

The Audit Plan for Merseyside Local Government Pension Fund

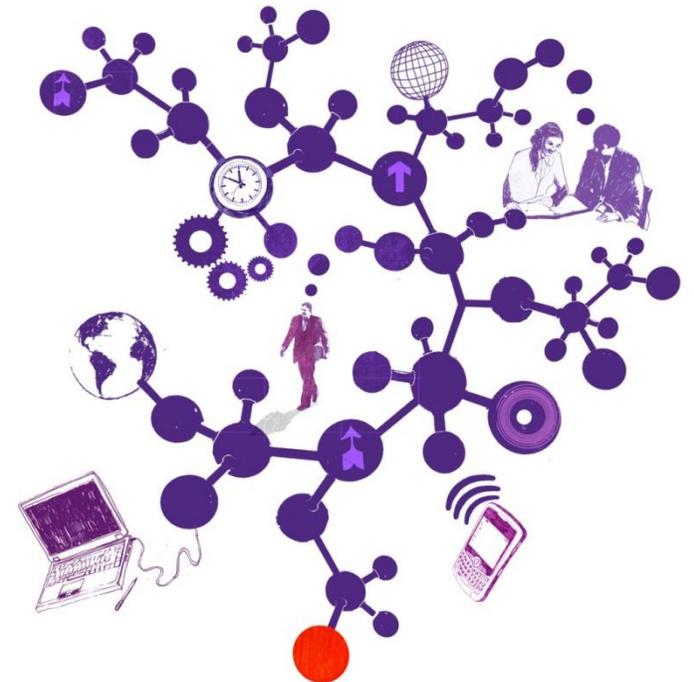
Year ended 31 March 2015

March 2015

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Understanding your business

In planning our audit we need to understand the challenges and opportunities the Pension Fund is facing. We set out a summary of our understanding below.

Challenges/opportunities

1. New governance arrangements

- The new governance regulations have introduced further changes for LGPS which take effect from April 2015. These introduce a Local Pension Board for each fund. These boards will work with the administering authority to help ensure compliance and effective governance and administration of the scheme. In addition the regulations also establish a National Scheme Advisory Board and a funding cap.
- There is a potential for overlap for many schemes between existing Pension Committees and the new Local Pension Boards, with a real challenge for administering authorities to meet the statutory requirements, but in a way which delivers visible improvements in the governance of the funds.

2. Pensions Regulator

- The Public Services Pension Act also provides for the extension of the work of The Pensions Regulator to the LGPS from 1 April 2015.
- The Fund will need to monitor compliance with requirements set by the regulator.

3. Future structural reform

- In May 2014 DCLG consulted on the opportunities for collaboration, cost savings and efficiencies in the management of LGPS funds. While the outcome of this is still awaited there is clearly a growing momentum for structural change.
- In the meantime the growing use of shared arrangements is delivering real benefits to funds through reduced costs, increasing access to relevant expertise and improved quality.

4. Local government outsourcing

- As many council's look to outsourcing and the set up of external companies as a more cost effective way to provide services, the impact on the LGPS fund needs to be considered.
- Funds need to carefully consider requests for admission to the scheme and where possible mitigate any risks to the fund.
- An increased number of admitted bodies may increase the risks for the fund in the event of those bodies failing. It is also likely to increase the administration costs of the scheme overall.

Our response

- We will continue our on-going dialogue with officers around their governance arrangements.
- We will share good practice that is emerging with officers.

- We will share our experience of working with The Pensions Regulator.
- We will discuss with officers any changes that have been made to existing practices for the fund to demonstrate compliance.

- We will share good practice in reducing administration costs through collaboration or other initiatives.
- We will discuss any proposals for structural change and their impact on the Pension Fund with officers.

- Through our regular liaison with officers we will consider the impact of any planned large scale TUPE transfers of staff and the effect on the Pension Fund.

Developments relevant to your business and the audit

In planning our audit we also consider the impact of key developments in the sector and take account of national audit requirements as set out in the Code of Audit Practice ('the code') and associated guidance.

Developments and other requirements

1. LGPS 2014

- During 2013/14 funds have implemented LGPS 2014. This has moved LGPS from a final salary scheme to a career average scheme one year ahead of other public sector schemes .
- Under this new scheme, the calculations of benefits are likely to be more complex, as are the arrangements for ensuring the correct payment of contributions.
- LGPS 2014 has put a greater emphasis on the employer providing detailed information to the scheme administrator, while also requiring the scheme to have enhanced information systems in place to maintain and report on this data.

2. Financial Reporting

- There are no significant changes to the Pension Fund financial reporting framework as set out in the CIPFA Code of Practice for Local Authority Accounting (the Code) for the year ending 31 March 2015, however the Pension Fund needs to ensure on-going compliance with the Code .

3. Financial Pressures

- Pension funds are increasingly disinvesting from investment assets to fund cash flow demands on benefit and leaver payments that are not covered by contributions and investment income.
- Pension fund investment strategies need to be able to respond to these demands as well as the changing nature of the investment markets.

4. Accounting for Fund management costs

- The Code's only requirement for the disclosure of the costs of managing the pension fund is that management costs in relation to a retirement benefit plan are disclosed on the face of the fund account.
- CIPFA have recently produced guidance aimed at improving the transparency of management cost data and have suggested that funds should include in the notes to the accounts a breakdown of those management costs across the areas of investment management expenses, administration expenses and oversight and governance costs.

Our response

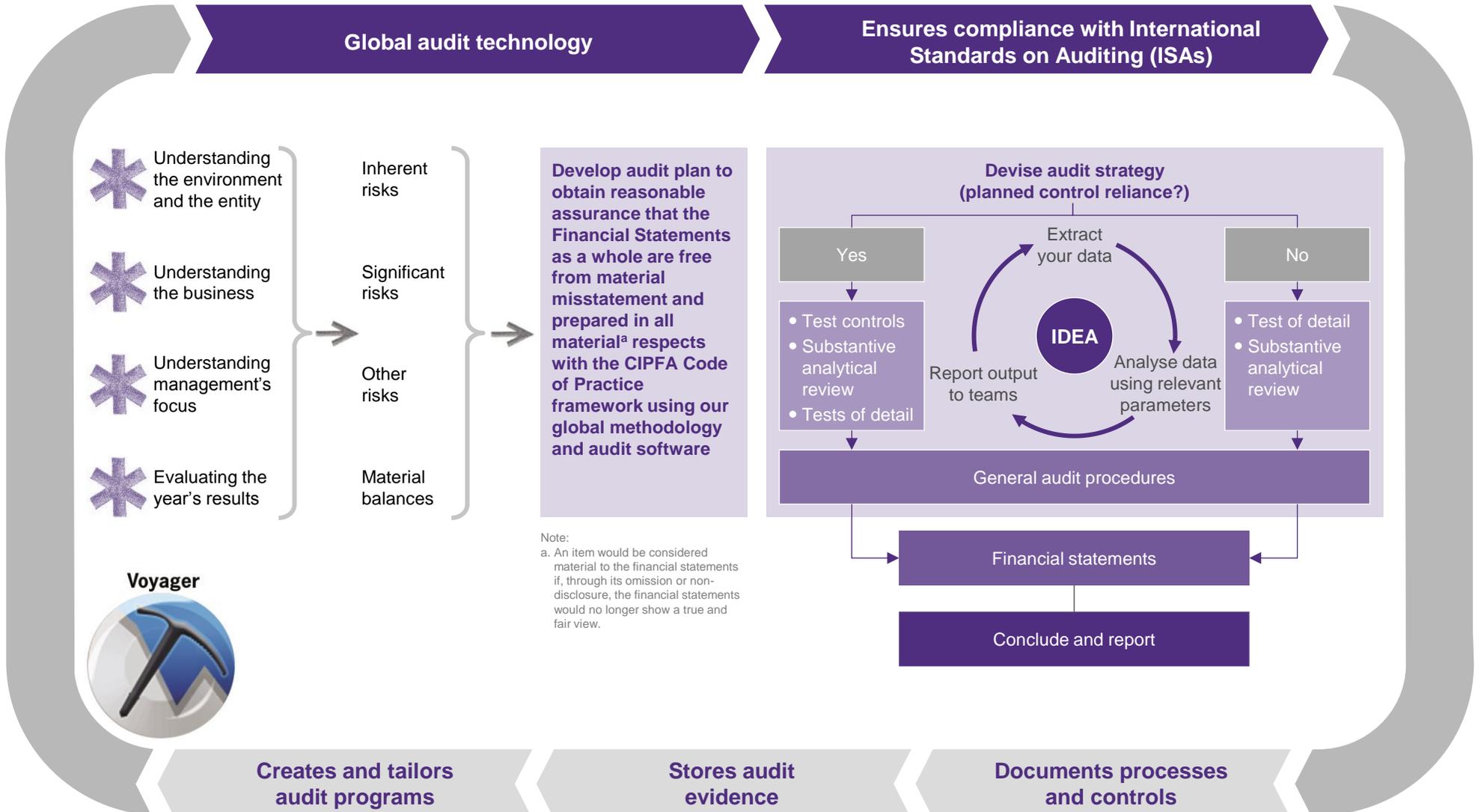
- We will consider changes made to the pensions administration control environment in response to LGPS data requirements.

- We will ensure that the Pension Fund financial statements comply with the requirements of the Code through our substantive testing.

- We will monitor any changes to the Pension Fund investment strategy through our regular meetings with management.
- We will consider the impact of changes on the nature of investments held by the Pension Fund and adjust our testing strategy as appropriate.

- We will discuss with officers any planned changes to the financial statements in response to this guidance.

Our audit approach



Significant risks identified

'Significant risks often relate to significant non-routine transactions and judgmental matters. Non-routine transactions are transactions that are unusual, either due to size or nature, and that therefore occur infrequently. Judgmental matters may include the development of accounting estimates for which there is significant measurement uncertainty' (ISA 315).

In this section we outline the significant risks of material misstatement which we have identified. There are two presumed significant risks which are applicable to all audits under auditing standards (International Standards on Auditing – ISAs) which are listed below:

Significant risk	Description	Substantive audit procedures
The revenue cycle includes fraudulent transactions	<p>Under ISA 240 there is a presumed risk that revenue may be misstated due to the improper recognition of revenue.</p> <p>This presumption can be rebutted if the auditor concludes that there is no risk of material misstatement due to fraud relating to revenue recognition.</p>	<p>Having considered the risk factors set out in ISA240 and the nature of the revenue streams at Merseyside Local Government Pension Scheme ,we have determined that the risk of fraud arising from revenue recognition can be rebutted, because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • there is little incentive to manipulate revenue recognition • opportunities to manipulate revenue recognition are very limited • the culture and ethical frameworks of local authorities, including Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council who act as the administrators of the pension fund, mean that all forms of fraud are seen as unacceptable.
Management over-ride of controls	Under ISA 240 the presumption that the risk of management over-ride of controls is present in all entities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of accounting estimates, judgments and decisions made by management • Testing of journal entries • Review of unusual significant transactions
Level 3 Investments – Valuation is incorrect	Under ISA 315 significant risks often relate to significant non-routine transactions and judgmental matters. Level 3 investments by their nature require a significant degree of judgement to reach an appropriate valuation at year end.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For a sample of investments, we will test valuations by obtaining and reviewing audited accounts at the latest date for individual investments and agree these to the fund manager reports at that date. • Where the latest date of audited accounts is not 31 March we will reconcile those values to the values at 31st March with reference to known movements in the intervening period. • We will review the nature and basis of estimated values.

Other risks identified

The auditor should evaluate the design and determine the implementation of the entity's controls, including relevant control activities, over those risks for which, in the auditor's judgment, it is not possible or practicable to reduce the risks of material misstatement at the assertion level to an acceptably low level with audit evidence obtained only from substantive procedures (ISA 315).

In this section we outline the other risks of material misstatement which we have identified as a result of our planning.

Other risks	Description	Audit Approach
Investment values – Level 2 investments	Valuation is incorrect. (Valuation net)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will review the reconciliation of information provided by the fund managers, the custodian and the Pension Fund's own records and seek explanations for variances, • Test a sample of level 2 investments to independent information from custodian/manager on units and on unit prices. • For direct property investments agree values in total to valuer's report and undertake steps to gain reliance on the valuer as an expert.
Investment Income	Investment activity not valid. Investment income not accurate. (Accuracy)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will review the reconciliation of information provided by the fund managers, the custodian and the Pension Fund's own records and seek explanations for variances • Test a sample of investment income to ensure it is appropriate • Complete a predictive analytical review for different types of investments • For direct property investments rationalise income against a list of properties for expected rental income.
Investment purchases and sales	Investment activity not valid. (Valuation gross)..	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will review the reconciliation of information provided by the fund managers, the custodian and the Pension Fund's own records and seek explanations for variances • Test a sample of purchases and sales to ensure are appropriate

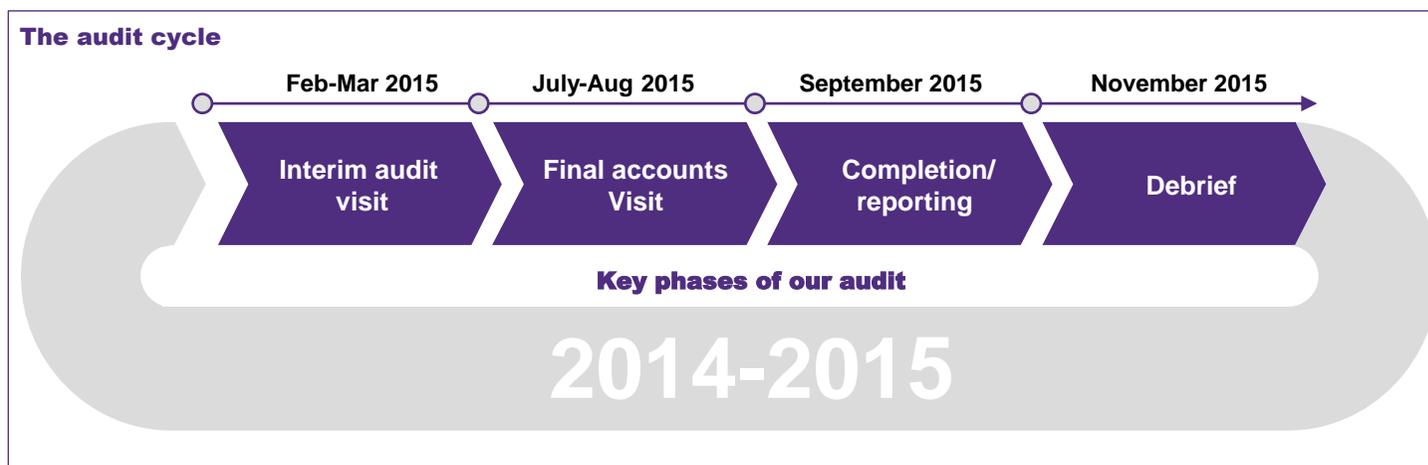
Other risks identified continued

Other risks	Description	Audit Approach
Contributions	Recorded contributions not correct (Occurrence)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Controls testing over occurrence, completeness and accuracy of contributions. • Rationalise contributions received with reference to changes in member body payrolls and numbers of contributing pensioners to ensure that any unexpected trends are satisfactorily explained.
Benefits payable	Benefits improperly computed/claims liability understated (Completeness, accuracy and occurrence)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Controls testing over completeness, accuracy and occurrence of benefit payments, • Test a sample of individual pensions in payment by reference to member files. • We will rationalise pensions paid with reference to changes in pensioner numbers and increases applied in the year to ensure that any unusual trends are satisfactorily explained.
Member Data	Member data not correct. (Rights and Obligations)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Controls testing over annual/monthly reconciliations and verifications with individual members • Sample testing of changes to member data made during the year to source documentation

Interim audit work

	Work performed and findings	Conclusion
Internal audit	<p>We have completed a high level review of internal audit's overall arrangements. Our work has not identified any issues which we wish to bring to your attention.</p> <p>We also reviewed internal audit's work on the Fund's key financial systems to date. We have not identified any significant weaknesses impacting on our responsibilities.</p>	<p>Overall, we have concluded that the internal audit service continues to provide an independent and satisfactory service to the Fund and that internal audit work contributes to an effective internal control environment at the Administering Authority.</p> <p>Our review of internal audit work has not identified any significant weaknesses which impact on our audit approach.</p>
Walkthrough testing	<p>We are conducting walkthrough tests of controls operating in areas where we consider that there is a risk of material misstatement to the financial statements.</p> <p>Our work has not identified any issues which we wish to bring to your attention. Internal controls have been implemented in accordance with our documented understanding.</p>	<p>Our work is still in progress but to date has not identified any significant weaknesses which impact on our audit approach.</p>
Entity level controls	<p>We have obtained an understanding of the overall control environment relevant to the preparation of the financial statements including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication and enforcement of integrity and ethical values • Commitment to competence • Participation by those charged with governance • Management's philosophy and operating style • Organisational structure • Assignment of authority and responsibility • Human resource policies and practices 	<p>Our work has identified no significant weaknesses which are likely to adversely impact on the Fund's financial statements.</p>
Review of IT environment	<p>Our information systems specialist is planning to perform a high level review of the general IT control environment, as part of the overall review of the internal controls system</p>	<p>We will consider the findings from our work to determine whether there are any significant weaknesses which are likely to adversely impact on the Fund's financial statements.</p>
Journal entry controls	<p>We will review the Fund's journal entry policies and procedures as part of the interim audit. This will determine our journal entry testing strategy to identify any significant weaknesses which may impact on the Fund's control environment or financial statements.</p>	<p>Our review of journal entry policies and procedures is in progress. We will complete our journals testing work as part of the opinion audit.</p>

Key dates



Date	Activity
February/March 2015	Planning
February/March 2015	Interim site visit
March 2015	Presentation of audit plan to Audit Committee
July-August 2015	Year end fieldwork
September 2015	Audit findings clearance meeting with the Group Accountant and Head of the Pension Fund.
September 2015	Report audit findings to the Audit and Risk Management Committee and Pension Committee
September 2015	Sign financial statements opinion

Fees and independence

Fees

	£
Pension Fund Scale Fee	36,882
Proposed fee variation – IAS 19 Assurances	2,180
Total fees (excluding VAT)	39,062

Our fee assumptions include:

- Supporting schedules to all figures in the accounts are supplied by the agreed dates and in accordance with the agreed upon information request list
- The scope of the audit, the Fund, and its activities, have not changed significantly
- The Fund will make available management and accounting staff to help us locate information and to provide explanations

Fees for other services

Service	Fees £
None	Nil

Fees for other services

Fees for other services reflect those agreed at the time of issuing our Audit Plan. Any changes will be reported in our Audit Findings Report and Annual Audit Letter.

Independence and ethics

We confirm that there are no significant facts or matters that impact on our independence as auditors that we are required or wish to draw to your attention. We have complied with the Auditing Practices Board's Ethical Standards and therefore we confirm that we are independent and are able to express an objective opinion on the financial statements.

Full details of all fees charged for audit and non-audit services will be included in our Audit Findings report at the conclusion of the audit.

We confirm that we have implemented policies and procedures to meet the requirement of the Auditing Practices Board's Ethical Standards.

Communication of audit matters with those charged with governance

International Standards on Auditing (ISA) 260, as well as other ISAs, prescribe matters which we are required to communicate with those charged with governance, and which we set out in the table opposite.

This document, The Audit Plan, outlines our audit strategy and plan to deliver the audit, while The Audit Findings will be issued prior to approval of the financial statements and will present key issues and other matters arising from the audit, together with an explanation as to how these have been resolved.

We will communicate any adverse or unexpected findings affecting the audit on a timely basis, either informally or via a report to the Council.

Respective responsibilities

This plan has been prepared in the context of the Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and Audited Bodies issued by the Audit Commission (www.audit-commission.gov.uk).

We have been appointed as the Council's independent external auditors by the Audit Commission, the body responsible for appointing external auditors to local public bodies in England. As external auditors, we have a broad remit covering finance and governance matters.

Our annual work programme is set in accordance with the Code of Audit Practice ('the Code') issued by the Audit Commission and includes nationally prescribed and locally determined work. Our work considers the Council's key risks when reaching our conclusions under the Code.

It is the responsibility of the Council to ensure that proper arrangements are in place for the conduct of its business, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for. We have considered how the Council is fulfilling these responsibilities.

	Audit plan	Audit findings
Our communication plan		
Respective responsibilities of auditor and management/those charged with governance	✓	
Overview of the planned scope and timing of the audit. Form, timing and expected general content of communications	✓	
Views about the qualitative aspects of the entity's accounting and financial reporting practices, significant matters and issue arising during the audit and written representations that have been sought		✓
Confirmation of independence and objectivity	✓	✓
A statement that we have complied with relevant ethical requirements regarding independence, relationships and other matters which might be thought to bear on independence.	✓	✓
Details of non-audit work performed by Grant Thornton UK LLP and network firms, together with fees charged.		
Details of safeguards applied to threats to independence		
Material weaknesses in internal control identified during the audit		✓
Identification or suspicion of fraud involving management and/or others which results in material misstatement of the financial statements		✓
Non compliance with laws and regulations		✓
Expected modifications to the auditor's report, or emphasis of matter		✓
Uncorrected misstatements		✓
Significant matters arising in connection with related parties		✓
Significant matters in relation to going concern		✓



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