



PCC Model

Safer Recruitment Policy

Adopted by the Governing Body

Autumn Term 2024

RECRUITMENT POLICY

1. Introduction

- 1.1. It is a long standing legal principle that every appointment to the Authority shall be made on merit.¹
- 1.2. As a local authority employer, we recognise the importance of having open, fair, ethical and lawful processes in place for the appointment of employees.
- 1.3. This policy:
 - i. Goes through each step of our process for attracting and selecting external and internal job candidates.
 - ii. Explains how we make sure that we avoid discrimination and any unfairness in recruitment.
 - iii. Explains how we incorporate special cases, such as agency workers and those selected for redundancy, into our recruitment processes
- 1.4. This Policy does not form part of the contract of employment. We reserve the right to amend or remove this Policy.
- 1.5. This Policy applies to all external and internal candidates or prospective candidates for employment vacancies within our Authority.
- 1.6. Employees involved in any stage of the recruitment and selection process should adhere to the contents of the policy and guidance throughout the recruitment section. Please refer to specific Guidance and Toolkits for additional recruitment and selection within schools.
- 1.7. All documentation will be equally available in the English and Welsh languages.

2. Scope

The principles of the Policy will apply to all recruitment activity undertaken in the name of Pembrokeshire County Council.

The School Governing Body have responsibility for appointments, it would be the expectation that they base their own practices upon the principles embodied in this Policy.

¹ Local Government and Housing Act 1989 Part 1 s. 7 All staff to be appointed on merit.

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Alternative arrangements are in place for Officers on Joint Negotiating Committee for Chief Officers or Chief Executive Conditions of service. Either the Senior Staff Committee or Council determine appointments, please refer to our Constitution Section 12.12 Employment Procedure Rules.²

3. An overview of the recruitment process

Our recruitment process includes the following steps:

- 3.1. Identifying a need to recruit: Once we have identified a need to recruit, we will seek approval to recruit via the Employee Referral Form (ERF) which will require the Recruiting Manager to evidence the business need [HR Recruitment \(pembrokeshire.gov.uk\)](https://pembrokeshire.gov.uk)
- 3.2. Preparing a new job description: If not already on our Job Description Library then the line manager will prepare a full job description and a person specification. These documents will include the key criteria we are looking for in any applicant and will help us to prepare job adverts. [HR Grading & Job Family \(pembrokeshire.gov.uk\)](https://pembrokeshire.gov.uk).
- 3.3. Amending a job description: Where any changes to a previous Job Description are required and made, the Recruiting Manager must apply “track changes” and then send to their HR Business Partner. Track Changes will enable HR to review the Job Allocation and allow the Welsh JDs to be updated accordingly.
- 3.4. Job Allocation: If this is a ‘new’ job role then we will need to ensure that it is assessed via our job evaluation methodology. This excludes teaching and soulbury staff roles.
- 3.5. Welsh Language Standards: In accordance with the Welsh Language Standards, when drafting the person specification for a vacancy, consideration must be given to the need for the ability to communicate in the Welsh language. This is especially important for posts which feature, or are likely to feature, contact with the Council’s customers. Welsh language skills shall be classified as being either:
 - i. Welsh language skills are essential
 - ii. It is a condition of this appointment that you will be required to achieve Welsh language skills up to and including Sylfaen Level within 4 years of appointment. You’ll be required to enrol on the first available Welsh language course.
 - iii. Welsh language skills are desirable.

² [Constitution](#)

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- iv. Welsh language skills are not necessary albeit all new recruits will be offered welsh language lessons.

Where it is considered that the ability to communicate in Welsh is a necessary requirement, the level of linguistic skill should be clearly defined, e.g. basic Welsh, conversational Welsh, fluent written and spoken Welsh. Sufficient and appropriate “weighting” will be attached to linguistic skills in relation to other elements of the person specification.

- 3.6. Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS): It is the responsibility of the Recruiting Manager to ensure that the job profile states what level of check is required. HR will offer advice and guidance.
- 3.7. Disability Confident Scheme: In line with our commitment under the Disability Confident Scheme, we operate a ‘Guaranteed Interview’ policy for those applicants who have indicated on the application form that they have a disability. This means that if they have met the essential job criteria as part of the job application process then they must be short-listed and invited for interview.
- 3.8. Guaranteed Interview Scheme for Veterans: We demonstrate a robust commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant, recognising the sacrifices made by military personnel and their families, and pledges support to key initiatives such as the Guaranteed Interview Scheme for Veterans.

Armed forces veterans who apply for jobs with Pembrokeshire County Council and opt into the scheme, will be offered a guaranteed interview, providing they meet the essential job criteria required for the role. For eligibility criteria and detailed explanation of the scheme please refer to our Jobs and Careers page of our website <https://jobs.pembrokeshire.gov.uk/>.

- 3.9. Internal recruitment: We will consider whether to open the vacancy to internal applicants before advertising externally.
- 3.10. Internal Redeployment: There will be circumstances in which it is in the Authority’s interests to redeploy existing employees to vacant posts i.e. employee at risk of redundancy, or due to a need for reasonable adjustments. Refer to the Redeployment Policy. [HR Recruitment \(pembrokeshire.gov.uk\)](https://pembrokeshire.gov.uk/hr-recruitment)
- 3.11. Planning: Recruiting Managers should prepare and diarise the timetable for the recruitment exercise including advertising, closing date, shortlisting, interviewing and testing, and making a formal offer of employment. The benchmark for planning a recruitment exercise will be to make a conditional offer of employment within 20 working days of the published closing date. Recruiting Managers should build into their plan consideration of the selection method to be used to assess applicants.

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- 3.12. Advertising: All external recruitment advertising will be managed by HR and will conform to the Authority's corporate branding. Advertisements will be consistent with the job description and person specification for the post. A carefully selective approach should be adopted to placing external advertisements to achieve cost-effective publicity. The HR Division can advise on the most appropriate options for specific vacancies. Adverts close at midnight of the closing date.
- 3.13. Receiving applications and shortlisting: Applications should be made online. We will look at all applications received and shortlist candidates. We will only consider information submitted as part of the application process when making decisions on shortlisting. This is to make sure that we treat all applicants fairly and equally. A detailed record will be kept of the assessment of each applicant against the criteria.
- i. Shortlists should be completed within 10 working days of the closing date by the persons identified as having responsibility for the recruitment exercise.
 - ii. Once a shortlist has been drawn up and agreed, candidates will be informed of the progress of their application.
 - iii. Shortlisted applicants should be given a minimum of at least 3 working days' notice before the interview takes place.
- 3.14. Selection process: Dependent on the role applied for, in addition to a structured interview on essential criteria for the role, Recruiting Managers are encouraged to employ other relevant selection methods to test the skills or aptitudes for the post they are applying for. Selection methods must be relevant to the post and may use vocational, technical or psychometric tests. They will only relate to non-biased, genuine requirements of the job as defined by the job description and person specification.

Interviewers will complete an interview assessment form for each candidate, making an assessment against pre-defined criteria.

- 3.15. Recruiting with partner organisations: Occasionally, representatives from outside organisations may seek to participate in recruitment exercises, as selection panel members or as observers, for example when appointing to jointly funded projects. Managers are advised to consider such requests on their merits, and to ensure that the role and the credentials of representatives concerned are appropriate in the circumstances. Where the person to be appointed will have a contract of employment with the Council, it should be clearly understood by all concerned that the authority and responsibility for making the final selection decision rests with the most senior Council manager involved in the exercise.

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- 3.16. Successful candidates: will be informed as soon as possible by the Recruiting Manager and asked to confirm their acceptance of the conditional offer subject to vetting ref. 3.18.
- 3.17. Unsuccessful candidates will be advised of the outcome of the process as quickly as possible, preferably by telephone from the Recruiting Manager, and in any event within 5 working days of the selection decision.
- 3.18. Offer: The Recruiting Manager is responsible for notifying Human Resources of the outcome and forwarding the completed assessment of outcome documentation. Human Resources will be responsible for preparing contractual documentation.

We will make any offers in writing. They will be conditional on the following:

- i. Receipt of two satisfactory references (Refer Paragraph 7.1)
 - ii. Completion of our Right to Work and proof of identity checks in line with our legal obligations.³
 - iii. Completion of a medical clearance check by Occupational Health and/or pre-employment medical examination with a medical professional, if required.
 - iv. A Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) Check - for certain roles only
 - v. Cifas Checks: A check against the National Fraud Database ⁴ - for certain roles only.
 - vi. Receipt of confirmation of essential / professional qualifications.
 - vii. Receipt of confirmation of professional registration – for certain roles only.
- 3.19. Offer not accepted or withdrawn: We will revert to the selection process and consider an offer to the next appointable applicant.
- 3.20. Feedback on the assessment of applications and interviews shall be provided to interviewees by the Recruiting Manager, on request. Management Guidance is provided [HR Recruitment \(pembrokeshire.gov.uk\)](https://www.pembrokeshire.gov.uk/hr-recruitment).

4. Questions about health and reasonable adjustments

³ [Right to work checklist - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/right-to-work-checklist)

⁴ [Cifas | Welcome](#)

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4.1. We will not generally ask candidates any questions about their health or any disabilities before any job offer is made. However, we may do so in the following circumstances:

- i. To find out whether a candidate is able to carry out an assessment which forms part of the application process.
- ii. To understand whether a candidate would be able to carry out a function which is central to the job.
- iii. To find out whether any reasonable adjustments need to be made to allow the candidate to take part in our recruitment processes.
- iv. For the purposes of equal opportunities monitoring. Please note we will store any information provided anonymously and separately from the candidate's application. Further details can be found below.
- v. To support positive action in employment for disabled people.

5. Our commitment to avoiding discrimination and unfairness in our recruitment processes

5.1. We take the following steps to avoid discrimination and unfairness in our recruitment processes:

- i. We ask candidates if they need any reasonable adjustments to help them with the recruitment process. We will action requests made to ensure they are not subject to unlawful or less favourable treatment during the recruitment and selection process. In assessing candidates with disabilities, managers will have regard to the duty imposed by the Equality Act 2010 to consider positively any 'reasonable adjustments' that might be necessary to the working environment and work practices. Failure to do so could expose the Council to claims of unfair discrimination.
- ii. We accept that the on-line application may well be a barrier for some candidates; our Recruit team are able to support the application process and assist in accessing the documentation in alternative formats, to assist people with disabilities recruit@pembrokeshire.gov.uk.
- iii. Special arrangements, such as the provision of minicom and induction loop systems, will be made to ensure that prospective applicants with impairment are not deterred from making initial or subsequent enquiries about a vacancy.

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- iv. Our application forms do not require the submission of any details relating to protected characteristics (such as sex, marital status, age, religion and belief, sexual orientation and disability) and no assumptions will be made on the grounds of protected characteristics.
- v. The equal opportunities monitoring form will be stored separately and will not be viewed by any person actively involved in the recruitment process for the role in question.
- vi. In accordance with the Welsh Language Standards, candidates shall have the right to use the Welsh language at interview, and at any other part of the selection process. The Authority shall provide a simultaneous translation service (from Welsh to English), if necessary
- vii. It is the Authority's aim to ensure the highest possible standards of recruitment practice, particularly in the skills of interviewing, assessment and selection. Anyone who is actively involved in recruitment (whether as an interviewer or otherwise) will be required to undertake training; guidance on our suite of courses, and our regular Equal Opportunities training is accessed via [POD = Pembrokeshire Online Development](#).
- viii. We keep our recruitment marketing techniques under review to make sure that we reach a broad range of potential candidates. For example, we consider advertising using several forms of media.
- ix. The interviewing process will be carried out in the following way:
 - interviews will be carried out by more than one person. Best practice advises Recruiting Managers to be mindful of limiting the number of panel members to prevent overwhelming applicants or prolonging decision making processes. The interview panel will preferably comprise of individuals from diverse perspectives and genders, wherever possible;
 - questions will relate to the requirements of the job as set out in the job description and person specification;
 - we generally follow a competency-based structure for interviews;
 - Safer Recruitment: recruiting managers must follow a safer recruitment process throughout by ensuring:
 - Any gaps in employment or education history are fully investigated;
 - Candidates explain satisfactorily any anomalies or discrepancies in the information available to recruiters;
 - Reasons for leaving previous post(s) are clarified;
 - For regulated activity posts candidates should be asked to demonstrate their capacity to safeguard and protect the welfare of children/young people and vulnerable groups. Incorporating

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specific safeguarding questions into the interview process is advisable [Warner style questions].

- Our Safeguarding Action Plan at Appendix 5, 7.2 requires managers who are recruiting staff who have contact with children, young people and adults at risk should ensure that a face to face interview is carried out.⁵
- applicants will be assessed at the end of interviewing against pre-defined criteria;
- interviewers will complete an interview assessment form for each candidate;
- When recruiting to regulated activity posts, at least one panel member should have attended the Council's online Safer Recruitment Training;
- records of the interview process will be retained for a period of one year by the HR department, including any interview notes and interview assessment forms for all candidates.

5.2. Our Constitution and Code of Conduct

It is imperative that there is no scope within the recruitment process for the Authority's reputation as an employer to be tarnished by accusations of bias, unfair advantage, nepotism or impropriety in the selection of new employees. To this end:

- i. An employee or elected member of the Council shall not participate in any way, either directly or indirectly, in any recruitment exercise or decision in which a relative, friend or person with whom they have a close personal association is an applicant for employment.
- ii. An employee or elected member shall not participate in any recruitment exercise or decision where a member of the public, knowing the facts of the situation, would reasonably think that the officer or elected member might be influenced by any such close personal association. Such relationships must be fully disclosed and recorded as soon as they become apparent, and the elected member or employee must then withdraw from the process completely. [Code of Conduct - All Documents \(pembrokeshire.gov.uk\)](https://www.pembrokeshire.gov.uk/code-of-conduct)⁶
- iii. The Council will disqualify any applicant who directly or indirectly seeks the support of any Member or Officer for any appointment with the Council.⁷

6. Special situations: redundant employees, agency workers and fixed-term workers

- 6.1. Employees who have been provisionally selected for redundancy and employees unable to continue their role due to an underlying health condition

⁵ [safeguarding-adults-and-children/appendix-5-pembrokeshire-safeguarding-audit-framework-for-evaluation](https://www.pembrokeshire.gov.uk/safeguarding-adults-and-children/appendix-5-pembrokeshire-safeguarding-audit-framework-for-evaluation)

⁶ Code of Conduct (Qualifying Local Government Employees) (Wales) Order 2001 s.10

⁷ 12.12.2 (b) (i) Employment Procedure Rules Constitution

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will be made aware of vacancies existing within the Authority and will be registered on an at-risk prior consideration register and informed of how to apply for new vacancies that arise. For further information, please see our Redeployment Policy.

- 6.2. Agency workers and those on fixed-term contracts of employment will be advised to sign up to job alerts to ensure that they are informed of all vacancies which become available on our vacancy page.⁸
- 6.3. Organisational restructuring: existing employees may be allocated new posts directly, replacing their existing posts, as part of an internal re-organisation exercise.
- 6.4. Career Grade Pathways: existing employees who are undertaking training and where it is planned at original recruitment that they be appointed to a higher post on successfully attaining recognised qualifications, or other such professional accreditation.
- 6.5. Apprenticeship Pathways: where employees are part of an agreed, structured apprenticeship programme they may be offered promotion directly, without recourse to normal competitive recruitment procedures in accordance with the objectives of that programme.
- 6.6. Fixed-term and / or Casual appointments of less than 6 months which are **not to exceed 6 months** [four months in respect of school vacancies in line with regulations] can be recruited directly, to meet peak workloads or emergency requirements. Consideration of procuring short term agency placement via our external agency provider [HR Recruitment \(pembrokeshire.gov.uk\)](https://www.pembrokeshire.gov.uk/hr-recruitment) could well be a more suitable source of short term resource.⁹ Casual workers who are to be retained for longer than 6 months on an internal BANK must go through open recruitment.

7. Verification, vetting and safeguarding of vulnerable groups

- 7.1. References must be taken up for the 'selected' candidate as a means of verifying factual information such as employment history, qualifications, sickness record, disciplinary record and request for disclosure of any safeguarding concerns. The following will be applied in respect of obtaining references for new recruits:

⁸ <https://www.pembrokeshire.gov.uk/jobs-and-careers>

⁹ A Fixed Term employee can only be extended beyond 6 months for time limited periods with the authorisation of the Head of HR. [HR Contractual Relationships \(pembrokeshire.gov.uk\)](https://www.pembrokeshire.gov.uk/hr-contractual-relationships) open recruitment is therefore the advisable approach for any short term resource where there is a possibility of ongoing requirement for the role.

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- i. It is the Authority's policy to request two written references in respect of each new recruit and to make all offers of employment conditional upon those references being satisfactory to the Authority. HR will be responsible for writing the reference request letters/emails.
- ii. The responsibility for obtaining references for posts which have not been filled through open recruitment, i.e. casual / fixed term appointments of 6 months or less rests with the Recruiting Manager. References sought should be forwarded to the HR Division with the commencement of employment documentation.
- iii. Referees must not be contacted without the explicit consent of the candidate to whom they relate.
- iv. One referee should be from the current employer, irrespective of duration of employment (or last employer if not currently working). The other referee should be from a past employer. Referees should be people worked for, not people worked with.
- v. For regulated activity posts working unsupervised with children or adults at risk, if the current or most recent post does/did not involve working with relevant client group (i.e. children or adults), the second reference to be sought from another employer where the candidate has worked with the relevant client group.
- vi. Current or previous employment will cover voluntary work where there is no history of paid employment.
- vii. There will be circumstances where an applicant has no current or previous employment history (paid or voluntary). For education leavers, an academic reference will be sought from the most recent education institution / school.
- viii. We will only accept character references where a past employer or academic reference cannot be sought.
- ix. In limited circumstances, where all other vetting has been completed and there is an urgency for the individual to take up duties, it will be acceptable for a verbal reference to be sought, but this must be followed up in writing in the normal manner and a recorded note taken of the telephone conversation.
- x. Managers must on no account attempt to make "secret" enquiries about a prospective employee, whether on the telephone, on social media or otherwise. Every individual has the right to know and to be asked for their consent before any check is made on any aspect of their background.
- xi. If a reference is received which contains any negative or adverse comments about the individual, the Authority will not assume that this information is accurate, nor that any information provided by the candidate was inaccurate or deliberately misleading. Instead the Authority will seek further information, by contacting the candidate and inviting them to a further discussion.
- xii. For internal candidates who apply for job roles in another area of the Authority only one reference from the current line manager will be required.

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7.2. Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS):¹⁰ Additional vetting will be carried out on the background of applicants selected for posts involving access to children and other vulnerable groups, and in particular those constituting 'regulated activity', as defined by the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006.¹¹ This will entail checking for criminal convictions and cautions, and against the lists of people barred from working in regulated activity, through the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS). The HR Division will provide detailed advice and facilitate the checking process in accordance with the Authority's statement of policy and practice on the use of criminal record information in employee selection. Where a DBS certificate reveals (or confirms) the existence of a criminal record or other information that casts doubt on an individual's suitability, an objective risk assessment process will be undertaken. The applicant shall have the opportunity to discuss the matter with those undertaking the risk assessment, in accordance with the provisions of the DBS Code of Practice.¹²

7.3. CIFAS¹³ a check against the National Fraud Database will be carried out on the background of applicants for certain roles.

8. Expenses

Any expenses incurred in travelling to or attending any interview or assessment with us are the sole responsibility of the candidate. We will not refund any expenses.

9. The First Day:

9.1. The Recruiting Manager will ensure that the new recruit has everything they need for their first day by requesting on the:

- i. ICT Portal [Login \(pembrokeshire.gov.uk\)](https://pembrokeshire.gov.uk/login) for both IT Equipment and for Systems Access.
- ii. ID Badge [Documents - All Documents \(pembrokeshire.gov.uk\)](https://pembrokeshire.gov.uk/documents/all-documents)
- iii. Induction Training & Plan [Induction - All Documents \(pembrokeshire.gov.uk\)](https://pembrokeshire.gov.uk/documents/all-documents)
- iv. POD Registration [Induction - All Documents \(pembrokeshire.gov.uk\)](https://pembrokeshire.gov.uk/documents/all-documents)

9.2. **Local arrangements will apply in schools.**

¹⁰ [Quick Guide to DBS Checks.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/644447/Quick_Guide_to_DBS_Checks.pdf)

¹¹ [Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/6/section/1)

¹² [DBS code of practice - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/644447/DBS_code_of_practice_-_GOV.UK.pdf)

¹³ [Cifas | Welcome](https://www.cifas.co.uk/welcome)

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10. Data protection

- 10.1. All information and documentation collated in relation to candidates as part of our recruitment processes will be stored, processed and destroyed in line with our Data Protection Policy and the ICO Employment Practices Code.¹⁴
- 10.2. Records of any testing undertaken will be retained for a period of one year by the HR department.
- 10.3. We will keep information in relation to candidates collated as part of any equality and diversity monitoring processes **anonymously**. We collect this information to monitor equality of opportunity and treatment to enable equality to be promoted or maintained. We report on this data annually as required under [The Equality Act 2010 \(Statutory Duties\) \(Wales\) Regulations 2011 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk) provision 7. We will not share the information collated with any member of personnel involved in the recruitment process.

11. Complaints

- 11.1. If any candidate is unhappy with the way we have handled their application, then they should raise this with recruit@pembrokeshire.gov.uk.
- 11.2. Any complaint about the conduct of a particular recruitment exercise will be handled by the Head of HR or delegated officer in accordance with either the Corporate Complaints Procedure or the Internal Grievance Procedure, as appropriate.

12. Useful links and contacts

- 12.1. The following internal policies and links are referred to in this Policy and contain additional information and guidance:
- i. Data Protection Policy [Microsoft Word - English Data Protection Policy.docx \(pembrokeshire.gov.uk\)](#)
 - ii. Retention Schedule [Retention Schedules 2018.pdf \(pembrokeshire.gov.uk\)](#)
 - iii. Right to Work Guidance [HR Right to Work \(pembrokeshire.gov.uk\)](#)
 - iv. Redundancy Policy [Organisational Change - All Documents \(pembrokeshire.gov.uk\)](#)
 - v. Redeployment Policy [HR Recruitment \(pembrokeshire.gov.uk\)](#)

¹⁴ [The employment practices code \(ico.org.uk\)](https://ico.org.uk)

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- vi. Reference Policy and Guidance [Recruitment - All Documents \(pembrokeshire.gov.uk\)](#)
- vii. Policy on the Use of Criminal Record Information in Employee Selection - [Recruitment - All Documents \(pembrokeshire.gov.uk\)](#)
- viii. Induction Guidance for Managers [Induction - All Documents \(pembrokeshire.gov.uk\)](#)
- ix. Keeping Learners' Safe WG Guidance 283/2022
<https://www.gov.wales/keeping-learners-safe>

13. Administration of the Recruitment Policy

- 13.1. HR Recruit is responsible for the administration of the Recruitment Policy. Should you have any feedback, please contact recruit@pembrokeshire.gov.uk.

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