



Resident survey report 2023





Playing Out - Resident Survey Report 2023

About Playing Out

The 'Playing Out' model of resident-led, temporary road closures for play originated on one street in Bristol in 2009. To date, over 1500 street communities across the UK have followed this model, supported by their local councils and in some cases, local community organisations.

Today the resident-led play streets idea has spread around the UK and internationally as a temporary way to give children safe space to play on their doorstep. Playing Out is a national organisation and movement for longer term change, supporting children's right to play outside for their health, happiness and sense of belonging.

About this report

This report is the result of the Playing Out Resident Survey (2023) which builds upon the learning of previous surveys (2017, 2019, 2021) in understanding the impacts of play streets, where they happen and who is involved. The report also aims to explore the barriers to play streets and how Playing Out can work alongside residents and allies in overcoming them.

The survey received 116 responses from play street organisers across the UK, including residents in Newcastle, Stockport, Bristol, Swindon, Hull, Exeter, Cheshire East, Brighton and Hove, Blackpool, Bournemouth, Cardiff, Greater Manchester, Reading, Hertfordshire, Leeds, London, Norfolk, Oxfordshire, and North Tyneside.

Many thanks to our partner organisations who helped disseminate this survey: Play.Meet.Street North Tyneside, Sustainable St Albans, London Play, Leeds Council, Fall In To Place, Kidz Klub Leeds, Play Wales and others.

The survey was sent out in late October 2023 via email, newsletters and social media.

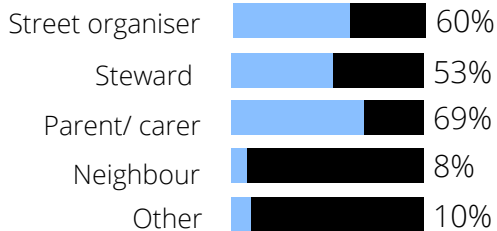


Play streets - background data

Survey respondent







What is your age?



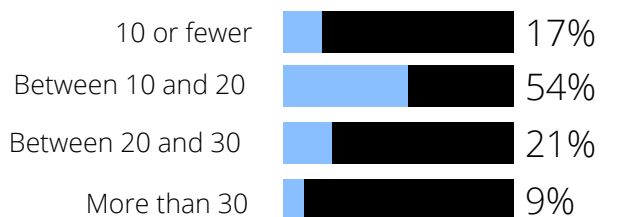
What role/s do you have in play street sessions?

Other roles at a play street:

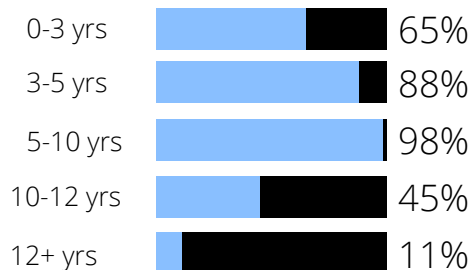
-  I'm a grandparent
-  I'm a facepainter
-  I consider myself a helper
-  I made games like homemade skittles

Who is involved in play streets?

Children during a play street

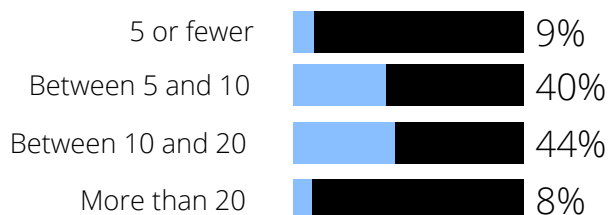


Roughly how many children usually take part during sessions?

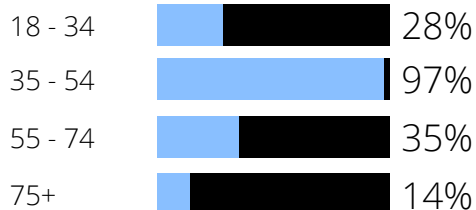


Roughly what age are the children who normally take part during sessions?

Adults during a play street



Roughly how many adults are usually around during your play street session?



Roughly what ages are the adults who are normally around during sessions?

The vast majority (97%) of the survey respondents were aged between 35-54 years old, recording themselves as a combination of street organisers, stewards and carers. 35% of streets report adults aged 55-74 years old and 14% reported adults aged 75+ engaging in the sessions themselves. This data is supported by previous surveys and showcases that play streets engage the whole street and not simply residents with young children. Scroll down for more information on building multigenerational communities.



Making play streets inclusive

A note from us

This survey has been completed by residents in our network who have seen our call and are self-selecting. People facing the most challenging circumstances are unlikely to have responded directly due to a range of barriers including time, working long hours, juggling care responsibilities, access to a computer and confidence in form filling. However we know that residents facing the most disadvantage are largely supported by community organisations in any play streets work and our survey includes responses from community group leaders.

To try and better directly represent and share the voices of residents facing greater disadvantage and challenges, we provide some case studies below. We are looking at other creative ways to gather in representative feedback, and longer-term ways of collecting meaningful data from a grass roots movement. If you would like more information about our work supporting play streets in communities who face greater disadvantage, please contact us on hello@playingout.net, or join our [Community of Learning](#) online forum along with other community organisations and councils across the UK.

Here are a few examples of the amazing work happening in communities facing greater disadvantage across the country:
(click on the box for info)

BRISTOL
resident
Samira Musse
runs play streets on
tower block estates

supported by
@playingoutcic

LEEDS
priority
neighbourhoods
are supported to
run play streets

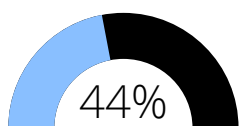
supported by
@kidzklubleeds
@fall_into_place-theatre

BLACKPOOL
residents
learn
how to run
play streets

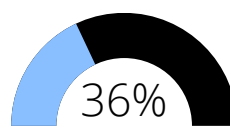
supported by
@CMmagicclub

Housing and street type

What is the housing like where you live?



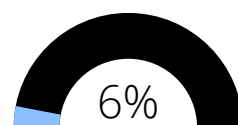
Mostly terraced houses



Mostly semi-detached houses



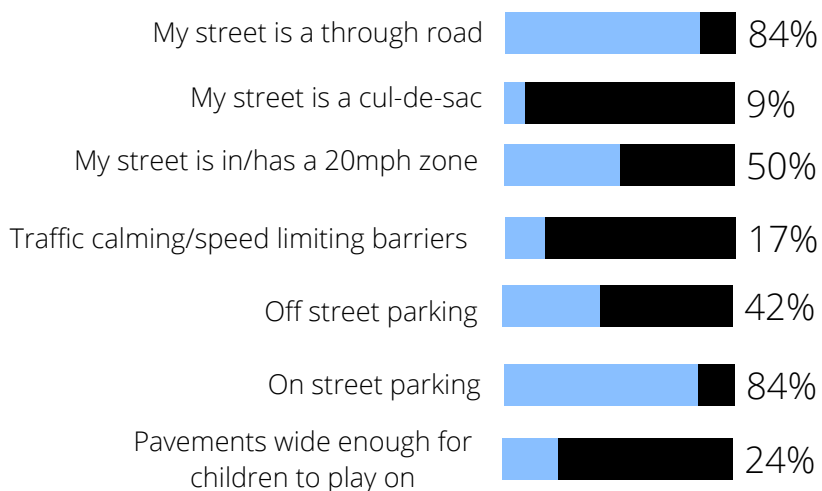
Mixed housing



Mostly flats

Many of the survey respondents live in mostly terraced houses (44%) and semi-detached houses (36%), with a low number of respondents living in mixed housing and mostly flats.

Below we see that play streets are primarily organised by residents who live on a through road (84%) and those with on street parking (84%), demonstrating that the need to create traffic / car-free space is a motive for running play streets.



Does your street have any of the following?



Why did you decide to get involved in a play street?

It's a fantastic chance for our daughters and the children on our street to play out, get exercise, grow in confidence, share ideas and toys, and get to know each other, for us to get to know our neighbours, and for us to support one another through life's trials. It's created a really strong community on our street.

To give my son a safe place to play with his friends

Good way of neighbours meeting, children & grandchildren to use scooters and bikes

Strong community of people using the back lane, long history of community activity. Lots of new small children wanting a safe space to play. Not many people have proper gardens on our street.

We get lots of cut through traffic, vehicles often speeding as well as vans and lorries. We're in an upstairs flat with a tiny garden. I felt sad my child has nowhere to run around near home and didn't know any of the other children on the street.

I'm a mother and a campaigner for healthier streets for kids. Ex GP and I see them as a public health initiative

We needed an opportunity for people to come together away from technology and learn how to socialise and play the way their parents played when they were young - reintegrate lost social skills. This also gave parents the opportunity to come away from daily pressures and get to know people.

To build community networks and meet neighbours while providing space for children to play and make a case for traffic calming measures

Increase community cohesion, raise awareness around prioritising people over cars, help slow traffic down in the street/discourage rat running

No outdoor space for our kids because of living in small flats. It's hard for parents to talk to each other and kids to play at drop off and pick up because school so small with no real outside space and road noise, and traffic danger so bad.

I had grown up playing outside and I wanted a similar experience for my children. When they were small it seemed like a good way to introduce the idea into the community and start street play in a safe way.

Lots of kids on our street benefit from having the space they deserve to be outside and play safely

Quotes from residents in

Newcastle, Stockport, Bristol, Swindon, Hull, Exeter, Cheshire East, Brighton and Hove, Blackpool, Bournemouth, Cardiff, Greater Manchester, Reading, Hertfordshire, Leeds, London, Norfolk, Oxfordshire, and North Tyneside

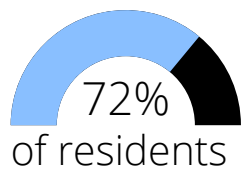
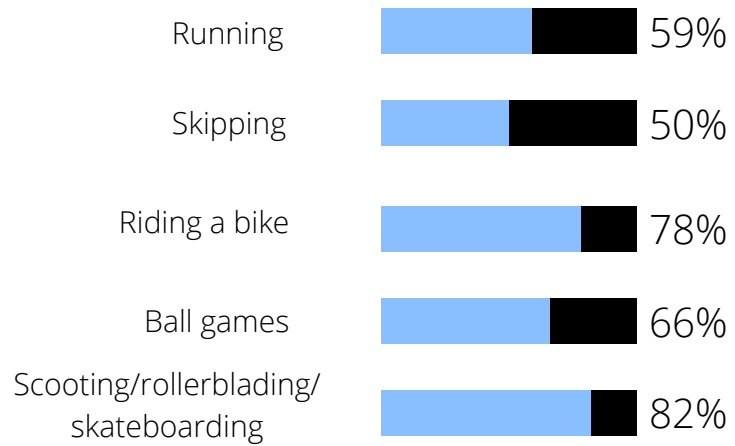
Children's health

Play streets give children space and freedom to get much-needed exercise, play freely, gain independence and skills, and make friends close to home. Play streets are not the long-term solution but are a simple, low-cost step in the right direction, starting to change things for children (streets, spaces, community, behaviour, culture, driver awareness, and a sense of what is possible..).

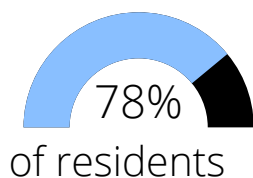
The data below (which is supportive of previous survey responses) shows how play streets increase physical literacy and levels of physical activity, whilst allowing children to feel that they belong more in their communities and increase social confidence.

Children's physical activity and literacy

Children on my street have learnt or improved practical skills during play streets



felt that the children involved are more physically active as a result of play streets



said play street sessions have positively impacted their children's/the children on their street's physical health

A boy (aged 5) who lives up the road learnt to ride his bike on the play street and now comes out on his bike every time, he also goes to a local pump track and has started doing BMX riding. The freedom he has when riding his bike is really evident.

Stockport

Scooting races, pogo stick (which lots struggled to pick up!)

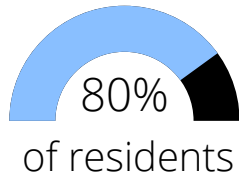
Lewisham

Hopscotch

Hackney

Children's health

Children's mental health and social confidence;

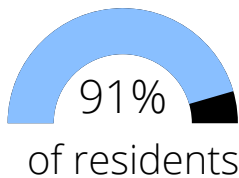


said that play street sessions have positively impacted their children's/the children on their street's mental health

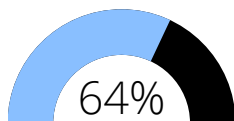
Children's physical activity levels in the UK are shamefully low - primarily because everyday activity such as walking, cycling and play have been built out of children's lives. Children suffer enormously through spending too much time indoors, inactive and isolated.

This has all taken a huge toll on children's mental health and social confidence.

These sections of the report highlight that play streets allow children the safe space to begin to build their social confidence, physical activity and sense of belonging in their communities, all of which are integral to their well-being.



said that play street sessions have positively impacted my/the children on my street's social confidence



of residents said that play street sessions have led to children on your street playing out together at other times

...some children now play together who may not have known each other before Playing Out.

Hertfordshire

Sense of community - the kids all go to different schools but now know each other.

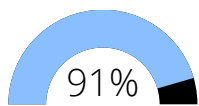
St Albans and Harpenden

Learning safely to take risks during play.

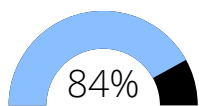
Cardiff

Play streets and community

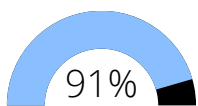
Due to play street sessions :



My street feels like a safer, friendlier place to live



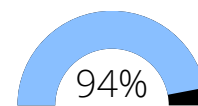
Children on my street have made new friends



I feel like I belong more in my neighbourhood



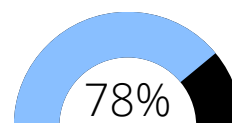
I feel more involved in the community in which I live



I know more people on my street

Building resilient communities

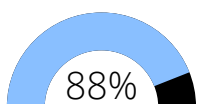
A majority of people responded that play streets have positively impacted the strength of their local community. 95% of people reported that play streets resulted in them 'feeling that they belong more in their neighbourhood' and 94% know more people on their street as a result.



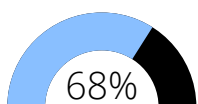
of residents said that play street sessions have led to neighbours having more social contact outside the play street

78% of people reported that play street sessions have led to neighbours having more social contact outside of their play street, in some of the following ways; Christmas drinks, parents helping each other out, increased confidence in chatting to neighbours, back lane parties and easing the transition into school by already knowing someone on the street.

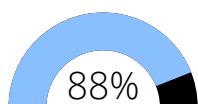
Play street sessions result in children:



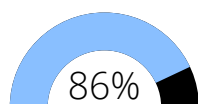
Interacting with other children of different ages



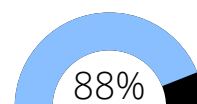
Learning about road safety



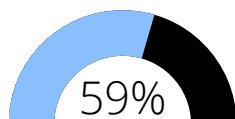
Interacting with adults on their street



Having increased confidence in street play







Having increased social confidence and freedom



of residents said that play street sessions have led to neighbours getting involved in other community activities, groups or campaigns

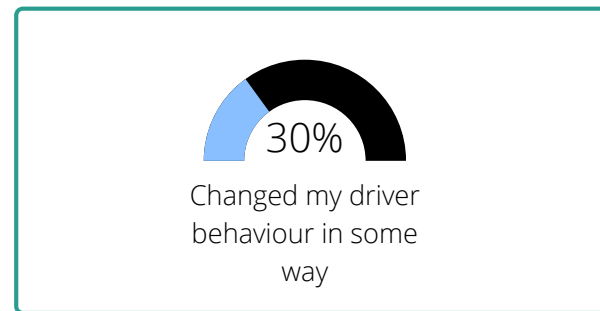
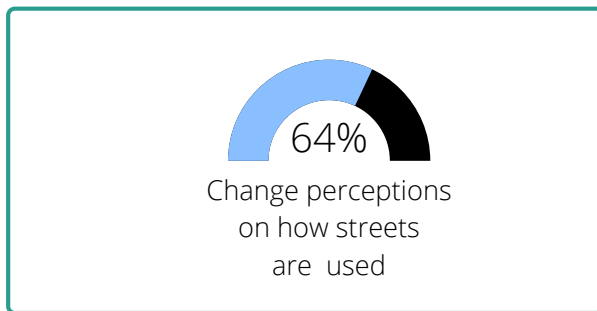
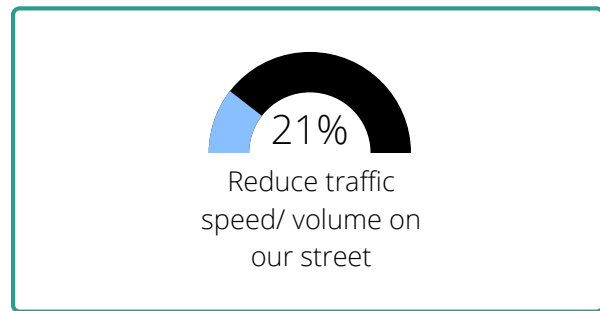
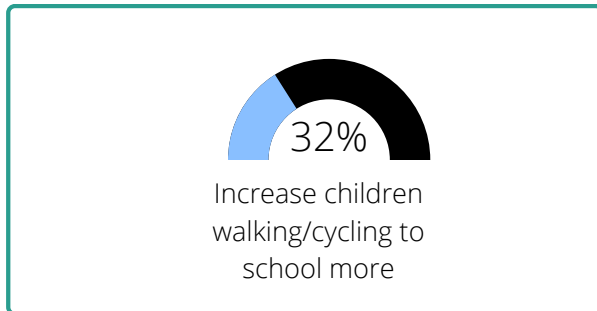
Other Community Activities

-  Shopping for my elderly neighbour
-  Walking to school or nursery together
-  Plant swaps or community planters
-  Litter picking on the street

Play streets and street use

The data below showcases the longer term effects of play streets, reflected through behavioural and attitude change. These changes demonstrate that play streets are the starting blocks for long term change.

Being involved in play streets has helped to...



The examples of actions taken by residents as a direct result of being involved with play streets show the depth and range of cultural impacts play streets can have. Residents have gone on to campaign for permanent changes to the spaces in which they live and altered their own behaviour when driving.

This data demonstrates the impact temporary road closures for play can have on wider societal issues, ranging from children's rights to active travel and the perceptions of 'who owns the road'. Through engaging with play streets residents have gone on to feel more empowered to lobby for more long term changes, such as promoting play streets to community development organisations to show that their areas are worth investing in.

We know that pedestrians and cyclists opt to cycle down our lane to admire the plants and upcycled street furniture that we have. We have linked and supported other community groups in the locality who wish to do something similar in their areas.

Newcastle

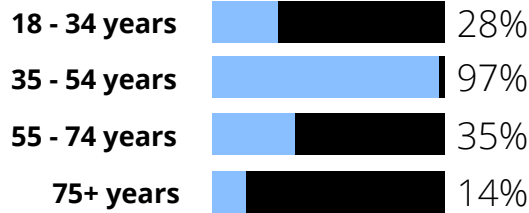
Using play street as an example, some children question the primacy of car use of the streets, especially those who cycle a lot. I have reduced my speed in residential areas, aware that children might be playing.

Cardiff

It's made myself more aware of local safety as we tend to go into autopilot in our local area. It's made me more vigilant when driving.

Bristol

Building Multigenerational Communities



Roughly what ages are the adults who are normally around during sessions?

35% of streets report adults aged 55-74 years old and 14% reported adults aged 75+ engaging in the sessions themselves. This data showcases that play streets engage the whole street and not simply residents with young children.

For children, being part of a multigenerational community can increase their confidence with interacting with people of different age groups and improve skills in empathy and understanding.

For older people there is an improved sense of wellbeing, reduced feelings of loneliness and improved physical and mental health.

Older people volunteering, even though they don't have small children.

St Albans

My elderly neighbor being invited to have Sunday lunch with a couple down the road who he marshalled with.

St Albans

A little one (about 5 years old) - neighbour - wanting to show me (59 year old) their new bike and how they could ride it :)

Newcastle

Seeing neighbours across 4 generations mixing; adults joining in with games; new neighbours being welcomed; children starting school already knowing some of the older children in the playground.

Newcastle

It's been a very community event which includes the older members of the street as well as the families.

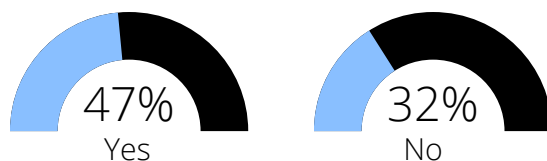
Bristol



Barriers to play streets

Barriers to play streets from the resident perspective can be split into two distinct categories: practicalities of running the play street and lack of local authority support.

Survey respondents noted lack of stewards, complaints from neighbours who both formally and informally object to the events and dealing with uncooperative drivers as the main practical barriers they have to overcome.



Did you encounter any barriers in organising play streets?

Significant restructures within council departments and reassignment of staff resource and funding lead to reduced promotion of play streets and the introduction of significant barriers within the application process.

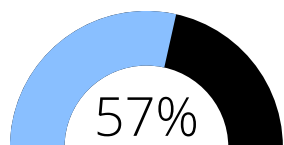
Our previous application was lost by the council due to cut backs and teams being under resourced

Lack of stewarding volunteers

Some complaints from neighbours about a sensitive dog struggling with the noise but we've figured it out between us - the dog goes for a long walk during street play sessions

1 or 2 individuals have complained about having to divert in their car because the street is closed however there are multiple other routes to get to other streets which connect off [our street] so it shouldn't be an issue. We respond quickly to allow anyone on the street access to their house if they need it, which is rare, and is welcomed by all.

Support from Playing Out and allies



of residents received support from organisations or individuals outside their street

Who did you receive support from?

The wonderful **Playing Out** team.

Play Wales in encouraging the Council to go ahead with play streets, without whose help, the play street wouldn't have happened. They helped with applying and provided us with the street signs, cones, hi-vis etc.

Initially by the **Playing Out team in Bristol** who came and talked us through how to manage playing out with stewards and provided equipment for us.

Catherine Peacock from kids club [**Kidz Club Leeds**] organised the play streets and is always there to help

Nicola from **Sustainable St Albans** has been very helpful with guidance

London Play offered moral support

Alison Stenning - PlayMeetStreet - North Tyneside has been a great help in getting road closures approved with the Council . Always helpful in giving advice.

The most memorable or enjoyable thing that happened during a play street session

Watching children who never had positive male role models in their lives be able to engage with dads on the street...

Just the sound of children playing happily, engaging across generations and meeting new friends (and pets)!

The memories we have created, the independence it has given my boys and the confidence it has given me in their ability to go off on their own journeys...

Play street in the snow on the lead up to Christmas felt very festive for young and old alike. My next door neighbour was born in her house 86 years ago and she loves to chat to all the neighbours

Seeing a tiny 3-year old learn to cycle is pretty wild!

There have been so many magical moments. One of my favourites is when two of the older girls, my daughter and a friend who have been playing out on the street since they were 4, decided to organise a talent show. They got everyone involved - children and adults - and we all sat on blankets in the street and watched everyone make a fool of themselves, and have a lot of fun!

A neighbour on the next street arriving with 150 cupcakes she baked that morning especially! Xxx



More memorable moments on a play street

The ice cream van coming on a hot day and everyone - adults and kids - stopping playing and all getting ice creams and chatting.

Just purely hearing the children laughing and enjoying themselves, my partner is disabled and doesn't go out much so I keep the door open so he can enjoy hearing the children play and laugh as well.

Having passers by enquire about what the road closure was due to, and turn from a tone of skepticism to one of wholehearted support and surprise when told about the concept. Seeing continuous laughing and active children for the full 2 hours, undeterred by any weather.

Our kids feel closer to their neighbours including kids and adults. Social skills have improved vastly. It has made our neighbourhood feel a special place to be

Watching the glee on a toddler's face when they realised that he had tottered out of immediate "grabbing range" of his mother.

Children selling lemonade, making lavender bags, playing with large skipping rope, adults joining in games, a child with a serious illness coming out to play.

A group sing along with adults and kids

A lot of the little girls on our street turn a corner next to our drive into their 'hollow' which they decorate with flowers and chinks - seems like a lot of fun for them. When I had a newborn baby I got to go out and be sociable but retreat inside to my house easily when I needed to - socializing with a tiny baby when recovering from birth is so hard when you don't want the burden of hosting or travelling far. But equally a bit of fresh air and seeing friendly faces did me the world of good - it felt like the perfect set up.



Quotes from residents across the country:

Newcastle, Stockport, Bristol, Swindon, Hull, Exeter, Cheshire East, Brighton and Hove, Blackpool, Bournemouth, Cardiff, Greater Manchester, Reading, Hertfordshire, Leeds, London, Norfolk, Oxfordshire, and North Tyneside



Playing Out CIC is registered in England and Wales.
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For more information on the survey,
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