



NASUWT
The Teachers' Union

**Workplace Bullying in
Schools and Colleges**

The largest teachers' union in the UK

1. Introduction

The NASUWT has a long-standing commitment to tackling the problem of adult workplace bullying in schools and colleges. The Union's report *No Place to Hide* (NASUWT 1995) was a landmark survey, exposing the fact that adult workplace bullying was a widespread and serious problem for both employees and employers.

1.1 The Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (Acas) defines workplace bullying as:

'offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means intended to undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient. Bullying or harassment may be by an individual against an individual (perhaps by someone in a position of authority such as a manager or supervisor) or involve groups of people. It may be obvious or it may be insidious. Whatever form it takes, it is unwarranted and unwelcome to the individual.'

1.2 Staff in schools and colleges have a right to work in a safe and secure environment free from intimidation, harassment, abuse and fear and where they feel valued and respected. All workers are entitled to be treated with dignity at work.

1.3 This report summarises the NASUWT research detailed in *Tackling Workplace Bullying* (NASUWT 2011). The responses of over 3,000 teachers to a survey (see Appendix 1) carried out between 15 September and 5 October 2011 are reported. The survey was conducted on a basis broadly similar to the research undertaken in 1995 to enable broad comparisons to be made.

1.4 Workplace bullying is an important issue for schools and colleges. The work undertaken by the NASUWT in 1995 indicated that adult bullying in the workplace typically resulted in:

- loss of self-esteem;
- rising sickness and absenteeism;
- rapid staff turnover;
- whole departments appearing to be ineffective;
- lack of motivation;
- low morale; and
- loss of respect for management.

1.5 Extensive research by Lutgen-Sandvik, Tracy and Alberts (2007) has confirmed these findings and highlighted that the negative impact on the workforce includes depression, stress, alcohol abuse and even suicide.

- 1.6 The same researchers also suggest that bullying has a negative impact on those who witness bullying as they experience higher levels of demotivation and report reduced work-quality outcomes.
- 1.7 It is therefore not in the interests of schools and colleges to allow a culture of bullying to thrive.

2. SURVEY FINDINGS

- 2.1 A key element of the NASUWT research was to identify the extent to which schools and colleges have anti-bullying policies and whether, if they do, the policy specifically makes provision for tackling the bullying of staff by other adults/staff.
- 2.2 The results suggest that a significant minority of workplaces (7%) do not have an anti-bullying policy for staff or pupils and that even where such a policy exists, nearly a quarter of schools and colleges make no specific provision regarding bullying of staff by other adults/staff.

Does your school have an anti-bullying policy?	Yes	1,702	57%
	No	210	7%
	Don't know	1,088	36%
		3,000	100%
Does the anti-bullying policy include bullying of staff by other adults/staff?	Yes	528	32%
	No	375	23%
	Don't know	723	44%
		1,626	100%

- 2.3 To discover the extent to which staff are bullied by other adults, respondents were asked to describe their impression of the frequency of employee bullying in their workplace.

Which of the following best describes your impression of the frequency of employee bullying by other adults/staff in your workplace?	None	9%
	Rare	25%
	Sometimes	40%
	Frequent	26%

Responses indicate that two thirds of staff perceived adult bullying in the workplace to be more than a rare occurrence.

- 2.4 A clearer measure of the prevalence of adult bullying is the identification of the extent to which respondents have actually experienced or witnessed the bullying of staff by other adults in their workplace.

Have you, in the last 12 months, been subjected to bullying by another member of staff or witnessed the bullying of any other employee by another member of staff in your workplace? (tick all that apply)	Subjected to bullying or witnessed bullying	67%
	Neither experienced nor witnessed bullying	33%

- 2.5 Results indicated that 67% of respondents had either experienced or witnessed adult workplace bullying during the prior 12 months. Further analysis revealed that 22% of respondents had both experienced and witnessed adult workplace bullying.
- 2.6 While the impact of bullying on those bullied is explored later in this report, it is important not to overlook the negative impact bullying has on those who witness it. Rayner, Hoel and Cooper (2002) found that one in four witnesses felt that they wanted to leave their job due to the adverse impact that witnessing bullying was having on them. Witnesses were likely to suffer stress and become despondent with their jobs, resulting in absenteeism, greater turnover and reduced productivity (Hoel and Cooper, 2000).
- 2.7 One of two methods is normally used to measure the full prevalence of bullying: counting the number of negative acts over a period of time, or self-identification as a victim of bullying. Research suggests that the prevalence of bullying captured by counting the number of negative acts is significantly higher than the self-identification method (Mikkelsen and Einarsen, 2001, cited in Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2007).
- 2.8 Reasons for the low rate of self-identification include not recognising that the behaviour is bullying and avoiding self-labelling as a victim of bullying due to the negative connotations associated with it (Rayner et al., 2002, cited in Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2007).
- 2.9 Since the NASUWT survey relied to a degree on self-identification, the results are likely to under-represent the true level of adult workplace bullying within schools and colleges.

2.10 The relationship between the age of the person bullied and the age of the person acting as a bully was explored.

Age of Person bullied	Age of person acting as a bully					All Ages	
	<30	31 to 40	41 to 50	51 to 60	>60		
<30	27	100	104	76	4	311	17.4%
31 to 40	19	141	214	130	7	511	28.6%
41 to 50	15	106	232	168	12	533	29.8%
51 to 60	8	87	158	155	10	418	23.4%
>60	1	4	6	4	1	16	0.9%
All	70	438	714	533	34	1,789	100%
	3.9%	24.5%	39.9%	29.8%	1.9%		

2.11 The results demonstrated that:

- (i) teachers aged 30 or below are very much less likely (3.9%) to act as a bully than older colleagues (excluding pensions aged over 60);
- (ii) teachers aged 30 or below are also less likely (17.4%) to be the victims of bullying (excluding pensions aged over 60);
- (iii) teachers aged 50 or over are much more likely to act as a bully.

2.12 The relationship between the gender of the person bullied and the gender of the person acting as a bully was investigated.

What was the sex of the person bullied?	Female	1,335	75%
	Male	453	25%

What was the sex of the person acting as a bully?	Female	1,179	66%
	Male	606	34%

2.13 The information suggested that while, proportionately, men and women are equally likely to be the victims of adult bullying in the workplace, men are more likely than women to act as a bully.

Gender of person bullied	Gender of person acting as a bully	
	Female	Male
Female	78%	67%
Male	22%	33%

An analysis of the gender relationship between those who act as a bully and those who are bullied suggests that, proportionately, women are more likely to bully women and men more likely to bully men.

2.14 The relationship between the status of the person bullied and the status of the person acting as a bully was investigated.

What was the position of the person bullied?	Admin/Support	6%
	Deputy/Senior Leader	7%
	Head of Department/Team	20%
	Headteacher	1%
	Other promoted teacher	9%
	Parent	0%
	Main Scale Teacher	50%
	Other	8%

What was the position of the person acting as a bully?	Admin/Support	4%
	Deputy/Senior Leader	25%
	Head of Department/Team	20%
	Headteacher	35%
	Other promoted teacher	4%
	Parent	0%
	Main Scale Teacher	7%
	Other	5%

- 2.15 The survey findings revealed that 80% of those who bully occupy leadership or line management posts.
- 2.16 The results suggested that while the incidence of headteacher bullying remains very significant, the introduction of increased distributed management has resulted in a larger number of deputies and heads of department being identified as bullies.
- 2.17 While main scale teachers clearly appear to bear the brunt of adult workplace bullying, it is interesting to note that heads of department seem as likely to be bullied as they are to act as a bully. This may reflect their 'squeezed' position between senior managers and those whom they manage.
- 2.18 These results correspond with research undertaken by the Teacher Support Network (2008), which also found that headteachers and senior managers were the main perpetrators of bullying.
- 2.19 The methods used by those acting as bullies to intimidate their victims were investigated.

What form did the bullying take? (Please select as many as are relevant)	Persistent unjustified criticism	53%
	Intimidatory use of discipline/competence procedures	45%
	Freezing out, ignoring or excluding	41%
	Destructive innuendo/sarcasm	35%
	Being set impossible deadlines for work	35%
	Being shouted at in the presence of colleagues	32%
	Being shouted at in the presence of pupils	19%
	Areas of responsibility removed without consultation	18%
	Threats (verbal or non-verbal)	17%
	Other (please specify)	17%
	Incessant and demanding e-mails	17%
	Abuse	1%
	Cyberbullying	1%
	Violence to property	1%

- 2.20 Respondents were asked to identify all the forms of bullying they had either experienced or witnessed.
- 2.21 The survey findings revealed that over half of respondents had either witnessed or experienced persistent unjustified criticism and nearly half had been exposed to intimidatory use of discipline or competency procedures.
- 2.22 Over one third of members reported that bullying in their school took the form of:
- freezing out, ignoring or excluding;
 - destructive innuendo or sarcasm;
 - being set impossible deadlines for work;
 - being shouted at in the presence of colleagues.
- 2.23 The consequences of adult workplace bullying for the person bullied were investigated.

What was the consequence for the person bullied? (Please select as many as are relevant)	Loss of confidence	77%
	Dread of going to work	68%
	Sleepless nights	60%
	Damaging effect on family	29%
	Panic attacks	23%
	Left job	22%
	Other (please specify)	20%
	Extended absence	18%
	Some other socio/medical symptom	18%
	Frequent absences	15%
	Surrender of post of responsibility	8%
	Smoking/drinking/drugs	7%

- 2.24 Respondents experience a wide range of symptoms. It is clear that the main effects are a loss of confidence, dread of going to work and sleepless nights. Respondents also indicate that adult workplace bullying impacts significantly and adversely on their family life with more than one in five feeling it necessary to leave their job.

2.25 Respondents were asked to describe the management style of the person acting as a bully. The following definitions were provided in order to assist respondents:

- situational bully (threatens and bullies subordinates when they feel themselves under pressure);
- punishing bully (believes they get more out of staff by punishment than by reward);
- pathological bully (persecutes and torments any victim they can find for the sheer pleasure of the exercise); and
- role playing bully (thinks they are expected to act in a bullying fashion because of the culture of the organisation).

The management style of the person acting as a bully was a...	Situational bully	37%
	Punishing bully	23%
	Pathological bully	16%
	Role-playing bully	9%
	None of the above	16%

2.26 The high incidence of situational bullies indicates that many senior leaders resort to cascading their pressures down to the workforce, but, worryingly, nearly half of the unhelpful management styles identified by respondents are traits that are more to do with personality than management workload.

3. COMPARISON OF THE 2011 SURVEY WITH THE NASUWT'S 1995 RESEARCH

3.1 The findings arising from the 2011 survey were compared with the findings from the equivalent 1995 survey.

3.2 With regard to teachers' impressions of the frequency of bullying by other adults/staff in the workplace, adult workplace bullying appears to be more prevalent in 2011 than in 1995. In 1995, 40% of respondents reported that their impression of adult workplace bullying was rare or none. The equivalent figure in 2011 is 34%.

	2011	1995
None	9%	18%
Rare	25%	32%
Sometimes	40%	50%
Frequent	26%	
	100%	100%

3.3 With reference to the extent to which teachers had been subjected to bullying by another member of staff or witnessed the bullying of any other employee by another member of staff in their workplace, the figures indicate that, while the actual incidence of adult workplace bullying is largely unchanged, the extent to which it is witnessed is significantly less in 2011 than it was in 1995. More bullying may therefore be taking place on a one-to-one or more covert basis.

	2011	1995
Subjected to bullying	44%	45%
Witnessed bullying	44%	60%
Subjected to bullying or witnessed bullying	67%	69%

3.4 With reference to any changes in the age of persons bullied and acting as a bully, the evidence indicates that there is now a greater propensity for those in age bands 31 to 40 and 51 to 60 to act as bullies. Those aged 41 to 50 seem much less likely to act as bullies now compared to 1995.

Age of persons acting as a bully	2011	1995
<30	4%	3%
31 to 40	24%	15%
41 to 50	40%	59%
51 to 60	30%	22%
60+	2%	2%

Age of persons bullied	2011	1995
<30	17%	18%
31 to 40	29%	31%
41 to 50	30%	41%
51 to 60	23%	10%
60+	1%	1%

Those aged 41 to 50 now appear to experience less adult bullying than in 1995 while those aged 51 to 60 now experience a far greater degree of adult workplace bullying.

- 3.5 With regard to whether there had been any change in the sex of persons bullied and acting as a bully, the evidence shows that there has been an increase in the proportion of women bullying.

Sex of persons acting as a bully	2011	1995
Female	66%	40%
Male	34%	60%

Sex of persons bullied	2011	1995
Female	75%	65%
Male	25%	35%

- 3.6 Although there is an increase in the number of women being bullied, the percentage increase is less than the equivalent increase in the number of women bullying.
- 3.7 With regard to whether there had been any change in the form of bullying, although the addition of two important options, not present in the 1995 survey, makes direct comparison difficult, it is clear that intimidatory use of discipline and competence procedures, coupled with sarcasm, innuendo and impossible work deadlines, continue to be used alongside unjustified criticism, and a deliberate 'freezing out' of colleagues has increased.

Form of bullying	2011	1995
Persistent unjustified criticism	16%	
Intimidatory use of discipline/competence procedures	13%	14%
Freezing out, ignoring or excluding	12%	
Destructive innuendo/sarcasm	11%	18%

Being set impossible deadlines for work	10%	12%
Being shouted at in the presence of colleagues	9%	14%
Being shouted at in the presence of pupils	6%	9%
Other (please specify)	7%	5%
Areas of responsibility removed without consultation	5%	8%
Incessant and demanding e-mails	5%	7%
Threats (verbal or non-verbal)	5%	12%
Violence to property	0%	1%

3.8 The following quotation offered by a teacher responding to the Union’s 1995 survey seems as relevant now as it was then:

“The breakdown in my health – acute stress – was the result of bullying over several years by my head of department. She overloaded me with unnecessary work, made unreasonable demands, needlessly questioned everything I did, undermined my authority with pupils, discredited me in the eyes of parents, pupils and colleagues, displayed a contemptuous, insulting and uncooperative attitude towards me, generally made life as difficult and uncomfortable for me as possible and obstructed me in carrying out my duties.”

3.9 Changes in the consequences of adult workplace bullying on the person being bullied were also compared. The evidence indicates that the 2011 results mirror very closely the findings of the Union’s 1995 survey.

	2011	1995
Loss of confidence	21%	21%
Dread of going to work	18%	16%
Sleepless nights	17%	15%
Damaging effect on family	8%	8%

Panic attacks	6%	8%
Left job	6%	5%
Other (please specify)	6%	3%
Extended absence	5%	5%
Some other socio/medical symptom	5%	6%
Frequent absences	4%	5%
Surrender of post of responsibility	2%	3%
Smoking/drinking/drugs	2%	5%

3.10 Respondents continue to suffer loss of confidence, dread the thought of going to work and experience sleepless nights. Other significant effects included damage to family life, panic attacks and, regrettably, departure from the profession.

4. OTHER NASUWT RESEARCH

Wellbeing at Work

- 4.1 The NASUWT developed, and continues to host on its website, a Wellbeing at Work diagnostic tool; At January 2012, 3,557 members had used the Wellbeing at Work online tool; 54.2% had experienced adult bullying.
- 4.2 This adds further evidence to, and confirmation of, the findings of the 2011 survey, which indicates that 67% of respondents had been subjected to or witnessed adult bullying in the workplace.
- 4.3 Exemplar statements taken from comments on the online Wellbeing at Work tool illustrate the nature of the problems faced within the workplace:

“I have been bullied in the past. It was ignored when I raised it, resulting in me being off sick long term.”

“A deputy with no interpersonal skills makes people feel inadequate. She neither listens to peoples’ concerns nor takes into consideration how her decisions and manner upset people. She does not care.”

“The deputy head shouted at me in a way that I feel was completely unacceptable. I have been unsure who to speak to regarding this as the head is very unapproachable.”

Safe to Teach?

- 4.4 In 2007, the NASUWT conducted a Health and Safety at Work survey, which contained questions on workplace bullying.
- 4.5 This survey of almost 6,000 teachers and school and college leaders found that, in the two years prior to the survey, 23% of respondents had been bullied by their line manager, 16% by other colleagues and 2% by a governor.

Teachers' Mental Health

- 4.6 In 2010, the NASUWT conducted research into teachers' mental health.
- 4.7 The high incidence of 'situational' bullies shown in the 2011 survey confirms the findings of this earlier research, which highlighted the fact that many senior leaders, when under pressure, cascade their pressures down to the workforce.

The experience of prejudice-related bullying and harassment amongst teachers and headteachers in schools

- 4.8 In 2011, the NASUWT conducted research into prejudice-related bullying.
- 4.9 The report cites Fox and Stallworth, who indicate that bullying has a greater impact on the person bullied when the bully is a supervisor rather than a co-worker. This has serious implications given that the 2011 survey of members indicates that 80% of those who act as a bully occupy leadership or line management posts.

5. THE NASUWT'S RESPONSE

- 5.1 The NASUWT publication, *Managing your Mental Health and Wellbeing* (2001), offers comprehensive advice to teachers and school leaders seeking to combat issues arising from difficult working relationships.
- 5.2 A copy of this publication, together with other helpful information, can be viewed or downloaded from the NASUWT website at www.nasuwt.org.uk.
- 5.3 The NASUWT continues to champion the right to dignity at work by:
 - representing members individually and collectively where bullying is identified;
 - tackling adult bullying through campaigns to raise awareness of the problem of workplace bullying and the horrific impact that it can have on teachers and on educational standards;
 - exposing adult bullying where it occurs within schools and colleges, supporting members to combat this by all appropriate means, including

legal redress and industrial action;

- issuing information and advice highlighting the NASUWT support available and advising what to do if experiencing adult bullying;
- providing high-quality training for those representing teachers and school leaders who are the victims of bullying;
- using the Wellbeing at Work online tool to analyse individual and collective issues;
- working with the TUC, WTUC, STUC and ICTU.

5.4 The Union will continue to make representations to ministers and employers across the UK, drawing attention to the link between increased autonomy, high-stakes accountability and adult workplace bullying and pressing for policy development to address this.

5.5 The Union will, as a result of this latest research, produce and promote, for adoption in all workplaces, a model anti-bullying policy.

Appendix 1: Questions asked in the survey on the type and extent of workplace bullying

1. Membership number.
2. Does your school have an anti-bullying policy?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Don't know
3. Does the anti-bullying policy include bullying of staff by other adults/staff?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Don't know
4. Which of the following best describes your impression of the frequency of employee bullying by other adults/staff in your workplace?
 - None
 - Rare
 - Sometimes
 - Frequent
5. Have you, in the last 12 months, been subjected to bullying by another member of staff or witnessed the bullying of any other employee by another member of staff in your workplace? (tick all that apply)
 - Yes, I have been bullied
 - Yes, I have witnessed bullying
 - No

Please answer the following questions in respect of the most recent act of employee bullying by another member of staff/adult you have experienced or witnessed.

(N.B. If respondents indicated 'No' at 5 above, the survey ended. This was the case for 959 of the 3,028 members responding to the survey.)

6. What was the age of the person bullied?
 - <30
 - 31-40
 - 41-50
 - 51-60
 - >60
7. What was the age of the person acting as a bully?
 - <30
 - 31-40

- 41-50
 - 51-60
 - >60
8. What was the sex of the person bullied?
- Female
 - Male
 - Trans
9. What was the sex of the person acting as a bully?
- Female
 - Male
 - Trans
10. What was the position of the person bullied?
- Headteacher
 - Deputy/senior leader
 - Head of department/team
 - Other promoted teacher
 - Standard scale teacher
 - Admin/support staff
 - Parent
 - Other (please specify)
11. What was the position of the person acting as a bully?
- Headteacher
 - Deputy/senior leader
 - Head of department/team
 - Other promoted teacher
 - Standard scale teacher
 - Admin/support staff
 - Parent
 - Other (please specify)
12. What form did the bullying take? (Please select as many as are relevant)
- Being shouted at in the presence of colleagues
 - Violence to property
 - Being shouted at in the presence of pupils
 - Intimidatory use of discipline/competence procedures
 - Being set impossible deadlines for work
 - Destructive innuendo/sarcasm
 - Areas of responsibility removed without consultation
 - Incessant and demanding e-mails
 - Threats (verbal or non-verbal)
 - Cyberbullying

- Freezing out, ignoring or excluding
 - Persistent unjustified criticism
 - Abuse
 - Other (please specify)
13. What was the consequence for the person bullied? (Please select as many as are relevant)
- Left job
 - Surrender of post of responsibility
 - Frequent absences
 - Damaging effect on family
 - Extended absence
 - Smoking/drinking/drugs
 - Panic attacks
 - Loss of confidence
 - Sleepless nights
 - Some other socio/medical symptom
 - Dread of going to work
 - Other (please specify)
14. Please indicate which of the following best describes the management style of the person acting as a bully:
- Situational bully (threatens and bullies subordinates when they feel themselves under pressure)
 - Role-playing bully (thinks they are expected to act in a bullying fashion because of the culture of the organisation)
 - Punishing bully (believes they get more out of staff by punishment than by reward)
 - Pathological bully (persecutes and torments any victim they can find for the sheer pleasure of the exercise)
 - None of the above

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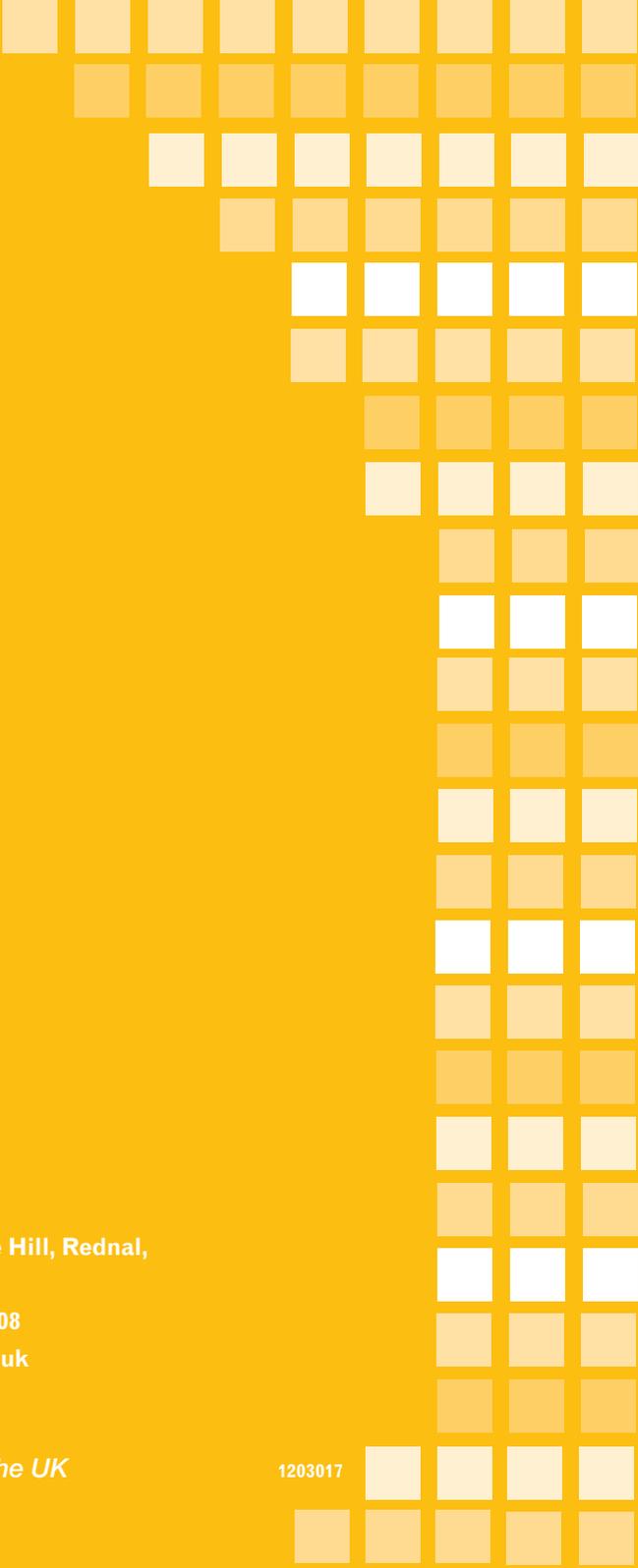
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