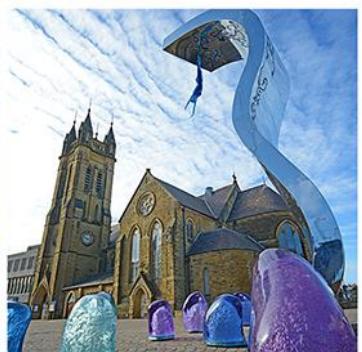
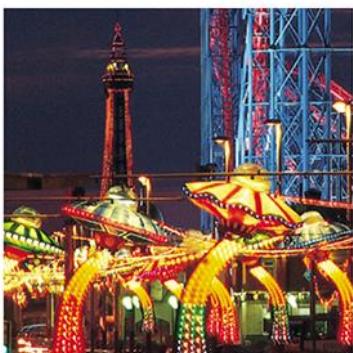


Draft Blackpool Early Years Strategy

2018 – 2020

For Consultation

Blackpool Council



Draft Blackpool Early Years Strategy

Contents

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Working effectively together to make sure that every child in their early years has the opportunity to be the best they can be.

From the point of conception through to the first day at school, parents, babies and young children have regular contact with a range of different services including midwifery, health visiting, GPs, Family Hubs/Children Centres, childcare and early education provision.

Getting this contact and these services right in these critical years is crucial to ensure that parents are supported sufficiently and that all babies and children are given the best possible start in life.

An effective Early Years Strategy needs to be based on the assumption that parents are the first educator and ensure that there is a robust system in place to support them in this vital role.

Research shows social class, income, co-parental relationships, living conditions and parent's own education levels are directly related to child development outcomes. However, the quality of the early home learning environment (from birth) acts as a significant modifying factor. All parents can enhance their child's progress if they engage regularly in activities that encourage positive social development, communication and thinking.

Children with strong early home learning environments are ahead in both social and cognitive development at the age of three.

They show secure language ability, higher levels of confidence, co-operation and sociability, and this advantage continues as they progress through school.

Services need to be focused on delivering an approach that is underpinned by supporting parents in good parenting skills. This will provide the basis for them to have an understanding of how a child learns and ensure that they are an active participant in their child's brain development, enabling the child to become an active learner with a strong attachment and healthy relationships.

Whilst parents are recognised as the child's first educator, this strategy recognises the impact that access to high quality education can have in improving outcomes for children. Research shows us that access to high quality educational experiences can have a significant impact on the outcomes a child achieves. This strategy has a strong focus on ensuring children have a breadth and depth in their learning within early year's settings and building upon the good and outstanding provision that exists within Blackpool.

For the purpose of this strategy **school readiness** is defined as:

"Children will be able to express their needs, feelings and wants effectively with their peers and adults. A setting/school will ensure that children feel heard and understood by their practitioners. Children will be excited, enthused and demonstrate a willingness to learn both inside and outside of the setting/school".

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National context

It is now recognised that the earliest years of a child's life can have an important impact on his or her long-term development. These are formative years, physiologically, cognitively, socially and emotionally.

For a child to flourish and fulfil their potential, they need their environment to provide them with specific types of support from conception to the age of five. The parent or primary caregiver is the most important part of a child's environment, and attachment has long been recognised as a key factor in positive child development.

Research found that children who are supported to develop positive behaviour are associated with a number of improved outcomes in later life, including income and aspects of mental health and well-being.

Language development - one of the earliest areas of cognitive development and an important stepping-stone to future success - is also influenced by parents or caregivers. If adults talk with children effectively - taking the lead from the child, elaborating on what they say, asking questions, sharing rhymes or songs or books - then children are given the best start in developing the cognitive tools they need to succeed at school.

Early intervention and prevention

For many years research has helped us understand that intervening early in the lives of young children can have a positive influence on their lives as they live and grow. Intervening early for those children and families who need it most makes a positive difference and the importance of the contribution that the Blackpool Family Hubs/Children Centres, Blackpool Better Start, Public Health and the Early Years Quality and Inclusion service can make to this process cannot be underestimated. Yet intervention from services has historically often started at a higher level of need.

Investing in the early years of a child's life with effective evidence-based interventions, with both universal services and also targeted approaches with families and children at risk, ensures all children will have improved outcomes and reduces inequalities. The cost benefit of this approach in terms of an 'invest to save' model for the future is also well evidenced.

Blackpool aims to offer support at a much earlier stage, building resilience, preventing the escalation of needs, wherever possible, and reducing the likelihood of problems emerging in the first place.

Early intervention services direct support to the most vulnerable children and families who require additional and intensive support, focusing on improving outcomes. Services aim to improve the resilience and well-being for children and families and ensure they are able to access the right services at the right time in the right place. They also aim to make a significant difference in reducing demand for statutory services and to provide support to families who are stepping down from statutory services.

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This approach helps to provide responses to the most vulnerable families and reduce inter-generational cycles of poor outcomes. The approach has far reaching implications which extends to both universal and targeted services who work with adults, young people, children and families and who work across all sectors.

Systems and services have recently been redesigned to ensure vulnerable children, young people and adults secure better outcomes, by coordinating the support they receive and the impact that services have.

Blackpool's approach is designed to be flexible enough to support all children and families whatever their need, whenever they need it.

It aims to respond in a meaningful, supportive way, working with parents wherever possible. It takes into account that everyone involved with the family has an important part to play and puts the wellbeing of children and families at the heart of any support.

What will Early Years Services look like for children, families and partners in Blackpool?

There is good practice happening across Blackpool and families are supported well. However, more needs to be done not only in embedding this good practice but in constantly improving the outcomes for children and families.

As a partnership we will deliver an integrated early years' service delivered by health, early education, social care and voluntary service partnerships. The more that agencies join-up to deliver services to meet the needs of families with young children, the more those needs can be met in a seamless way. We want to ensure parents and carers have access to the services they need and feel confident, competent, well informed and secure in their role as parents so that children thrive in an environment where they are encouraged and supported to reach their potential.

In order to capture a child and family's journey and ensure the services we offer to them impacts on their outcomes, the Early Years Strategy has identified a number of key strategic priorities which have been grouped into the following five themes:

- Good Maternal and Child Mental Health and Well Being
- Parental Engagement
- High Quality Inclusive Education
- Workforce Development
- Integrated working and system change

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Good maternal and child mental health and well being

Objective 1: Improve health and wellbeing for all children in Blackpool and reduce inequalities.

Good health and wellbeing is vital if children and young people are to enjoy their childhood and achieve their full potential. Establishing good lifestyle habits in childhood provides the basis for lifelong health and wellbeing.

This theme focuses on ensuring there is a consistent approach to the delivery of health services for families with a clear pathway from conception to age five, in line with the Healthy Child Programme, outlining what families can expect from professional services. This will be achieved through good partnership working that ensures specialist services such as drug and alcohol and mental health services receive referrals at the earliest possible point, to help parents develop and sustain a strong bond with their child. The achievement of successful outcomes as a result of early intervention will support parents across Blackpool.

Family Hubs/Children's Centres offer both universal and targeted support to families across the Blackpool. These are facilitated by a range of multi - agency professionals. Delivering universal services to every child and family provides an invaluable opportunity to identify children at risk of poor outcomes and provide early help to families. Research around early attachments tells us that promoting secure attachments and good maternal health are important for the emotional well-being and development of both mother and baby to secure the best start in life.

By offering a consistent and well-planned approach to service delivery, families will be supported in developing secure attachments and identification of early needs. A clear pathway will ensure the ease of access to services such as early parenting support, specialist health services (such as community-based health services/professionals) and Family Hubs/Children's Centres.

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Parents	Professionals
Will be engaged in health/ universal services at the earliest point and are clear about what is on offer across the Blackpool.	Will launch a pathway that all professionals who support children and families in the early years will sign up to that offers a consistent message and ensures the best start in life
Will participate in services so that their children have the opportunity to receive high quality health care	Will provide services at the appropriate milestones to ensure children get the best start in life. Will initiate whole family Early Help Assessment where needed and coordinate a plan to meet identified needs.
Will understand their child's development milestones and how they can support them through their parenting	Will provide Perinatal Education classes that offer an attractive Early Parenting Programme to expectant parents and beyond including sessions focused on early attachment/bonding.
	Will identify and make available a suite of multi - agency services to support expectant/new mothers and fathers at the earliest point, especially those who may present with early signs of low mood or historical mental health issues
	Will support parents' access to services already on offer. Will inform and support parents in their understanding of the importance of physical and mental wellbeing in child development.

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Parental engagement

Objective 2: Support and increase parents' knowledge and skills

Parenting is an important, exciting, complex and challenging role. Positive parenting has a strong and significant impact on children's ability to maximise the available opportunities and reach their full potential both personally and academically.

This theme focuses on developing the provision of universal services for families in order to support parental engagement. Parents will be supported to develop good parenting skills to enable them to help their child(ren) achieve their full potential. This meets the key strategic priorities, by developing a clear pathway for parents and professionals that promotes an understanding of child development and improves readiness for school.

Effective Provision of Pre-school Education (EPPE) research shows that parental engagement with their child's learning has a significant impact on their outcomes. The role of *Universal Services Practitioners* is to support parents in becoming their child's first educator, as well as supporting families with school readiness. Practitioners and other professionals; including Health workers; are promoting Early Education Funding for eligible 2-year olds and all elements of 3 and 4 year old entitlement. Access to high quality educational experiences can have a significant impact on narrowing the attainment gap.

We are aware that parents are the first and most important educators in their child's lives and the things that parents or carers do with children at home, like talking to, reading to, and playing with them, are key predictors of future development and readiness for school. We will develop the skills of providers to build warm and genuine relationships with parents and carers to support this 'home learning environment'.

To ensure healthy minds and bodies we will promote children having access to active and energetic play on a regular basis and support the development of high quality active outdoor learning in early years establishments and green spaces.

Through home learning and promotion of services parents will be assisted to build resilience and be the child's first educator also supporting school readiness. This will be measured by monitoring referrals for home learning and attendance at both play and stay and library groups. By developing the existing parent champions' programme and working in partnership with other professionals, promotion of Early Education Funding will support engagement with families within community groups, Family Hubs/Children's Centres, Schools and Childcare Providers.

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Parents	Professionals
Will increase their understanding of their child's developmental milestones and how they can support them	Will promote services available to families in their community in order to deliver prevention and early Intervention support Will engage with parents in ways that enable them to effectively support their children's learning and development and skills in building relationships. Will initiate whole family Early Help Assessment where needed and coordinated a plan to meet identified needs.
Will develop skills and resilience to be their child's primary educator providing good home learning environments	Will provide child development resources regarding ages and stages to inform parents of expected progress Will promote awareness and access to information to support parenting Will support with school readiness by developing a holistic understanding which supports families Will actively engage parents as partners in their children's learning.
Will feel supported to participate in services. Will access Bookstart, Literacy Weeks, Play and Stay groups, communication and language support and other universal services available within the community including Family Hubs, and Libraries.	Will increase the number of parent champions across the Blackpool Will develop the skills and knowledge of parent champions so that they can: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Promote universal services• Encourage other parents to access Early Education Funding• Enable them to signpost and support families to other services available in their community

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Will support their children to access high quality Early Education Funding (EEF) for 2,3 and 4-year Old's and Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP)

Will raise awareness of Early Education Funding and further improve the take up of places

Will identify eligible children so that resources can be targeted to the right children and families at the right time

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High quality inclusive education

Objective 3: Children ready for schools and schools ready for children

Good communication and language skills combined with strong social and emotional skills are essential for children to be effective learners throughout life and achieve their potential and improve their life chances.

This theme focuses on ensuring all children in the Blackpool have access to high quality inclusive pre-school experience and education which will enhance and improve their learning outcomes throughout their education.

Research (EPPSE3-16+) which tracked children from 1997 through to their educational and developmental outcomes at 16 years old in 2013 continues to drive and shape current government policy. The report demonstrates how pre-school experience continues to influence the outcomes of young children most significantly:

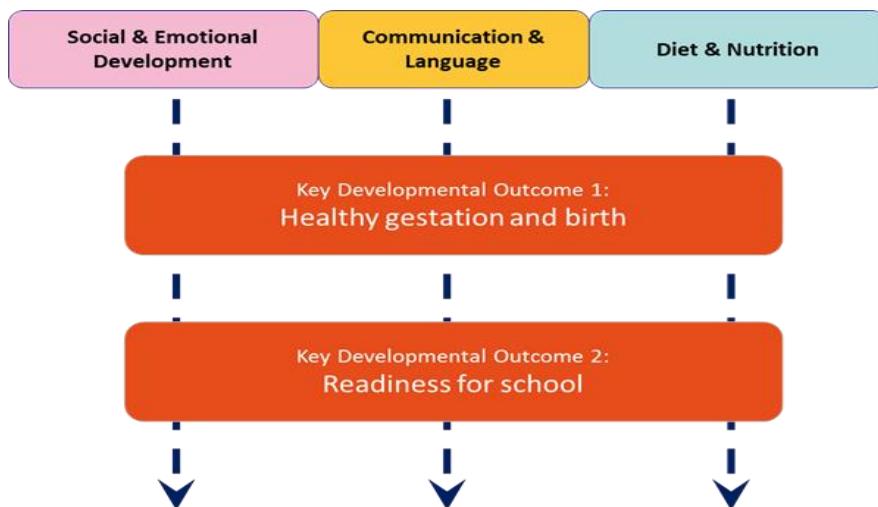
- The quality of pre-school experience predicted both total GCSE scores and English and Maths grades. Quality education was also linked to better pro-social behaviour and lower levels of hyperactivity. The quality of pre-school experience was especially important for children whose parents have low qualifications.
- Attending a high quality pre-school, experiencing a longer duration, or attending settings of higher quality all predicted a greater likelihood of following an academic pathway post 16 as well key findings as a reduced likelihood of taking a lower academic route.

Key findings from Ofsted's good practice survey, "Teaching and play in the early years-a balancing act?" (July 2015) included:

- Accurate assessment of children's starting points was based on constant reflection about what was deemed typical for each child given their chronological age in months. Where we observed this to be most effective, staff entered into frequent discussion, within and between providers, to check and agree their judgments. This included the frequent sharing of information between parents, other pre-school settings and health visitors.
- Collaboration between early years' providers was key to securing a higher quality of teaching and play. We found that where schools and settings shared a site, were directly managed by one overarching leader or had entered into a professional network with others in the locality, expertise was shared effectively to allow all early years professionals to learn from the best. Many had become early years' hubs for their area, championing the importance of early education and raising the quality of learning and development.

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Every child has the right to access a good or outstanding early years' provision and to have access to the best support for their learning and achievement. They should also benefit from providers working in partnership with each other to share the best practice as they continue to improve together. No child should be disadvantaged by not being able to attend a good quality early years provision, ensuring their 'readiness' for school.



In their first few years most children learn to walk and run, speak and communicate, relate to others and explore learning through play but for all children, including those for whom these skills are more difficult, realising and reaching their full potential is the goal and these are the key elements of "school readiness".

- By the age of five children should be ready to make the most of the wealth of opportunities available to them at their next stage of learning and development.
- Ensuring all children make good progress in the early years requires a good understanding of their development, the early identification of any problems, and support for these children through universal and more specialist services.
- The quality of early years and childcare provision is second only to the quality of parenting in shaping how well children do in the early years.

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Children	Professionals
Will have increased Good Level of Development at the Early Years Foundation Stage and will attain in line with National expectations	Will develop a clear pathway for parents and professionals that promotes a common understanding of child development and how this can be supported Will establish a robust transition protocol to support children's move onto statutory education including the sharing of data
Will not achieve to a lesser degree if they receive Early Years Pupil Premium compared to those not receiving Early Years Pupil Premium	Will develop a school readiness definition to improve readiness for school for all children with particular regard to disadvantaged and vulnerable children at age 5
Will receive high quality preschool education in settings that are judged to be good or outstanding	Will provide high quality learning environments Will achieve and maintain a "Good" or above Ofsted judgement Will develop self-confidence and resilience in children through high quality inclusive play and experiences. Will provide a support and challenge function within and to settings in order to develop and continually improve practice Will develop training materials, opportunities and practice to support providers in implementing changes in practice that will impact on children's outcomes
Will achieve successful outcomes as a result of early intervention	Will track cohorts of children to monitor progress ensuring children at a disadvantage are fully supported Will use their best endeavours through the graduated approach to make sure that children with SEN get the support they need.

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Will initiate whole family Early Help Assessment where needed and coordinated a plan to meet identified needs.

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Workforce development

Objective 4: Support the development of high quality leadership together with a highly skilled and responsive workforce

Strong leadership and a highly skilled and responsive workforce are essential to the delivery of high quality services. Effective intervention and evidence-based practice and intervention can support every child in achieving the best outcomes.

This theme focuses on challenging and supporting schools and childcare providers to deliver the best education for children and young people through developing a highly skilled Early Years workforce with strong and effective leadership and management. This meets the key strategic priorities, by establishing Early Years forums with a clear programme for improving outcomes. Also, to establish a robust transition protocol and to ensure the workforce support effective transitions between settings.

The model environments focus on strengthening leadership and management to raise the quality of learning environments, progress of implementation is monitored during quality support visits. The Local Offer came into effect from September 2014; this provides parents with information regarding how early years provision can support children with additional needs.

Research demonstrates that inspirational practitioners providing stimulating and challenging environments support children in accelerating their learning.

Through the promotion of focused early years forums, workshops and drop in the workforce will be supported to share and disseminate good practice, building effective working relationships with other partners such as Blackpool and Fylde College and Adult Education services, to provide a consistent approach in developing high quality early years practice. Regular monitoring of the quality of early years practitioners entering the workforce and maintaining a continuous cycle of staff development within provision, will assist in ensuring the stability and quality of practitioners.

Workforce development will focus on achieving:

- Practitioners receiving a strong grounding in current early years child development research and theory to inform practice
- Practitioners being equipped to enhance the quality of adult-child interactions through Sustained Shared Thinking - encouraging 'back and forth' discussions to build vocabulary
- Practitioners who know how to implement evidence-based approaches across language, literacy and numeracy
- Staff that have increased skills and confidence to engage with parents around children's learning – to support the home learning environment
- Staff that are equipped to identify children with SLCN and know how to put into place suitable support strategies

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Children	Professionals
Will learn in high quality learning environments	<p>Will share and disseminate good practice</p> <p>Will maintain a continuous cycle of staff development within the provision to ensure the stability and quality of the workforce</p>
Will achieve to their full potential with those more disadvantaged than their peers progressing well.	<p>Will develop and maintain Early Years forums to enable leaders and managers to enhance their knowledge of the sector and to build locality networks</p> <p>Will develop high levels of skills in graduate leaders</p> <p>Will promote and develop a common language, messages and use of evidence-based practice</p> <p>Will access training to support the development of model environments and peer support opportunities</p>
	<p>Will demonstrate an in-depth knowledge of child development and how to support families</p> <p>Will embed effective key worker practice within provision</p> <p>Will implement observation planning and assessment to meet individuals needs and interests</p>

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Objective 5: Integrated working and system change

Integrated working and system change is integral to the delivery of effective services and providing early help for vulnerable children and families in order to meet the full range of needs within each family and strengthen their ability to provide care and support to each other.

Context:

- Systems and processes need to be streamlined to remove duplication, identify and address any gaps.
- Resources are limited and there is a need for cost effective and readily available services for all families.
- We need to ensure all partners work together in an integrated way to make best use of our resources, to ensure consistent, high quality provision across Blackpool.
- To improve outcomes and reduce inequalities we need to ensure our most vulnerable families are identified early and encouraged through easily accessible services to sustain engagement.

Our Priorities:

- Ensure improved communication, information and data sharing.
- Promote and develop a common language and shared evidence-based messages.
- Improve timely interventions and appropriate help at the right time.
- Improve team around the child and family partnership approaches to improve outcomes and reduce inequalities.
- Ensure the Integrated Care Pathway is fully and effectively implemented and linked to all other key pathways.
- Aligning multi-agency pathways and services to ensure maximum impact on outcomes and inequalities.
- Ensure effective transition of family support from Family Hubs/Children's Centres and health visitor services to schools.

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Appendix 1: Ofsted Inspection Outcomes October 2018

Setting Outcomes

The tables below outline the current Ofsted inspection figures as of October 2018 – judgement at most recent inspection for where providers have received a grading.

All provision types %					
	Outstanding	Good	Requires Improvement	I	Good & Outstanding
All England 31/03/18	18	76	5	1	94
Blackpool 14/10/18	28.7	68.8	2.5	0	97.5

Childminders %					
	Outstanding	Good	Requires Improvement	I	Good & Outstanding
All England 31/03/18	16	78	5	1	94
Blackpool 14/10/18	34.1	65.9	0	0	100.0

Non-domestic %					
	Outstanding	Good	Requires Improvement	I	Good & Outstanding
All England 31/03/18	22	73	4	1	95.0
Blackpool 14/10/18	22.2	72.2	5.5	0	94.4

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Appendix 2: Summary of EYFSP Outcomes

In August 2018 the Early EYFSP data (not nationally published or validated) showed that **Overall GLD has increased from 66.7 in 2017 to 67.9 in 2018**, continuing the upward trend. Unvalidated national data obtained via Nexus system suggests that the gap between Blackpool and National has further narrowed, albeit slightly. The % of boys attaining GLD has increased by 2.3 percentage points (ppts), compared to an increase of 0.4 for girls, this has resulted in a slight reduction in the gap between boys and girls.

% achieving at least expected in all 17 ELGs has increased from 65.1 in 2017 to 66.8 in 2018, again continuing the upward trend. As with GLD, the increase has been greater for boys (2.8 ppts) than girls (0.9 ppts).

Average total point score has decreased from 33 in 2017 to 32.7, continuing the downward trend from 2017. Again unvalidated national data indicates a slight increase (0.1 point) nationally after a static picture last year. The ongoing downward trend this year is as a result of **a decline of 0.6 in the performance of girls**, whilst boys have stayed the same.

Whilst GLD and the % achieving at least expected in all 17 ELGs have increased, the total % of children attaining the expected level in individual goals is a less positive picture. The majority of goals have seen slight decreases compared to 2017, with only listening and attention, understanding, writing, technology and exploring and using media and materials seeing an increase, and managing feelings and behaviour remaining the same.

Main concerns are around falling **Average Total Point Score and reduction in % of children attaining the expected level in several ELGs**. This could be indicative of the impact of increased focus on maths and literacy.

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Appendix 3:

Legislation

The statutory duties of the Local Authority in relation to early years and childcare are set out in a number of key legislative tools which govern the work that Blackpool Council undertakes with partners to support children and families. Key legislation is listed below with more details set out in Appendix 1.

Key legislation

Children Act	1989
Education and Inspection Act	1996
Children Act	2004
Childcare Act	2006
Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act	2009
Working Together to Safeguard Children	2015
Children and Families Act	2014

These duties strengthen the ambitions of the Local Authority to ensure every child in Blackpool gets the best start in life through development of integrated and accessible access to; early years and childcare provision, high quality Family Hubs and timely information, advice and guidance.

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