

Enter and View

**Jhoots Pharmacy (located within
Waitrose, Portishead)**

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Background

Jhoots Pharmacy is an independent community pharmacy chain that provides a range of NHS services including over-the-counter medications, dispensing NHS prescriptions and providing flu vaccinations. It has over 40 branches across the UK, with 10 situated in Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire (BNSSG).

Of the two Jhoots pharmacies in Portishead, the Healthwatch Enter and View Team visited the one located within the Waitrose store in February 2025. This pharmacy is one of three in town that serve patients attending Portishead Medical Group GP practice, which provides care for 18,000 patients across Portishead.

In 2024, the Jhoots Pharmacy in Portishead delivered an average of 3.67 Pharmacy First clinical pathway consultations per month. This was 4 times lower than the monthly average delivered by other Jhoots Pharmacies in BNSSG of 14.89, and 4.6 times lower than the national average of 17.06.

Methodology

The visits

We scheduled the visit to Jhoots in Portishead as Healthwatch BNSSG would like to hear from service users and staff about their respective experiences with pharmacy services in N. Somerset to understand what is working well and identify areas where additional support may be needed.

The visit was planned to take place on Monday 24th February 2025. The location is situated in Waitrose, Harbour Rd, Portishead, Bristol BS20 7DE.

- Staff at Jhoots pharmacy were given notice in advance of the Enter and View visit, which was acknowledged by a staff member as they do not have a manager onsite. Healthwatch sent a letter of authorisation to the pharmacy along with posters and leaflets. The branch manager of the Waitrose store was also contacted to obtain permission to ask general customers if they use the pharmacy and obtain their feedback. The branch manager made Healthwatch aware that Waitrose employees often receive complaints about the service and opening hours of the Jhoots pharmacy.

- 23 individuals, both those using pharmacy services and general Waitrose customers, and one staff member were engaged in conversation during the visit.
- A set of structured open questions for customers were agreed and developed. Posters and flyers were displayed within the pharmacy to highlight the visit.
- Three trained and authorised Healthwatch representatives carried out the visit. The team checked in briefly with a staff member at the beginning and end of the visit, and the lead volunteer was able to speak more in depth with her during the visit.
- The visit took around two hours from 10am – 12pm.

Observations

The pharmacy occupies a small space just within the entrance of Waitrose. There is accessible parking and a toilet, though the team noted the toilet is not well signposted. The visit took place on a chilly day, which made the pharmacy's waiting area a bit drafty and cold. The queue extends towards the entrance of Waitrose, and the longer the queue, the more service users would be exposed to the outside temperature.

The opening hours are posted at the entrance to the pharmacy, but there is currently a notice in a plastic sleeve over the hours stating, "In the current circumstances, we are struggling to open on weekends." The notice encourages service users to pick up necessary medication during the week and apologizes for the inconvenience. It was noted that this sign does not look securely fastened. There is also a sign stating less busy times for the pharmacy. Lunch hours are clearly posted.

There are many informational and resource posters displayed around the pharmacy. The team noted that two posters from Healthwatch announcing the visit were on display along with Healthwatch pamphlets on the counter. Prescription prices are clearly posted over the till. The team did not see any posters informing service users of the complaints process. It was also noted that the language identification sign was placed off to the side in a location that may be overlooked.

The queue at the pharmacy was noted to never be more than 3-4 service users, and at times, there was no queue at all. The queue moved quickly with pharmacy staff addressing service users promptly and most service users appeared to wait no more than 5 minutes. The pharmacy area is very small but tidy, and the lighting is bright. There are two chairs, of which only one had arms. There is a sign which indicates a hearing loop is available.

Due to the size of the pharmacy space, it is possible for conversations between pharmacy staff and service users to be overheard. There is a consultation room behind the till, which was noted to have many informational pamphlets posted. There were

several large bags of individual prescriptions sitting in the back of the consultation room labelled with service user information. Staff assured the Healthwatch team that this occurrence was unusual, a temporary storage measure needed while they completed some organisational work. Service users would not be wandering freely into the consultation room.

There were two staff members, including a pharmacist, working during the Healthwatch visit. Both seemed quite busy, moving about. The team generally felt the staff's interaction with service users was excellent. Staff were noted to be helpful and polite when overheard guiding service users who had come to the pharmacy seeking advice.

Staff conversations

- The lead volunteer met with the dispenser account assistant (DAA) in the consultation room during the visit to ask some questions prepared in advance. DAA said she had contacted the management of Jhoots once she learned of the Healthwatch Enter and View visit but had not yet received a response. There is no onsite management. There are two part time DAA's, besides the locum pharmacist, who has been at the pharmacy for about five months and works Monday to Friday. With only two people in a DAA role, there is decreased flexibility and some disruption when time away is needed.
- It was unclear how many people the pharmacy served but we were told most people use the pharmacy to obtain prescriptions.
- Jhoots had a sign near the till about Pharmacy First, but the DAA said this service is currently on hold due to a technical issue. They are anticipating the service will be offered again starting in March and for now refer people who wish to use this service to another branch.
- The DAA said one of the biggest challenges faced in operations is getting the correct stock of medications, which depends on access to different suppliers. They said if they cannot get prescribed medication, they will try to find a replacement if possible, contacting the service user and prescriber, or refer the service user to a different pharmacy.
- The conversation with the DAA took place in the consultation room where privacy can be ensured for service users.
- They said there is also a hearing loop if needed, but they have never been asked if it could be used.

- They said the team is happy to make accommodations for service users who may have a disability such as blindness and that interventions taken are determined on a case-by-case basis depending on the individual's situation and requests.

Headline findings

- The Healthwatch team was able to speak with 23 individuals to ask a series of questions developed in advance
- 2 individuals shopping at Waitrose stated they no longer use this pharmacy. One cited the length of the queues and waiting times as the reason for leaving and said the pharmacy they use now is better. The other individual commented that the new pharmacy they use is more organised and provides notification when a prescription is ready.
- Most of the individuals that provided feedback stated they utilize the pharmacy to obtain prescription medication. Other reasons service users came to the pharmacy included seeking advice, vaccination, and for over-the-counter medication.
- 3 individuals mentioned being generally happy or satisfied with using the pharmacy to obtain prescriptions. One said the service is okay while another described the service as "spasmodic".
- 50% of individuals asked said there were generally no issues with prescriptions being available and ready, the other 50% had mixed responses.
- Most individuals said that the queues differ depending on the time and day you visit. The times waiting in the queue varied from no wait to 30 mins.
- The majority of individuals said the staff were very helpful and professional.
- Six individuals felt their conversations were not private in the space provided.

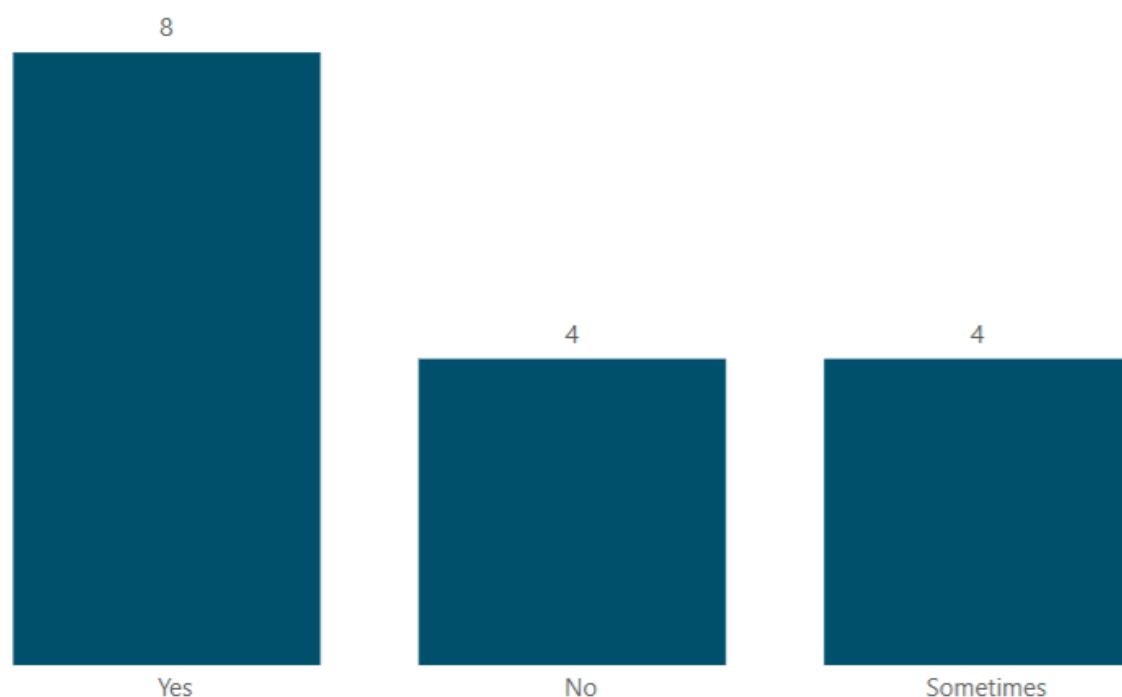
Thematic analysis

Why are service users choosing this pharmacy?

Most service users cited convenience as the reason they chose this pharmacy. Many said they live close to the location or are already coming to shop at Waitrose.

What are service users' experiences regarding pharmacy services?

Figure 1. Was your prescription ready when you were told it would be?



When asked if their prescription was ready when they have been told it will be, 50% (8 service users) said yes, generally. One individual said they are advised by text when their prescription is ready. Another 25% (4 service users) stated that their prescriptions were only sometimes ready. One individual said their prescription they had come to collect today was not ready but that the pharmacy staff were working to sort it out.

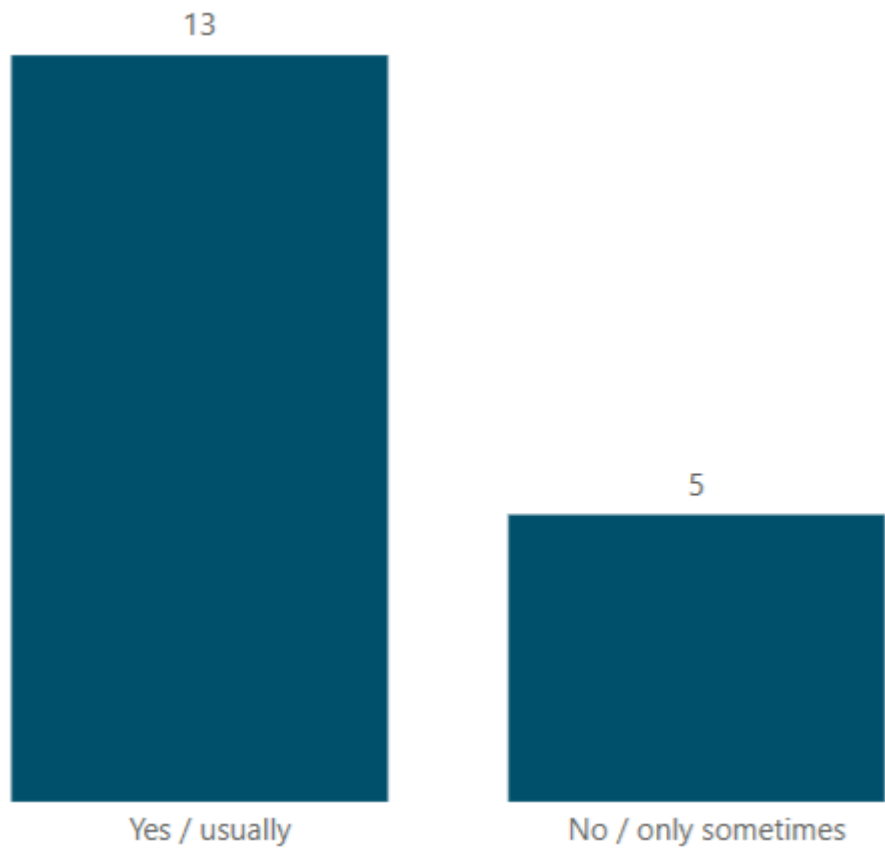
The remaining 25% (4 service users) answered no, when asked if their prescription was ready when they were told it will be.

"Had to wait over the weekend, Friday through Monday"

When asked if they are notified about any delays with their prescriptions, all but one service user who answered this question said no. One individual said they are asked to wait whilst they prepare the medication. Another service user commented that they do

not receive any notifications for anything from the pharmacy. The one service user who stated being made aware of delays said they are telephoned if medication is not available.

Figure 2. Does the pharmacy always have your medication in stock?



13 of 18 service users responded yes or usually when asked whether the pharmacy always has their medication in stock. One individual said this was their first visit and stated they were impressed.

The other 5 of 18 service users answered sometimes or no when asked whether the pharmacy always has their medication in stock. One individual commented that this has become better but sometimes their medication is still not available.

4 service users answered yes when asked if the pharmacy helps them to find an alternative equivalent medication or signposts them to a pharmacy that does have the medication, while 2 answered sometimes. One individual noted that they were told about alternatives but said they do not drive.

How long do service users normally spend in the queue?

Service users’ responses when asked how long they normally spend in the queue were quite varied and revealed that it depends on the time of day. The queue was reported as being shorter in the morning and that it can be quite long in the afternoon. 7

individuals reported waiting 5 minutes or less, which corresponded to the Healthwatch team’s observations on the day of the visit. Other service users cited longer wait times.

“Depends, one Friday there was a queue to the door”

“Depends on time of day”

“If you come in the morning queue is ok, if afternoon you wait much longer”

“Afternoons – always have to wait long periods of time, especially after lunch break”

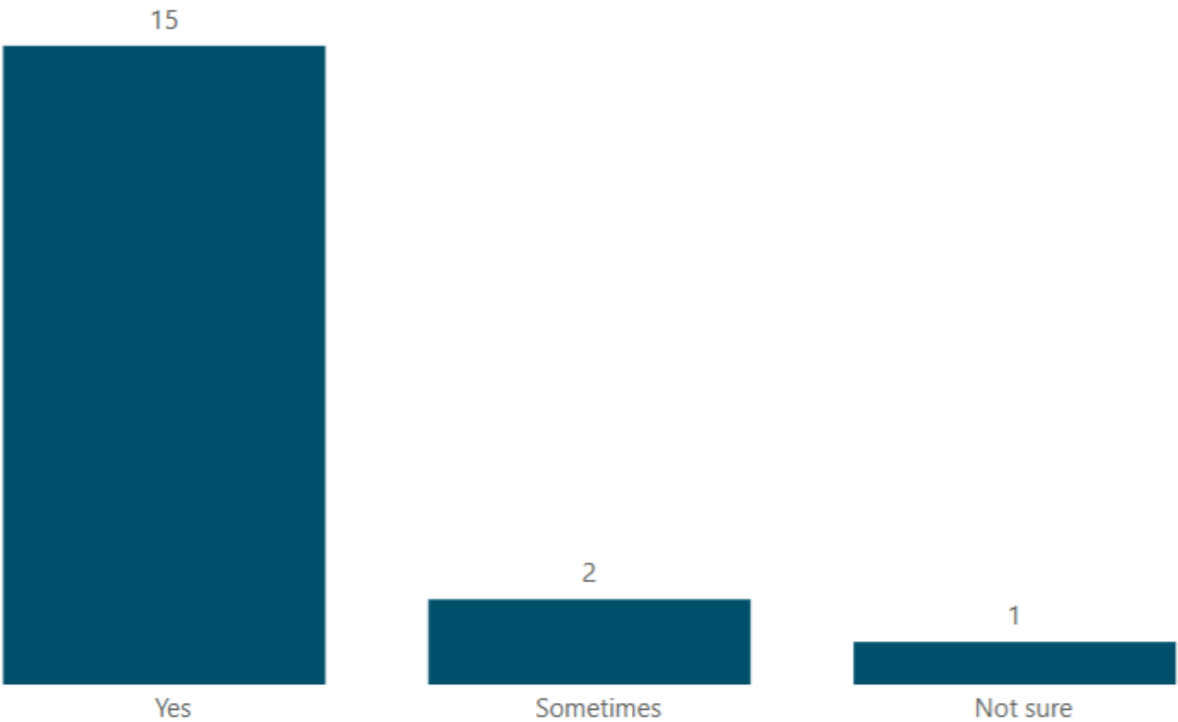
“Usually a long wait”

One individual said, “That’s the problem,” when asked about the queue. They said they have waited up to 30 minutes and that today is the first day they have been to the pharmacy when there is no queue. Another individual said they have sometimes abandoned the queue when it is very long.

One service user said they have learned from experience that the best time to come is in the morning. Another service user can see if the queue has reached the store entrance from her window so waits to leave her flat until the queue has cleared.

How do service users find the staff?

Figure 3. Do you have confidence in the staff’s ability to be able to help you?



When asked if they feel confident in the staff’s ability to help them, 15 of 18 service users answered yes.

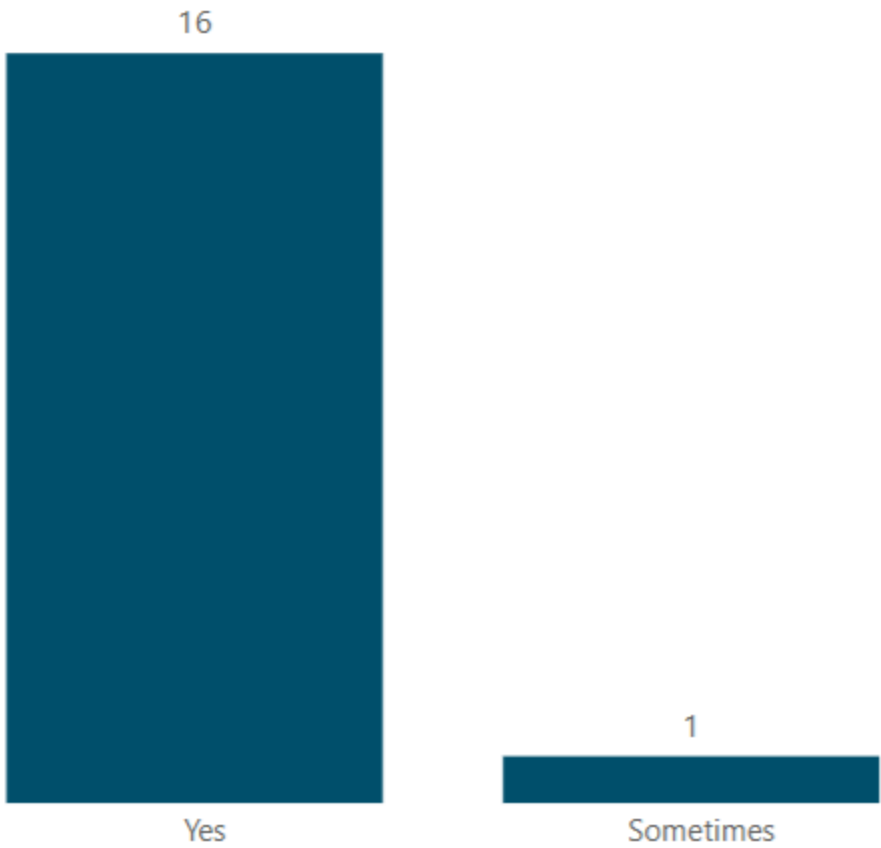
“Staff are great”

“They have an understanding of what the doctor has requested”

“Staff are helpful”

2 service users answered that only sometimes they feel confident in staff’s ability to help them, one saying they have “had mixed responses”. One service user simply commented, “they are overstretched”.

Figure 4. Do you feel that staff are professional when they help you?



When asked if they feel the staff are professional when helping them, 16 of 17 service users answered yes.

“Kind staff”

“Staff go out of the way to help”

“Staff are always pleasant”

One service user answered that only sometimes they feel staff are professional and said they have mixed feelings.

What about privacy?

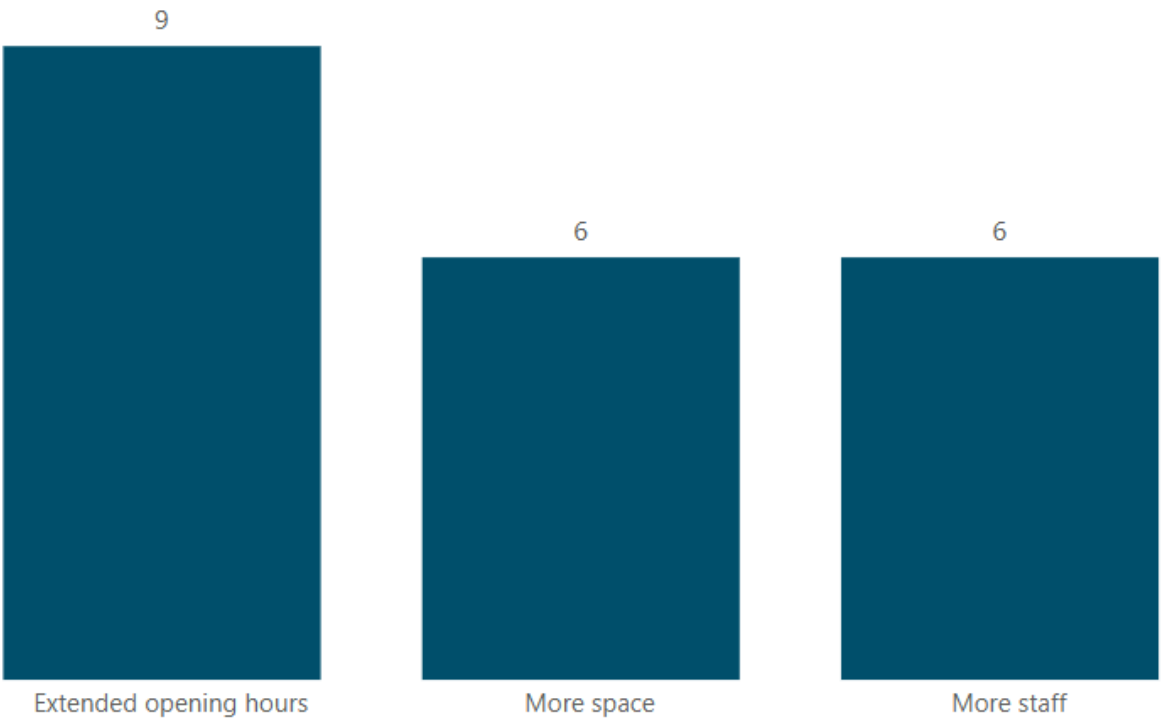
When asked whether they felt that conversations with pharmacy staff were private and not overheard by others, 4 people said yes, the conversations were confidential, 3 responded that they felt they haven't needed to have a confidential conversation. 2 people said they would ask to go to the consultation room.

6 service users said that they did not feel their conversations were private in the pharmacy space. One individual remarked that they used to have more space, and that the consultation room is not regularly used. A second individual said the space is too open and feels uncomfortable. A third individual said they are hard of hearing and “don't want the world to know everything.” A fourth individual mentioned that they do not like their address being repeated in a public space.

What feedback do service users have about what could improve their experience?

When reviewing service users’ responses to what they thought could be different to improve the experience of using the pharmacy, 3 major themes emerged:

Figure 5. Improvement Themes



1. **Opening hours** – 9 service users stated their desire for additional opening hours, especially during the weekend, and expressed frustration that the pharmacy is sometimes closed when it should be open. One individual commented that their spouse had become fed up with the pharmacy's decreased opening hours and now goes to a different pharmacy.
2. **Staffing** – 6 service users expressed concern about not having enough staff. One individual commented that counter reception staff can also be doing other jobs which means they are not always responsive.
3. **Physical space** – 6 service users commented on the physical space, such as the small size and where the pharmacy is positioned, which some individuals noted, leads to a queue out to the entrance of the Waitrose store, and felt more space was needed. One individual said the space could "do with more chairs." Another individual suggested using the consultation room more often.

2 service users commented on their prescriptions not always being available or ready.

"It's annoying to wait for prescriptions to be made up when you have been told they will be ready in 3 days."

Several service users had some positive comments about the pharmacy. One individual said they were pleased with the service while 2 others endorsed the service having been improved.

"6 months ago the pharmacy was a nightmare, now significantly improved"

Recommendations

- The pharmacy to provide all chairs with arms to allow people to rise easily.
- The Pharmacy to ensure that service users' details cannot be seen or heard by other customers in line with data protection regulations.
- The pharmacy to identify peak times of business and ensure sufficient staff are available to meet demand.
- The pharmacy to encourage all service users to use text notifications for prescription readiness.
- The pharmacy to clearly display the availability of the private consultation room.
- The pharmacy to display clear contact details for management enquiries and complaints.
- The pharmacy to consider additional opening hours to meet customer demand.
- The pharmacy to provide clear information regarding processes, charges, opening hours and complaints in additional accessible formats.

Provider response

The stakeholders who received this report ahead of publication did not provide a response to our findings.



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