

# EMPOWERING PEOPLE



# Working to End Homelessness

*Thank you to our staff across Dublin Simon Community, our volunteers from all walks of life who give so generously of their time, and to the men and women who use and rely on our services that inspire and motivate us to continue our work.*

*Thanks to all of you who have donated in many and varied ways to Dublin Simon Community. Our ultimate goal is to empower the people who use our services and allow them to develop the confidence to rebuild their lives.*

*Without your help and their motivation this would not be possible.*



## Annual Review **2011**

CONTENTS	PAGE
CEO Statement	05
Chairperson's Report	07
News	09
Brian's Story	11
Learning & Development	13
Volunteering	14
Housing	16
Treatment Services	18
Area Development	20
Fundraising & Communications	22





## REVIEW OF CHALLENGES

*"It's immeasurable the impact of human kindness in creating hope for a better future."*



The demand for emergency accommodation increased in 2011 despite the additional beds put in place across the sector. The need for accommodation and assistance for people with no place to go, without security and with their lives in danger was aggravated by worsening winter conditions.

As winter descended the rise in basic needs was evident with Simon's Soup Run and Rough Sleeper Team offering our most vulnerable street residents warm clothing and sleeping bags, food and medical assistance and kindness from a friendly face. They offered access to available accommodation, social support services, needle exchange and sleeping packs (folded up mattresses, scarves, gloves, socks and sleeping bags). Our street counts demonstrated an increase throughout the year at a time when already nearly 1,500 people were in danger of becoming institutionalised in temporary emergency accommodation in the greater Dublin Region alone.

Our "Homeless Snapshot" in July showed nearly 40% of the people accessing our services were homeless over five years. The events triggering their homelessness were family conflict, domestic violence, relationship breakdown, alcohol, drug, mental or psychiatric issues. Frequently diagnosed physical health conditions were arthritis, blood pressure and asthma while mental health issues included depression, panic attacks and anxiety. This demonstrates that homelessness is not just about housing.

Health is a significant factor and also needs to be addressed. Access to healthcare is critical to ensure that people remain healthy and get the supports they need. People moving out of homeless accommodation must have appropriate housing, health and social care services with access to high support housing for those who need ongoing support.

Our core purpose is to offer men and women safe, supportive alternatives to living on the streets while also attending to their emotional and medical needs. Moving people into permanent supported housing produces a better outcome and is more cost-effective in the long run.

We are vigorously working with the resources at our disposal to help people open the door to a permanent home and enable them reach their highest level of independence. We are determined to find the necessary additional means from the limited government funds available in partnership with our loyal and dedicated supporters, donors, volunteers and staff. Through the strength of the whole Community, and the partnership with the HSE and Local Authorities, our goal of providing permanent housing for people who are chronically homeless will become a reality.

We depend on your help.

Thank you, *Sam*





## CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT 2011

*In a period that has been difficult for many in the charitable sector the Dublin Simon Community held its own very well during 2011. The Community is expanding its services into new areas and looking to improve the facilities it has, as well as to relocate some services into new premises. It has been a long process because of the uncertain environment but it is a testament to the staff, people using our services, our donors and volunteers that it is even possible for us to be expanding and growing.*



The financial results for 2011 were good because a lot of care has been taken, both in 2011 and over previous years, to ensure the Community can weather whatever storms may come. Where statutory funding suffered from some cuts, private donors have continued to give generously and costs have been cut significantly. It is necessary to constantly question how the funding, be it from the taxpayer or public donations, is used. We know that we must constantly ensure that funding, which is given in trust, is used efficiently.

We must also constantly ask what it is that Dublin Simon offers over and above simply using funds to provide services and facilities, which is the sense of Community. In 1963 Simon was founded in the UK by Anton Wallich Clifford, a probation officer. In recalling his early years he said, "I very quickly began to understand that the overt demand for a bed chit or a pair of shoes was no more than the formality of an introduction – a way of gaining some sort of acceptance. It was an inarticulate cry from the heart for recognition as a human being, and not just as a figure in the queue waiting

for a handout." At the end of 2011, and into 2012, we commenced our new strategic planning process up to 2015 and the same issues still arise. Housing stock and funding alone, while very obviously necessary, will not provide everything that is needed by people experiencing homelessness. It is the sense of human recognition, and respect for individuals as members of the Community, which has always differentiated Simon from a state body. Simon must be about providing homes not houses.

Simon has to be, and is, run to very high standards in terms of professionalism and governance. It is a large organisation dealing with public funds with all of the responsibility which follows. That is why it has weathered the last number of years well and we can be proud of that. However, it is the intangible benefit of being a Community which is the heart and soul of Simon. We are a large professional organisation because we have to be, but we are a Community because we want to be.

**Ed Farrelly**

CHAIRPERSON





### **Service User Participation group**

The participation group for people using our services had a busy 2011. Some of the highlights included two Speak Outs, a sale of work, winning the Simon Community soccer tournament, performing a piece of interactive theatre for our Community Day as well as monthly development group meetings and many Saturday social outings. The pilot of the service user volunteer programme also began in 2011. For more see page 13.

### **Health Snapshot Survey**

Dublin Simon conducted a health survey in July among 232 people using our services. The study found that 83% of respondents had a diagnosed physical health condition while 30% had a diagnosed mental health condition. The study highlights the complexity of need among those living in the most vulnerable settings with those in emergency accommodation, or using emergency services such as the Rough Sleeper Team and Needle Exchange, reporting high levels of drug and alcohol use and experiencing the highest levels of physical and mental health issues. This illustrates the importance of moving people on from emergency accommodation to appropriate housing with support as quickly as possible.

### **Mobile Health Clinic**

In May the Mobile Health Clinic operated by Safetynet, the Simon Community, Chrysalis and the Order of Malta Ireland was officially launched following a successful pilot period in 2010. The service brings primary healthcare and harm reduction services to people who are homeless and female street workers while also providing GP trainees with experience of working with hard-to-reach groups.

### **Pre-election pledge**

Before the general election the Simon Communities throughout Ireland succeeded in getting the five main political parties in the State - Fine Gael, Labour, Fianna Fáil, the Green Party and Sinn Féin - to sign the Simon Pledge. The pledge committed each party to tackling homelessness if elected to government.

### **Nightbus**

In September the Nightbus service successfully closed with minimal impact to people using the service, thanks to the collaborative work carried out by a number of homeless services including the Simon Rough Sleeper Team.

### **Flexi-Panel**

May 2011 saw the introduction of a flexible panel of Dublin Simon staff to cover vacancies and leave. The service was tasked with providing a greater quality of service than the previous system of casual relief workers. Both staff and people using the services have reported a greater level of consistency and participation since the introduction of the flexi-panel.

### **Strategic plan**

As 2011 is the third and last year of Dublin Simon's current strategic plan, a Strategy Steering Group (SSG) was set up to develop a new three year plan for the organisation. Consisting of staff, people who use our services and volunteers, the SSG aims to develop a new strategic plan that is engaging and innovative. The new strategic plan will be in place in 2012.

### **Metro Herald**

In March Metro Herald Readers voted for Dublin Simon Community to be the chosen charity of 2011. We would like to say a big *thank you* to Metro Herald staff and readers for all their support during the year.





## BRIAN'S STORY

*Brian Cahill's journey to independent living has been long and hard since he first became homeless at 21 years old. He finished his leaving cert and started college but left to find work. Things started to go wrong when he began to drink heavily, which led to him having to leave the family home.*

"I ended up on the streets because I was an alcoholic but I didn't know I was at the time. I was asked to leave the house because I was just drinking all my money and not contributing anything. I kinda knew a couple of lads from my area that ended up on the streets and I used to see them around town. So I knew from them where the homeless services were and where to go for help."

Any time Brian managed to secure a long-term hostel bed his drinking would lead to him losing it again. His addiction meant he wasn't able to break the cycle that he found himself in.

"I went into treatment a few times but any time I was off alcohol for a few weeks I would tell myself I was alright even though I wasn't. The longest I'd stay off it after treatment would be about six weeks and then bang, I'd be back on it and that's what kept me homeless for so long," he explains.

"I couldn't get on top of my addiction and kept ending up in trouble and staying in emergency shelters or sleeping rough. All of that craziness was fuelled by alcohol. I was 26 before I realised that I had a problem with drink. I was so caught up in the madness that it took me years to see it."

In an attempt to tackle his addiction, Brian went into the Simon Community's detox service on Usher's Island.

"I was in there three times. It's a great service because it gives people a real shot at beating their addiction and breaking away from homelessness. Staff treat you with a bit of TLC and you need that when you come in off the streets because your spirits are low and your head is a mess. Because you can go from detox to rehab and then onto aftercare the service there can be a stepping stone to independent living."

Since then Brian has moved into a council flat and he's grateful for the security this has brought to his life.

"To a lot of people there's more to a home than just four walls and a roof over your head. But to me, those are the most important things about this flat because for the first time in a long time I feel like I have a proper home."

Even though Brian hasn't stayed in Simon services for two years he keeps involved with the Community through the Service User Participation (SUP) group.

"Things like the SUP group really empower people because it gives an opportunity to give something back. It's a social outlet too and when people are focused on participating in something and bettering themselves then they're going down a positive path. It builds their confidence and self-esteem."

A part-time volunteering programme was one of the initiatives developed by the SUP group. As part of this, Brian volunteered with the Rough Sleeper Team.

"I really enjoyed that because it allowed me to see the way I used to be but from a fresh perspective. I used to help the team with the needle exchange and head counts too."

Last year Brian completed the first year of a social care course in Tallaght IT. When the four-year degree course is finished he hopes to work with people who have special needs and he's very grateful for the role the Simon Community has played in helping him rebuild his life.

"Simon do all they can to help you move away from the things that have been holding you down for so long. But they can only give you a hand up and then you have to work at it yourself."



## LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT

*This was a busy year in the Learning and Development (L&D) service, which aims to address the education, training and employment needs of people using our services.*

### **We delivered a range of activities and courses including:**

Creative Writing	Health & Wellbeing	Computers
Newsletter Production	First Aid	Découpage
Literacy	Fire Safety	Gardening
	Mosaics	Art

We also piloted a literacy programme in four services. We continued delivering literacy classes on a one-to-one and group basis in three of our housing services due to demand from residents. In total, 172 individual participants engaged in L&D activities and projects in 2011.

In February we launched the first Scrappy But Happy, a collection of artwork and creative writing from people using Simon services. Roddy Doyle was our guest speaker at the launch which was part of the 2011 Adult Learners' Festival, an annual event to showcase talent and achievements.

We held a recognition ceremony in October for participants of the health and wellbeing workshops. In total, 82 participants received awards, 76 of which were certificates of participation and six were certificates of achievement.

We also published three issues (spring, summer and winter) of the Simon SUN, a newsletter written and produced by people using our services. This newsletter is their platform to share information, interests, creativity and achievements.





## VOLUNTEERING

*In 2011, our full-time volunteering programme expanded to support new and existing services such as Support to Live Independently (SLI), Service User Participation, Learning and Development and the Dublin Simon shops. In total, 51 people came through the full-time programme. Our part-time volunteers grew to over 250 while an estimated 4000 people volunteered their time to take part in our various fundraising activities during 2011.*

### **Pilot programme**

The pilot of the service user volunteer programme also began in 2011. This was a six-month pilot programme where people who are using, or have used, our services undertook a part-time volunteer placement within our Community. The project was very successful and is now an established programme in the organisation.

### **Graduation**

In April, DIT hosted the first formal graduation ceremony for volunteers who completed the Certificate in Volunteering with 10 Dublin Simon volunteers attending to graduate on the day. A total of 20 volunteers completed the certificate in 2011.

### **Volunteer-led services**

The Simon Community Soup Run and Social Club are services that simply could not exist without the ongoing commitment of our part-time volunteers. In addition to these services, part-time volunteers also contribute to social programmes in our treatment services and help run our charity shops. The dedication of our part-time volunteers also enabled us to have a new Tuesday night Social Club for people using our Detox service. Volunteers from Pioneer Investments linked in with the Service User Development Group to get a Saturday Social Club up and running in July.

### **European Year of the Volunteer**

In 2011, to celebrate the European Year of the Volunteer, Dublin Simon's volunteers produced a book featuring stories of how volunteering has touched their lives and impacted the lives of others.

### **Recognition event**

Our 2nd Annual Volunteer Recognition event took place in November with a total of 26 volunteers recognised for over five years service with five of those having volunteered with Dublin Simon for over 25 years.





## HOUSING

### **Rough Sleeper Team**

In 2011, our Rough Sleeper Team became the Regional Contact and Outreach Service (RCOS). The RCOS is an integral element of the Pathway to Home model, providing a seven day service, working with all rough sleepers across the four Dublin Local Authority areas. Throughout the year Dublin Simon's RCOS worked with almost 370 people every month. This service is provided in partnership with Focus Ireland.

### **Mobile Health Clinic**

In May, following a successful pilot in 2010, Dublin Simon, in partnership with Safetynet, Chrysalis and the Order of Malta Ireland, officially launched a mobile health clinic to provide primary healthcare and harm reduction services to people who are homeless and female street workers (see page 9).

### **Peer Initiative**

The Peer Volunteer Initiative in housing services was introduced in the RCOS. The role was developed with the support of the volunteer office to help increase engagement with rough sleepers.

### **Backpack Needle Exchange**

The RCOS team also provide an emergency backpack needle exchange. The service focuses on harm reduction and provided an average of 145 exchanges a month.

### **Emergency Accommodation**

Dublin Simon Community provide low threshold, 24-hour emergency accommodation for men and women who are homeless in Dublin. In 2011, over 900 people secured emergency accommodation, with 459 people accessing these services for the first time. Our 20-bed shelter on Island Street operated beyond capacity for 10 months during 2011 while our 30-bed shelter on Harcourt Street operated beyond capacity for over half of the year. The majority of people staying at both shelters are Irish men under the age of 50.

Both Dublin Simon Community emergency shelters saw many developments during 2011. The first major change came with the advent of the Central Placement Service. This changed how people were referred and meant working closely with Dublin City Council to ensure people using the service continued to receive the best possible support.

In August, our Island Street shelter introduced a three-month bed management system to replace the night-by-night referral process from the Dublin City Council freephone service. The new system saw a greater level of stability provided to people accessing the shelter as they no longer had to check each evening if they were going to be placed in a different shelter or not. Residents soon became more capable of making longer-term plans to move out of homelessness, as they now had a more stable base where they could keep their belongings, send and receive correspondence, play a more inclusive role in the running of the shelter and work more intensively with a keyworker who would support them with their move-on options.

### **Supported Housing**

Dublin Simon Community provide four supported housing units with varying levels of support depending on the individual needs of residents. Our two high support houses on Sean MacDermott Street and North Circular Road had 51 residents in 2011. The majority of residents in both services are Irish with 30% female and 70% male. Long-term homelessness is common among residents in both services with almost 70% of people in Sean MacDermott Street reporting that they were homeless for longer than five years. At NCR almost 80% of residents were homeless for longer than five years. Beds in both high support services are in huge demand as long-term homelessness can lead to a vast array of health issues.

Staff at both services worked extremely hard during 2011 to provide the best possible care to residents. Dublin Simon's team at NCR helped six residents whose support needs had changed, due to the care received there, to move to lower support housing.

Dublin Simon also provides low support housing for 45 people in their Dorset Street and Canal Road services. Residents receive support with day-to-day life skills, health and welfare, education and training. Staff also provide assistance with addressing loneliness and social isolation. Both projects operate a comprehensive keyworking and case management programme which involves carrying out an assessment of the needs of each individual in order to identify key areas where support is required. This is then used by the resident and keyworker to agree a support plan.

### **Support to Live Independently (SLI)**

Originally set up in October 2010, as a key service arising out of the re-configuration of homeless services, Support to Live Independently (SLI) was further developed in 2011. The SLI service, which gradually replaced Dublin Simon's resettlement service, is provided by Dublin Simon Community for the four Dublin Local Authorities. Staff are based in Fingal, Dun Laoghaire Rathdown and South Dublin County and Dublin City Councils.

This service is provided for people moving from homelessness to independent living with the overall aim being to help people integrate into their local community. The service also shows people how to find local and community services and supports in their area. Referrals to the service come through the Local Authority and in 2011 SLI worked with 263 people, with 70% male and 30% female. Some 75% of cases were closed successfully leading to 123 people moving from homelessness into independent living.

### **Dublin City Tenancy Sustainment**

In 2011 the Dublin City Tenancy Sustainment (DCTS) supported 31 people before it was phased out and replaced with the Preventative Tenancy Sustainment Service. This service works to reduce the number of people becoming homeless and is a unique partnership between Dublin Simon Community and Dublin City Council. This co-operation is based on a shared understanding of prevention as the best cure. The service is designed with regard to Dublin Regional Homeless Executive's Pathway to Home model 2010 for all tenants within the Dublin City Council administrative area.

The service works with single people, couples and families and receives referrals from Dublin City Council and other agencies working with people who are at risk of becoming homeless. A Preventative Tenancy Sustainment worker will meet with the prospective client to ensure that the service can meet their expectations. Priority will be given to people most excluded from homeless support services.



## TREATMENT SERVICES

### Detox

Our residential medical alcohol detox unit has a capacity of 11 beds. It is a low threshold service targeted specifically at people who are homeless. The programme is of three weeks duration and the detoxification process is medically supervised by visiting GPs while the unit is staffed 24 hours a day by nursing staff. In 2011 the processes for medication management were revised, a medication audit was introduced and a medication incident reporting tool commenced. The entire unit was refurbished during the year.

Referrals are received from other homeless agencies, treatment addiction centres, GPs and other Simon services. On completion of the detox programme, a substantial number of people using our service transfer to the three month residential alcohol rehabilitation programme.

Dublin Simon Community's rehab service has capacity for 20 people. It is an abstinence based, structured programme which uses a holistic approach, providing a safe and supportive low threshold residential environment. People using the service attend groups on a daily basis and discuss topics such as relapse prevention and life skills. This enables people to develop the skills and confidence to start creating a positive lifestyle that does not include alcohol and to live independently. They also engage in alternative therapies such as yoga and acupuncture.

In 2011, almost 300 people accessed Dublin Simon's treatment services. Almost 90% were male with 55% between the ages of 31 and 49. The importance of follow-on support for people is highlighted by the fact that 135 people leaving residential treatment services required either onsite or visiting support.

### Aftercare

Our aftercare service provide residential and non-residential low threshold post-treatment support programmes. People using the service attend peer support groups twice a week and meet, once a week, with the aftercare addiction support workers to continue building on the progress made in rehab in order to sustain a positive lifestyle that does not include alcohol.

In 2011, 62 people accessed Dublin Simon's aftercare service. Over 85% of these were male and 56% were between the ages of 31 and 49.

Earlier this year we opened Roylands House in Tallaght, which provides accommodation for people who have completed the three-month intensive rehab programme in Ushers Islands and want to continue their recovery. The main objective of the service is to support people to start building supports within the community and establishing meaningful activities such as going to college, starting a job or a volunteer placement. During the year 11 people completed the programme and moved on into their own accommodation in the community.

### Counselling service

Plans were put in place in 2011 to establish the Dublin Simon Counselling Service with the service due to begin in 2012. This service will provide professional counselling to adults who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. It will offer support to people using our services and help them to improve their life skills and self-esteem to enable them to live independently again.





## AREA DEVELOPMENT

*Since 2010 we have established the Simon Community Homeless Support service in Kildare, Wicklow and Meath. The purpose of this service is to conduct assessments, provide tailored support plans and work closely with other service providers to help people who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness. This service is funded solely by the generosity of Simon supporters in these counties and, in relation to the provision of the service in Meath, involves partnership with our colleagues in Dundalk Simon Community.*

### **Who we worked with**

During the year the Simon Community Homeless Support Service engaged with 320 people who were homeless in Wicklow and Kildare.

- 195 people were in Wicklow and 125 were in Kildare
- A minimum of 42 people (18 in Wicklow and 24 in Kildare) were recorded as rough sleeping when presented to the Homeless Service
- The main age profile was between 17 and 29 years of age
- Presentation to our services and drop-in clinics were mainly based in the urban areas of Wicklow town, Bray, Arklow, Athy, Newbridge, Curragh and Sallins
- In Wicklow, 33% require independent living, some with visiting support, while 31% are in need of long-term onsite supported housing

We established and continued to develop our links with a number of local agencies such as:

- Bray Homeless Forum
- Youth of Peace Hostel (Teach Iosa) Athy
- Vincent De Paul Hostel Newbridge
- ARAS Addiction Services Newbridge
- Regional drug task forces in each county
- Sonas Housing

We would like to thank these agencies for their partnership.

### **Working with Local Authorities**

In 2011 we continued to work closely with the Local Authorities in Kildare, Wicklow and Meath resulting in:

- A strategic partnership agreement with Wicklow County Council to establish a Supported Temporary Accommodation with 24-hour onsite support in Wicklow town. While an initial attempt to acquire a property through the Capital Assistance Scheme was unsuccessful, at the end of the year the Local Authority sought funding from the Department of Environment for the purchase of a suitable building. The service is now intended for operation in 2012, with the Board having agreed to fund the project based on the generosity of our supporters in Wicklow

We also worked with Kildare County Council and the Mid East Joint Homelessness Consultative Forum in the Eastern Region on the Review of Homeless Services conducted in June.



### **Recommendations**

In July we presented to the Minister for Housing, detailing the extent of the work we conducted across Kildare, Wicklow and Meath. We also outlined our recommendations for these areas including:

- The provision for 24-hour accommodation with onsite staffing support for those in emergency accommodation
- Increasing resources for visiting support to people moving out of homelessness into their own home based on the success of the SLI model in the Dublin region
- The provision of long-term supported housing for people who are unable to live on their own and require ongoing support
- The piloting of Homeless Action Teams (HATs) to develop a case management process and provide move-on options for people who are homeless



## FUNDRAISING & COMMUNICATIONS

*Fundraising plays a vital role in enabling Dublin Simon Community to provide services in Dublin, Kildare and Wicklow for people who rely on us. On behalf of the Community and the people who need it most, thank you for the support. Thank you to the thousands of donors, volunteers, and to all who gave items to our shops, or supported events and activities during 2011. Without your help we would not be able to survive.*

### Some of this year's highlights

The **Women's Mini-Marathon** continued to be a successful event with families and friends running for Dublin Simon.

The 28th annual **Fun Run** moved to St Mary's Hospital in the Phoenix Park, and despite being changed to a 5km run, was a huge success. Thanks to the band The Shoos we had a fantastic atmosphere at the start line, as well as a great race with over 2000 attendees on the day. Please keep Saturday 6th October 2012 free for another great day out for all the family.

**Sing for Simon** was a great success in 2011, with over 100 groups singing throughout the festive period, including 23 professional choirs. Sing for Simon was launched with a Flash Mob in St Stephens Green which took shoppers by surprise when a group of singers gave a heart-warming rendition of 'All I Want for Christmas' over the balconies of the shopping centre. Thank you to all those choirs, dancers and volunteers who helped us give a great start to the festivities.

Our **Direct Mail Campaigns** had a very generous response and we are extremely grateful to those who support us in these difficult times.

The Simon **House of Cards Appeal** went into its 13th Year and received much needed support from the business community. We would like to thank each company for taking part and helping make a difference to over 5,000 people experiencing homelessness. Also, a special thank you to The Irish Times, Metro Herald, Irish International BBDO and WHPR whose critical help, generous support and leadership make this appeal possible.

The **Food for Simon** programme continued to be a great cost-saving initiative for Dublin Simon in 2011. Thank you to all of the participating companies and service suppliers who make this programme such a success by donating their products or services free of charge.

Throughout 2011 our **Room to Improve** programme went from strength to strength with volunteers from businesses taking time out to make a difference to a room in our services. Groups of volunteers took part painting, decorating and providing furniture and soft furnishings to bedrooms, apartments and communal areas within our services. Thank you to everyone who took part and for helping make our services more homely and welcoming for people accessing them.



Our Communications and Campaigning team continued to grow in 2011 with Dublin Simon Community featuring in numerous print articles and broadcast features and interviews throughout the year. Some key events which the media covered over the year include:

- Simon Open Door
- Mobile Health Clinic
- Simon week
- Fun Run
- Scrappy But Happy
- Sing For Simon

We would like to sincerely thank those media outlets who choose to tell the story of homelessness and through their endeavours have highlighted the ongoing work of the Dublin Simon Community. Dublin Simon would also like to thank the many staff, volunteers and people using our services who have answered when called upon, to represent Simon on public occasions. Real stories from people throughout our Community help us to demonstrate our success.



Dublin Simon Community would like to thank photographers **Conor McCabe, Angela Halpin, Renee Summers** and **Callum Patrick Swift** for giving their time and skills to take the photographs included in this Annual Review.



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