

University Admissions and Support for Care Experienced, Care Leaver and Estranged Students

Presented by University of Edinburgh and University of York



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Setting the scene

Definitions



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From the
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Care-experienced definitions - Scotland

Care-experience(d)

In Scotland we define care experience as any time spent in care up to the age of 18. So we advise that applicants tick the UCAS box to be considered as a care-experienced student regardless of their current age.

Types of care experience that is considered:

- **Foster care** - living with foster carers, on a short-term or long-term basis.
- **Kinship care** - living with extended family, neighbours or family friends (usually agreed with social work).
- **Residential care** - living in a residential care home with other Care Experienced people.
- **Compulsory supervision order (looked after at home)** - staying at home with family, but with support from social services.
- **Compulsory supervision order (looked after away from home)** - living outside of the family home, cared for by foster or kinship carers, prospective adopters, in residential care homes, residential schools or secure units. This includes adopted children who were previously looked after.



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Definitions - England



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Care Experienced

A person who has been in care for **any length of time** * at any age. This includes:

- Those living with foster carers in a foster placement
- Those living in a residential children's home
- Being looked after at home under a supervision order
- Living with friends or relatives in formal kinship care (formally recognised by the Local Authority)
- Living with friends or family in informal kinship care, usually referred to as private fostering
- Being adopted from care (does not include those that have been adopted by a step-parent or sibling)
- Having a Special Guardianship Order
- Those that entered care at age 16 or 17 and were housed in semi-independent housing, including those that have been homeless or are an unaccompanied asylum seeker
- **Someone that was previously defined as a care leaver but has now 'aged out' at 25.**

*Some examples of when young people might be in care for very short periods of time can include:

1. A single parent who needs urgent medical treatment and can't care for their child
2. A child needs protection immediately but stays with foster carers until other family members can be located
3. The parents die and it is unclear who should care for the child

Care Leaver

If you're aged **16 and over** and in care you should be supported to plan for when you turn 18.

When you turn 18 you are called a 'care leaver'. You are expected to be more independent and manage more things for yourself but your local council still has a responsibility to support you up until you are 25.



At the University of York we use the umbrella term
Independent Students

This encompasses Care Experienced Students,
Care Leavers and those that are Estranged.



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Some key differences - England

The support available to Care Experienced students and Care Leavers **varies** depending on the area of the UK and the university.

Unlike Scotland, we are **yet to have a standardised approach across all Local Authorities and universities.**

Financial support from Local Authorities

All care leavers are entitled to a
one off bursary
of at least £2,000

Amount of support from LAs vary

Some LAs pay for university
accommodation costs
while others do not

Estranged definitions

An applicant is considered estranged and will receive support if they are:

- Aged under 25 when they apply
- Will be 25 or under when they start their programme of study
- **They are living without the financial or emotional support of their family due to a breakdown in the relationship**

Estrangement should be from both parents - there can often be overlap with estrangement and 'kinship care'

If the student still has contact with parents so that they can visit siblings or grandparents they can still be considered as estranged.

- Individuals may be estranged and are living independently before entering higher education or may become estranged during their studies.
- People can be both care experienced and estranged.

If a student's parents have both passed away we would also count them as estranged, although they are assessed as 'independent other' rather than 'independent estranged' by Student Finance England.

At the University of York we use discretion in these circumstances and offer them the Estranged Students' Bursary.



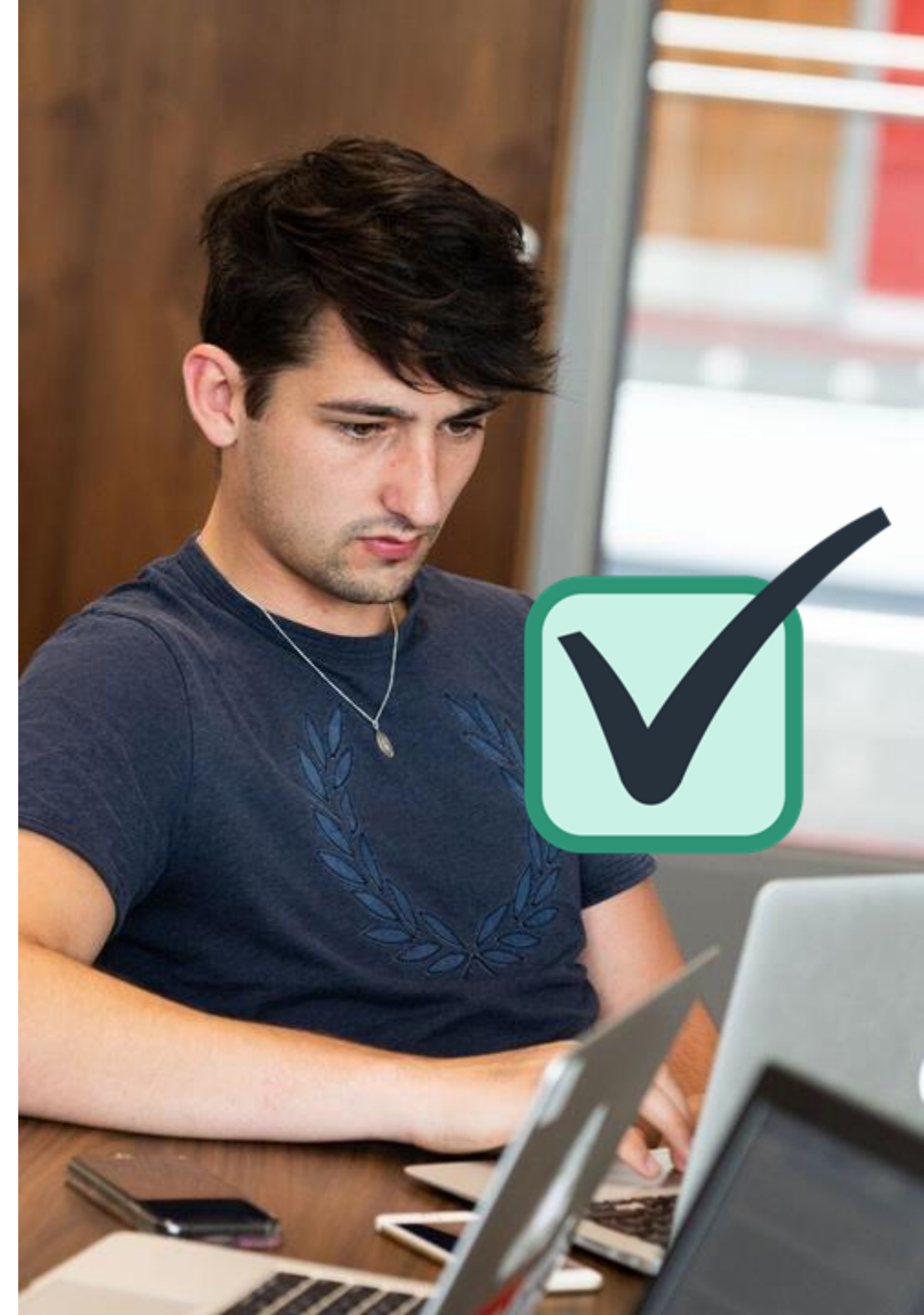
Why should an applicant share that they are care-experienced/estranged?

By **ticking the care-leaver/care-experienced/estranged box on UCAS**, WP/Outreach and Admissions teams are alerted to the individual's circumstances. Universities can then:

- Offer extra information, advice and guidance
- Ensure contextual or adjusted offers are made if appropriate
- Support the individual through the transition process

If an applicant is unsure about their circumstances, there are **named contacts** at the University that can be contacted in advance to reassure applicants and clarify the process.

- Our applicants, offer holders and on programme students use different terms, often in their own language to explain their experiences
- There are often multiple and complex factors affecting the individual
- Our definitions may not be what the student is used to but we use it to draw down support
- In Scotland we do not ask for documentation at the verification process



Data



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How many care experienced/estranged students enter HE?

Care Leavers

- Progression rate entering university by age 19 is **14%**
- Progression rate into high tariff institutions is just **2%**

Estranged Students

- **~3,000** students entering HE each year (but may be higher)

All other young people

- Progression rate entering University by age 19 is **47%**
- Progression rate into high tariff institutions is **14%**

The University of Edinburgh – a growing population

Academic Year	Entrants	All UK	Scottish
17/18	6	6	1
18/19	13	13	7
19/20	20	20	11
20/21	20	20	13
21/22	40	40	17
22/23	64	64	39
23/24	61	61	40

UCAS applicant breakdown

- A total of **74,240 UK 18-year-olds** have shared their individual circumstances following the introduction of seven new widening participation questions to the UCAS application for 2023 entry onwards – equating to **23.2% of all UK 18-year-olds**.
- **Applicants have responded to at least one of the new questions sharing circumstances such as:**
 - Receiving free school meals (**43,250**)
 - Having caring responsibilities (**11,590**)
 - Being estranged (**3,200**)
 - Having a parent in the armed forces (**12,450**)
 - Declaring themselves as a refugee or asylum seeker (**2,770**)
 - Being a parent (890) or having served in the armed forces (**90**).
- The number of UK applicants sharing **care experience** has **doubled** since the question was first introduced (2008).
- In 2023, **8915** applicants shared they had been in care. **1.5%** of all UK applicants shared a care background and **45%** had 3+ years of care experience.



Barriers faced in progressing to Higher Education

- Disruption to education e.g. moving schools/areas
- High rate of school exclusions
- Housing instability
- Lack of support systems
- Lack of emotional support
- Mental health issues/past trauma
- Stigma and stereotypes
- More likely to have a disability
- Language barriers
- Low attainment
- Financial hardship
- Practicalities e.g. moving in
- Lack of awareness about support/ resources

To address these barriers, universities and colleges are increasingly recognizing the importance of providing targeted support and resources for care-experienced students.



Graduate outcomes - England

- “Care-experienced graduates were somewhat **less likely to have received first or upper-second class degrees**, although a clear majority still did so (**70.1%**, compared with **79.8%**)”

(Harrison et al., 2022).

- “While those with care experience are **substantially less likely to enter HE**, the findings show that those who complete an undergraduate programme are 1.274 times **more likely to progress** to postgraduate study than their non-care-experienced peers.”

(Baker et al., 2022)

- “**70.1%** of care-experienced graduates had a positive graduate outcome, compared with **72.3%** of other graduates; this difference was **not statistically significant**. We take a positive graduate outcome to be either working in a professional role and/or studying on a postgraduate or professional course.”

(Harrison et al., 2022).

Trends: subject and HE destinations - England

- *“In 2022, care experienced applicants were **69%** more likely to apply for nursing or midwifery than other applicants and were **167%** more likely to apply for health and social care. Conversely, those without care experience were **73%** more likely to apply for physics, astronomy, or chemistry.”*
- *“In 2022, care experienced applicants were **112%** more likely to apply to university with an Access to HE diploma than university applicants who were not care experienced, who in turn were **77%** more likely to apply using only A-Level qualifications than care experienced students.*
- *“Those applying to university with qualifications such as **BTECs and Access to HE diplomas** are more likely to apply to lower tariff universities and less likely to apply for STEM subjects or traditional humanities such as geography, history and economics.”*

(Civitas, 2023)

So, what are universities in England doing?

- All English universities wishing to charge fees above the basic level must have an Access & Participation Plan (APP) that sets out how they will improve equality of opportunity for underrepresented groups to access, succeed in and progress from higher education. The plan must be approved by the Office for Students (OfS).
- The OfS states that all universities must include care experienced students in their APPs and prioritise the needs of this group.
- The shift from 'care leaver' to 'care experienced.'



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Pre entry support

Contextual admissions at the **University of Edinburgh**



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Contextual admissions

At the University of Edinburgh we use 4 factors when making widening access offers:

- Where the applicant lives (home postcode)
- The School or College they go to
- If they are care experienced, or a refugee, or asylum seeker
- If they have completed a SWAP or UoE Access Programme, or recognised bridging programme

We make two different types of widening access offers, called “Plus Flag” and “Flag”.

- Plus Flag will be considered at our minimum entry requirements and will be given 10% uplift in UCAT score for Medicine
- Flag will be considered at our standard entry requirements like all other students but will be prioritised for an offer in most cases



Pre entry support

University of York

How is York working to change this?



*“Just **31%** of care experienced university applicants in 2022 knew that there was support available for care experienced students in higher education before they started the application process.”*

(Civitas, 2023)



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Pre-entry Support Team



Vanessa
Manager



Asha
Graduate Coordinator



Chloé
Officer

+ 3 Student Interns who are current Independent Students at York

What do we offer: **VIP visit package**

Includes:

- Free return travel
- Overnight accommodation with breakfast
- Lunch with one of the team
- A campus tour
- A bespoke visit to an academic department with time to speak with an admissions tutor, student or academic

Available for any estranged/care experienced person (**plus one guest**) who is planning to start university in the **next two years**.

Bespoke visit available at **any time in the year**.

After using our VIP Visit Package, they do not have to apply to the University of York.



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What do we offer: **bespoke advice and support sessions**

Support and advice covers:

- General information about university
- Student options
- Finance
- Student support
- Application
- Personal statements

These sessions can be provided:

- In person (on campus/in the community)
- Over the phone
- Through video call



In person sessions can include a **campus tour** with one of our current students.



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Other support available

- Young people in care will get **priority** places on one of our **FREE** Access and Outreach programmes, which are working to ensure that all prospective students are **informed about their options**.



- **ON TRACK** - local outreach partnership programme
- Partnership working with local authorities

- **FostertheirFuture** - 6 online workshops available to any foster carer in England

- A **FREE** gym membership at our two on-campus sport centres (available for those who are 16-25 and live in York or North Yorkshire)



- **Contextual offers and dedicated support during Clearing (separate phone line)**
 - Admissions staff can consider the applicant for a **contextual offer**. These take social and economic factors that may have prevented an applicant from reaching their true academic potential into account. At the University of York, a contextual offer is usually **two grades below** the standard offer e.g. **ABB** instead of **AAA**.



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Post entry support

Student lifecycle approach / corporate parenting plan
at the **University of Edinburgh**



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Student lifecycle approach

Edinburgh Cares Team



Transition:

- 1:1 in person / on campus meetings and online 1:1 support
- Bespoke pre-arrival and induction sessions
- Welcome packs on arrival
- Staff Mentors

Pre and point of application:

- School programmes and STSS
- 1:1 in person / on campus meetings and online 1:1 support

On programme:

- Weekly newsletter
- Appointment booking (online or in-person options)
- Co-ordinate support services on students' behalf (internal and external)
- Advocacy, including influencing policy and procedure
- Monthly events programme
- 365 Accommodation
- Access Edinburgh Award
- Participation Grant
- Insight programme and paid internships

Moving on:

- Graduation support
- Alumni community

University of Edinburgh Corporate Parenting Plan 2024

a whole University approach



Develop targeted outreach and pre-application programmes and systems



Improve the navigation and signposting experience



Improve the accommodation offer



Enhance the financial support offer



Build a strong student community





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Post entry support

University of York



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Support for current Independent Students

Transitional Support:

- Step Ahead Induction (early September): 2 days/1 night, optional, **free of charge**
- The University will **pay for travel costs for moving** to York in their first year (*capped at £135*)
- Welcome letter and information from Student Support
- Buddying Scheme
- Luggage can be provided to move to York
- Kitchen and bedding packs



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Accommodation support

- **Accommodation subsidy on campus or off campus** - £130 per week. For legal care leavers only currently
- **Flexible** accommodation contracts
- **Guaranteed accommodation** for 52 weeks of the year
- Prioritised for the accommodation of **their choice**
- Advanced payment (**£200**) to secure room can be deferred until October
- **FREE secure storage** for during holidays
- Rent Guarantee Scheme for private sector accommodation (university acts as the guarantor)



Step Ahead
Programme



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Financial support

Year 1
£3,000

Year 2
£2,500

Final Year
£2,500

An additional **£1,000** to be paid in term three to assist with graduation and interview costs
Reduced by 50% for full year placements or study abroad years.

Currently available to UK undergraduate students who are under 25 on the first day of their course and meet the legal definition of a 'care leaver.'



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Consistent support for Independent Students

- **Socials** (both in person and online)
- Newsletters
- Support drop in sessions
- Pastoral and budgeting support
- Opportunities for paid work as Student Ambassadors and interns
- **FREE** off peak gym membership/reduced full membership
- **Careers advice** and employment support



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Small expressions of care

- Christmas present sacks, and a handwritten card from the Vice-Chancellor
- Christmas meal
- Handwritten birthday cards
- **Celebrating** National Care Leavers' Week and Estranged Students Solidarity Week
- **FREE** Freshers Pass and **FREE** college merchandise
- **FREE** access to the College Music Scheme (access to facilities)
- **Graduation party** - attended by the Vice-Chancellor



Resources

and practical opportunities you can encourage...



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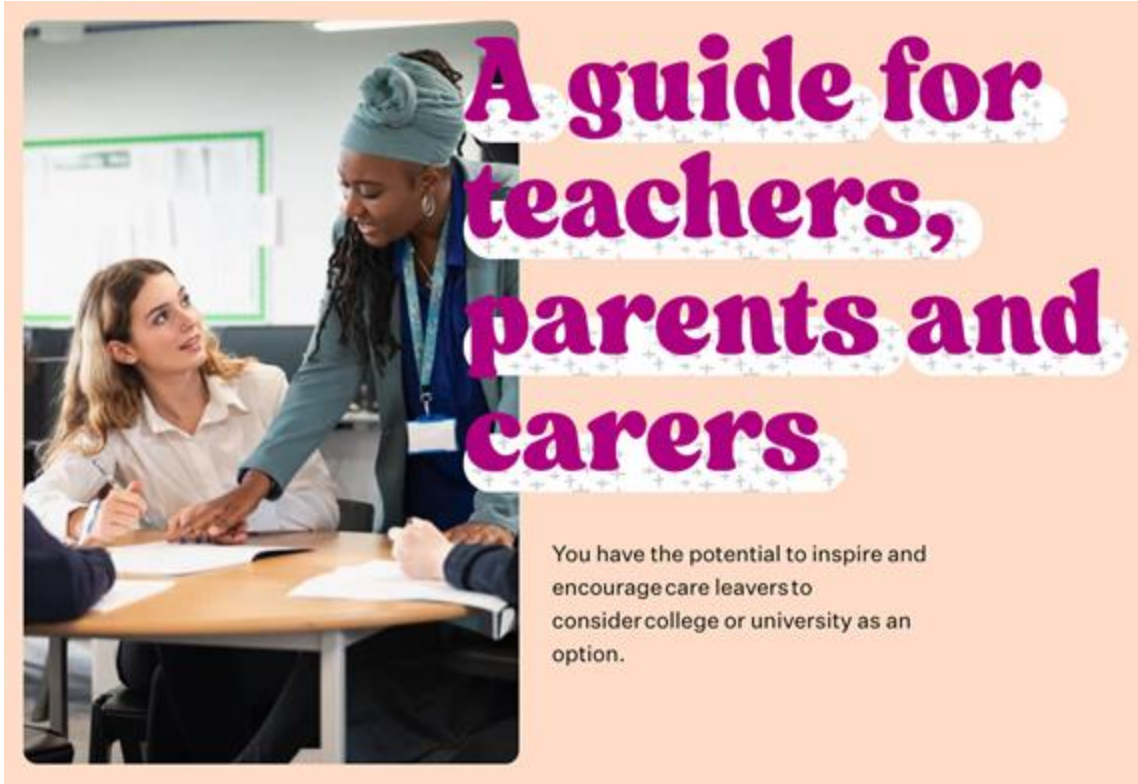
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The **Propel website**, run by **Become**, Provides fantastic resources for those supporting young Independent Students.

A promotional graphic for a guide. It features a photograph of a woman in a blue blazer and headwrap leaning over a desk to assist a student. The background is a light orange color. Overlaid on the image is the title 'A guide for teachers, parents and carers' in large, bold, purple, rounded letters. Below the title is a short paragraph of text.

A guide for teachers, parents and carers

You have the potential to inspire and encourage care leavers to consider college or university as an option.

- The **Propel guide** provides **useful and easy ways** to integrate conversations around college and university into everyday life.
- Inspire them to look at their local universities and see how they can get involved or access facilities.
- Seek Widening Participation (WP) programmes at universities (their place will be prioritised)
- Discuss the opportunity to attend an Open Day
- See what online resources/tasters universities offer
 - **FutureLearn** (FREE courses - created by real academics from a variety of universities!)

Support for Care Experienced Students at Russell Group Institutions: [Information breakdown document](#)

- **Care Leavers:**
[Advice from UCAS for applying to university](#)
- **Estranged Students:**
[Advice from UCAS for students applying to university without parental support](#)



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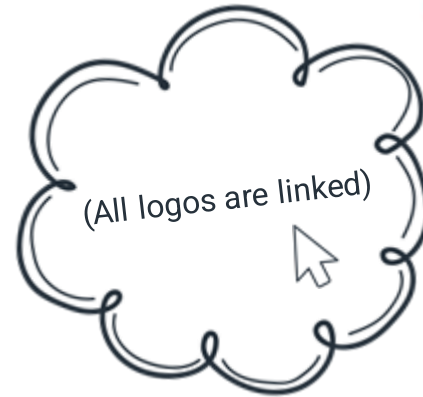
BECOME.

THE CHARITY FOR CHILDREN IN CARE
AND YOUNG CARE LEAVERS



NNECL

National Network for the
Education of Care Leavers



write, speak, share



Rees

HELPING CARE EXPERIENCED PEOPLE THRIVE



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Thank you for your time today!

We all have a responsibility to support these students.
We do this best **together**.

Over to you for any
questions



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Contact us

We look forward to support you
and your students further!



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