Forces in Mind Trust first visited Glasgow's Helping Heroes in 2012 and, with others, have had a longstanding interest in a model of service delivery that takes a holistic approach to understanding and supporting its clients, through its unique partnership with Glasgow City Council and local partners. However, despite running successfully for many years, and with plenty of anecdotal evidence of its benefits and long-term impact, we recognised that it was important to provide a more rigorous assessment and objective evidence of its long-term impact for the veteran community and their families. That's entirely consistent with FiMT's vision that all ex-Service people and their families lead fulfilled civilian lives, and to drive improved support toward that end through objective evidence and learning. Thus, a project that evaluates the benefits of expert knowledge, good client communication, accessibility to services derived from a one-stop shop approach, services navigation support and a person-centred, flexible service offers valuable insight.

Forces in Mind Trust's mission is that all ex-Service persons and their families make a successful and sustainable transition to civilian life, a journey that sometimes requires resort to charities who dedicate themselves to this task. This report underscores the value of the GHH model, signalling the benefits of this approach to both SSAFA, local authorities and the wider Armed Forces charities sector alike. I therefore welcome this study and commend it to all those interested in a proven model and wanting to learn from its success.

Tom McBarnet
Chief Executive (Acting),
Forces in Mind Trust



“We always notice the camaraderie of the group. I think veterans can be... picky about who they spend their time with. I think sometimes being engaged with groups that aren't solely veterans can be quite challenging for some of them. But being able to bring them all in together and they almost build that respect and friendship with each other, and they build a really strong group, which they've maybe not had since they've left the Forces... almost a support mechanism where they can push each other.”

- (GHH Stakeholder)

Launched in 2010, Glasgow's Helping Heroes (GHH) is a SSAFA service run in partnership with Glasgow City Council, providing emotional, practical and financial support to service personnel, veterans and their families throughout the city.

Since its inception GHH has helped 2,210 veterans, service personnel and Armed Forces families across the city.

SSAFA, the Armed Forces charity, has been providing practical, emotional, and financial support to our Forces and their families since 1885. In 2020 our teams of volunteers and employees helped more than 79,000 people in need, from Second World War veterans to those who have served in more recent conflicts or are still currently serving, and their families.

SSAFA understands that behind every uniform is a person. And we are here for that person and their family - any time they need us and in any way they need us.

NEED TO TALK?

SSAFA's Forcesline is a free and confidential helpline providing advice and information for serving personnel, reserves, veterans and their families, and is completely independent of the chain of command.

Call 0800 731 4880

Lines open 09.00 to 17.30 weekdays

Visit ssafa.org.uk/forcesline

To make a donation and help us provide lifelong support to our Armed Forces and their families, visit ssafa.org.uk/give

To find out how to make a difference and volunteer for SSAFA, visit ssafa.org.uk/volunteer



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