

The MTPT Project Coaching Impact Survey

October 2023

Introduction

Women aged 30-39 are the largest demographic to leave teaching every year: in 2022, 8,965 women in this age bracket left – a figure higher than 24-29 year olds of both genders, put together (Schools Workforce Census, 2022).. For half of these teachers, an aspect associated with motherhood contributes to their decision to leave (MTPT Project, 2021).

Female teachers in this same age bracket also make up a quarter of our workforce and there are, in fact, more female teachers aged 30-39 than there are male teachers of all ages (Schools Workforce Census, 2022).. 55% of these women are mothers, a figure that increases to 81% by the time they reach their forties (TeacherTapp, 2023).

The MTPT Project's Accreditation – a two-module programme for teachers on maternity leave, comprising of self-directed CPD and six sessions of 1:1 coaching – was piloted in 2018. An additional programme, The MTPT Project's Parental Leave coaching quickly evolved from the Accreditation. This alternative programme included the six sessions of coaching, but without the additional paperwork required for Accreditation certification.

Initially, the Accreditation and Parental Leave coaching were designed to support teachers during their maternity leave and as they returned to work, improving their wellbeing and empowering them by acknowledging their ongoing commitment to their professional identities. The coaching format enabled participants to set their own goals, make their own choices, regain a sense of control over their personal and professional lives, and benefit from the close listening ear of a qualified coach.

“At the time of starting coaching I felt a weight of pressure to make motherhood and work successful yet felt I wasn't doing either well enough. I felt I had compromised family life after the birth of my first child and was determined not to do that again.” – Primary Headteacher, Greater London

“I struggled with being at home after the 'busyness' of work. MTPT coaching gave me a sense of purpose while I was off.” – Assistant Headteacher (PRU), Greater London

Other than individual wellbeing, we were curious at The MTPT Project, of the impact that 1:1 coaching would have on the retention of the key mother-teacher and women aged 30-39 demographics, and on gender equality in an industry where an 18.1% (WomenEd et al., 2021)



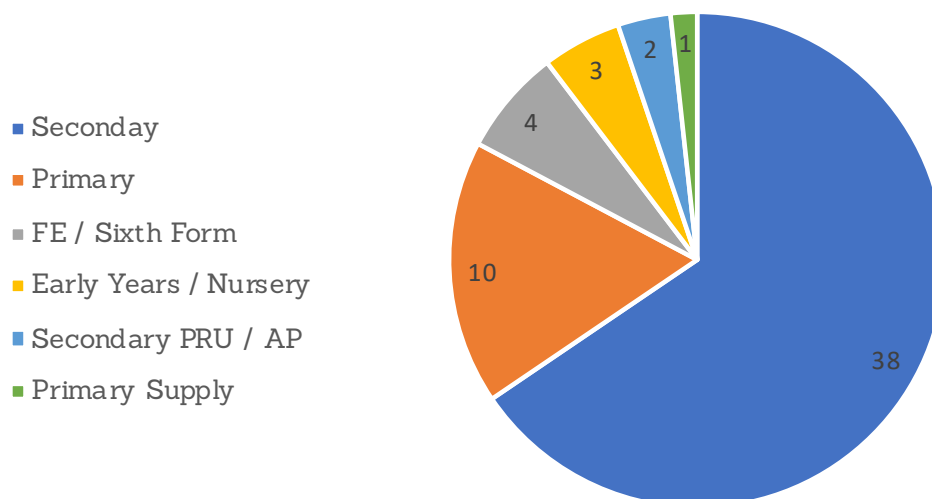
gender pay gap exists, and women are disproportionately underrepresented at senior leadership level (Schools Workforce Census, 2022).

Between 2018 and 2020 104 female participants began 1:1 coaching with The MTPT Project. The pilot was boosted by DfE Equality and Diversity funding in 2018, which opened up 48 funded places in Lancashire and West Yorkshire, and Hertfordshire. 58 of these participants completed the 2023 Impact Survey, a return rate of 56%.

Key Characteristics of Coaching Participants

In this first section of the report, we outline the key characteristics of the 58 coaching participants who responded to our Impact Survey.

Participants' School Phase



Despite there being a higher percentage of women in the primary workforce, between 2018-2020 participants were predominantly from the secondary workforce.

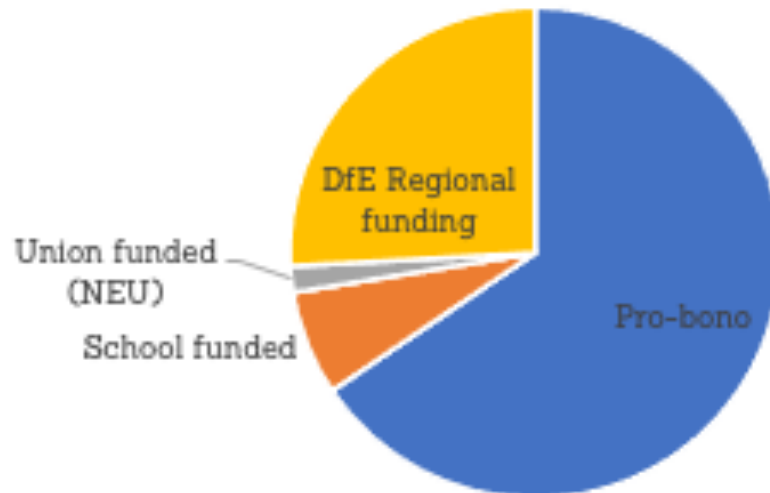
Within the first two years of delivery, The MTPT Project relied on a pro-bono coaching model.

Whilst this was appreciated by participants, it was an unsustainable model for a small charity, and was phased out in 2020.

Since this decision, we have seen a significant reduction in the uptake of 1:1 coaching, which provides a strong argument for DfE, MAT or school-level funding models.

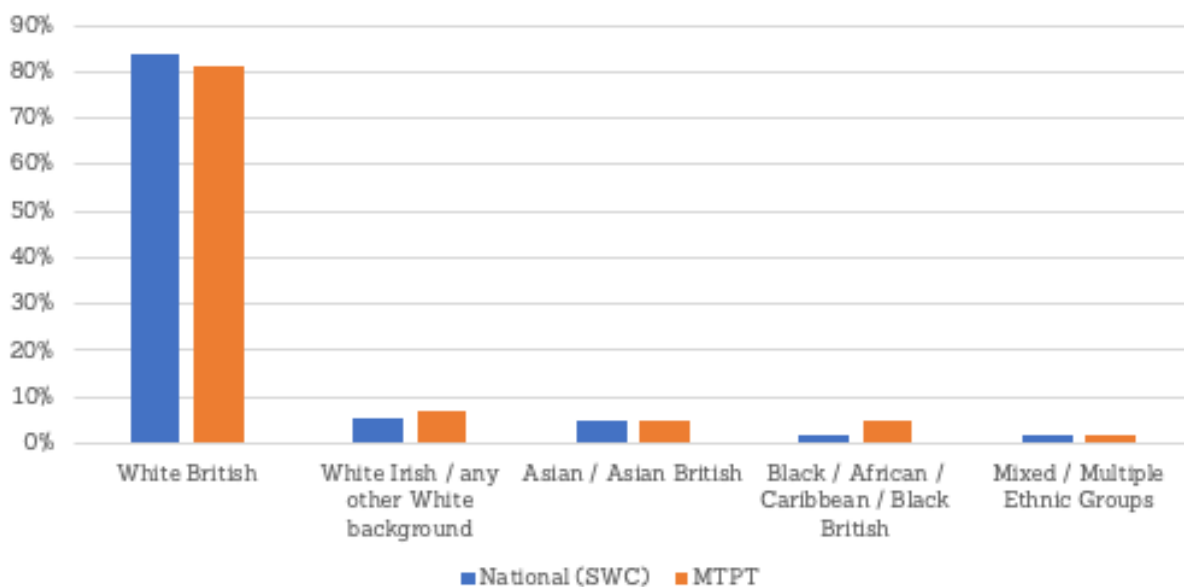


Funding Model



Encouragingly, ethnicity data is representative of the wider teacher workforce, with slight over-representation of participants from Black / African / Caribbean / Black British and White Irish / other White backgrounds. This mostly reflects the findings of The MTPT Project’s 2023 Diversity and Inclusion report, although Asian / Asian British were *underrepresented* according to the data in the 2023 D&I report (MTPT, 2023a).

Ethnicity of Participants



What impact does 1:1 coaching over the maternity and immediate return to work period have?

In this second section of the report, we explore the impact of 1:1 Accreditation and Parental Leave coaching against three key measurables:

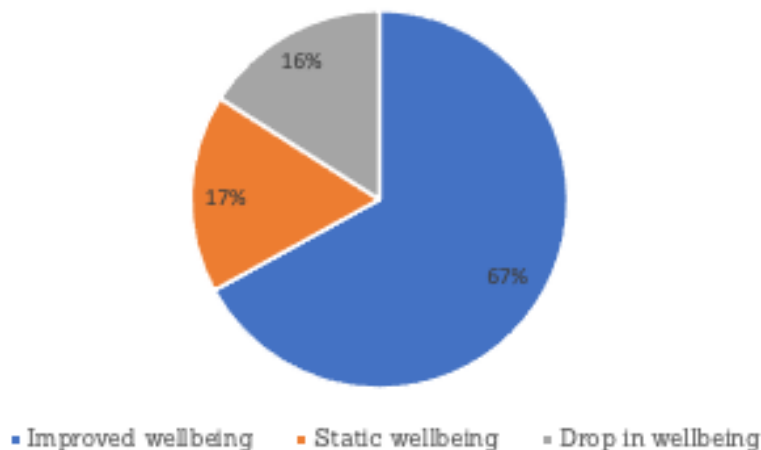
- Wellbeing
- Occupational mobility (including progression and salary)
- Retention

What impact does coaching have on mother-teachers' wellbeing?

The maternity and immediate return to work period are a time of significant vulnerability for new mothers. Indeed, post-natal depression affects 1 in 10 mothers (NHS, 2023) and half of female teachers aged 30-39 who leave the profession every year do so because of poor mental health or wellbeing (MTPT, 2021).

Of the teachers in this “leaver” demographic who participated in the qualitative interviews of The MTPT Project’s 2018-2021 study, 16% referred to a negative mental health experience during their maternity leave (MTPT, 2022).

Participant Wellbeing



In 67% of cases, participants' wellbeing rating had improved 2-5 years after starting 1:1 coaching with The MTPT Project, and 14 of the 58 participants (24%) specifically credited the coaching for this improvement.

Other reasons for improved wellbeing included the easier nature of parenting older children (including more sleep), happier working environments following a move to a new school, improved work-life balance, increased confidence having been back teaching / leading for a number of years, or leaving teaching altogether.



Reasons for a drop in wellbeing included ongoing lack of support for working mothers, ill health, challenges in new roles and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

I loved coaching. It enabled me to have an adult, professional conversation within a safe space that understood my needs at that time.” – Professional Co-ordinating Mentor, Greater London

“Quite honestly, it made a huge impact. I began to see myself as valued colleague and not a hindrance or inadequate because I was part-time. That can’t be measured, really.” – Primary Teacher, Yorkshire

Key Findings: wellbeing

1:1 coaching with The MTPT Project has an unarguably positive impact on mother-teachers’ wellbeing at a time when they are vulnerable to poor mental health.

The fact that – according to The MTPT Project’s 2018-2020 study – half of the women aged 30-39 who had left teaching leave did so due to poor mental health could mean that coaching could eventually have a positive impact on the retention of mother-teachers.

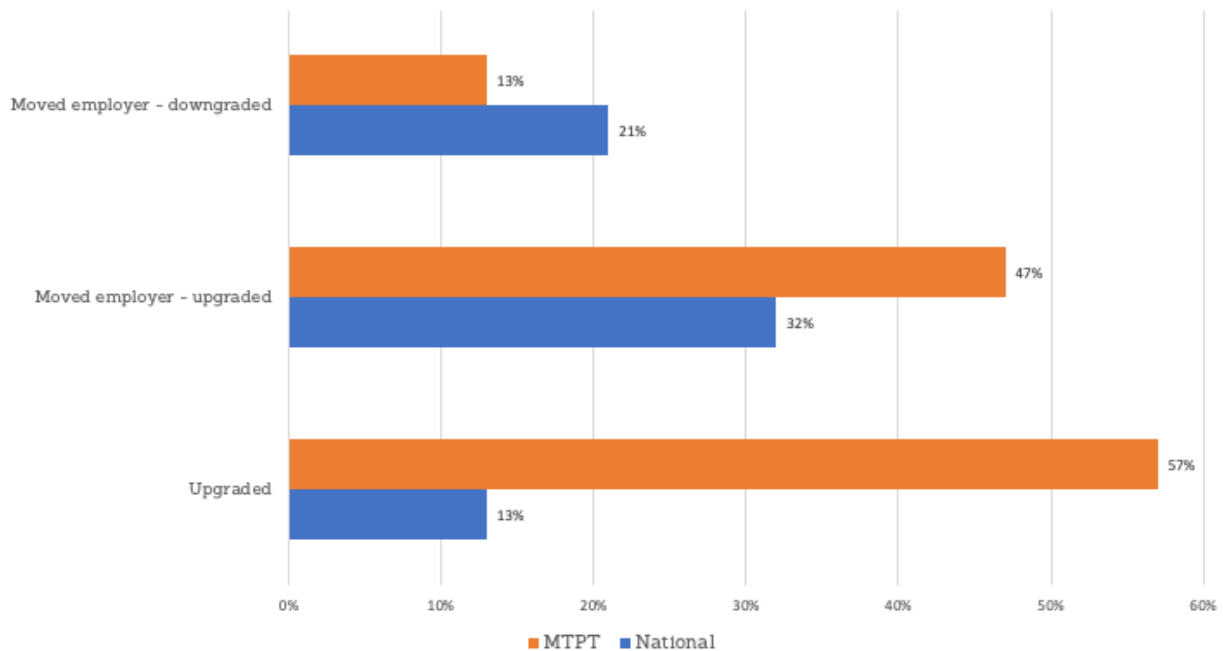
What impact does coaching have on mother-teachers’ occupational mobility?

In the Government Equalities Office’s 2019 report, *Employment pathways and occupational change after childbirth*, occupational status is defined by involvement in the workforce, professional responsibilities, pay, the potential for progression opportunities, movement to new employers, and the impact of part-time working (Harkness et al., 2019).

Nationally, 13% of mothers ‘upgrade’ their occupational status and move up the career ladder 3-5 years following childbirth, whereas 18% ‘downgrade’. When mothers moved employer, 32% upgrade and 21% downgrade (Harkness et al., 2019).



Occupational Mobility



In comparison, 57% of MTPT participants had secured a promoted position 3-5 years following the commencement of their 1:1 coaching with 69% of total participants receiving a salary increase.

60% of MTPT participants moved schools within the 3-5 years following the start of their 1:1 coaching, with 47% upgrading their employment status, and just 13% downgrading.

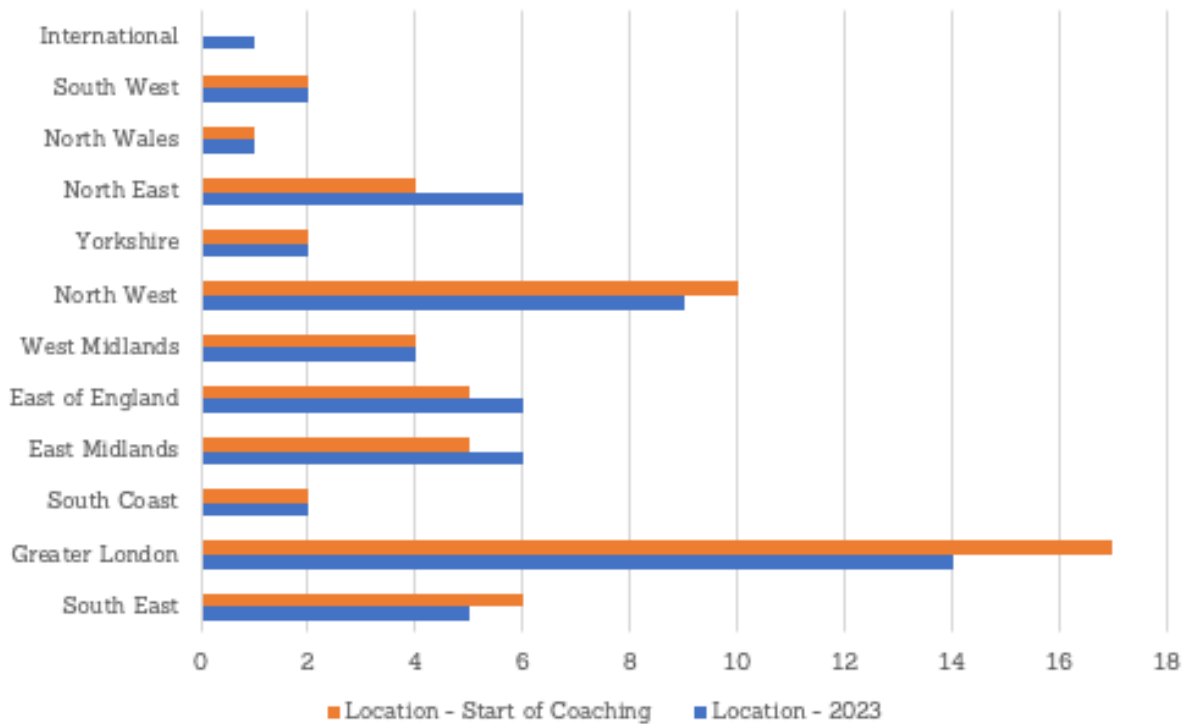
“I was ready to leave teaching as I thought it was too much. I’m now very happy that I didn’t because finding the right school gave me the experience I needed to develop.” – English Teacher, North East

For five participants, the school move was influenced by a relocation. Three further participants stated that they had relocated shortly before starting their coaching programme – i.e. during their maternity leave.

Eight of the nine teachers that mentioned relocating in their survey responses, (including relocations within the same region) were teaching / leading in a UK state school, on an extended career break, or working outside of education when they began their coaching programme. Six participants were still teaching / leading in a UK state school 3-5 years later following their relocation.



Participant Location and Relocation



The largest exodus is seen from London to other regions, which is reflected in the reasons that participants gave for relocating: to access more affordable and larger houses, wanting to be closer to family, wanting a better quality of life and because they had received a promotion.

Key Findings: occupational mobility

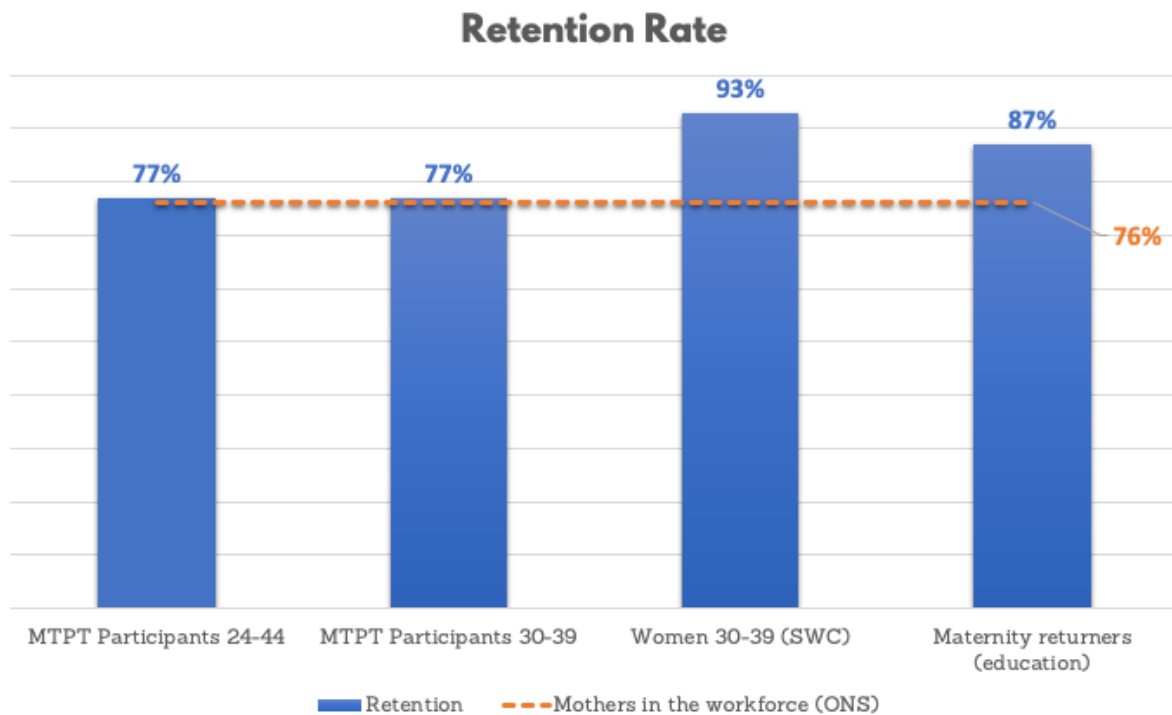
1:1 coaching over the maternity, immediate and extended return to work period has a positive impact on mother-teacher's occupational mobility and is therefore a key tool in diversifying the teacher workforce, particularly at leadership level.

Coaching is a key tool for schools, MATs and other organisations who want to reduce their gender pay gap. It supports women to overcome the barriers presented by the motherhood penalty, and can therefore increase gender equality, particularly at leadership level.

"I am certain that I would not have applied for headship without coaching. It has increased my confidence, given me skills and allowed me to become a better more reflective practitioner, mother and partner." – Head Teacher, London



Does coaching retain mother-teachers?



Nationally, 76% of mothers are in paid employment. This figure is slightly lower for mothers of children aged 0-4, and increases to 80% for mothers of children aged 5 or older (Statham et al., 2022; Murphy et al., 2022).

Approximately half of all teachers are mothers, with available data suggesting that 55% of female teachers aged 30-39, and 81% aged 40-49 are mothers (TeacherTapp 2023). MTPT Project data suggests that the percentage of mother-teachers aged 30-39 could be much higher at between 87-90% (MTPT 2021) but this data is not collected centrally as part of the Schools Workforce Census (SWC) and so no fully reliable figure is currently available.

“I could have left the profession without the inner grit and reflection on my values that coaching gave me.” – History and Sociology Teacher, East of England

The SWC shows that – despite being the largest demographic to leave teaching every year – 93% of women aged 30-39 are retained in the state education sector (Schools Workforce Census, 2022). DWP data reveals that education has one of the highest maternity returner rates at 87% (Chanfreau

et al., 2011), however MTPT research has suggested that this figure may not be entirely accurate due to the small sample size in the DWP report, and the existence of a claw-back period for teachers’ enhanced maternity pay (MTPT, 2022).



All 58 participants included in this report received 1:1 coaching with The MTPT Project during their maternity leave and over the first 12-18 months of their return to work.

Across all MTPT participants, 77% were still teaching or leading in a state school (or had returned to state school teaching following an extended career break) 3-5 years following the start of their 1:1 coaching. Amongst 30-39 year-olds, the figure was the same.

All coaching participants were in paid employment at the time of completing the survey.

Key Findings: retention

MTPT data so far reflects the findings of wider studies that coaching *on its own* will not guarantee the retention of mothers within education, although it does support with keeping mothers in the wider workforce.

Instead, coaching is one valuable part of the more complex infrastructure needed to support mother-teachers to remain in the workforce. 'Clear development paths', 'flexible working', positive organizational cultures, and appropriate work-life balance are also needed to complete this infrastructure (Bussell, 208), with equal and improved parental pay and leave for both parents, more affordable and accessible childcare and greater access to development opportunities whilst on maternity leave, being key to supporting mother-teachers in particular (MTPT, 2023b).

"It made me so hopeful ... but the reality was depressing. Men and childless women seem to be leading the schools I am in ... I look around and just feel like it's a boys club ... I've got so much to offer the state sector but I feel rejected and angry that I've been pushed out." – English Teacher, Greater London

"The coaching gave me confidence to request part time and when this wasn't financial viable for my family circumstances gave me confidence to request full time. Now I am full time but am able to request flexible arrangements around my young family." – FE English Teacher, North Wales

Where coaching *did* lead to retention, it was because participants were empowered to influence structural change – either by negotiating flexibility, challenging unhelpful practices, applying for promoted positions, or moving schools.



Recommendations for MATs, Local Authorities and School Groups

1. Invest in 1:1 coaching for staff over the maternity and immediate return to work period with an external coaching provider
2. Outline key policies and processes in the case of relocation or resignation, to enable mother-teachers to continue to access this coaching support
3. Provide career break returners with coaching as part of their recruitment and induction package
4. Establish an organisational infrastructure that supports returning, and working mothers – flexible working, equal and improved parental leave and pay, manageable workload, progression opportunities
5. Support maternity returners with the cost and access to childcare provision



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