



**2019**

---

**HERMAN GOLDSTEIN  
PROBLEM ORIENTED POLICING AWARD**

---

Operation Arrow & Spear

## Project Owner

Sgt Daniel Whyte  
Newcastle Neighbourhood Team (Central)

Chief Inspector Stephen Whykes  
Harm Reduction (Central)

## Correspondence Address

Chief Superintendent Janice Hutton  
Northumbria Police  
Bedlington Police Station  
Schalksmuhle Rd,  
Bedlington  
NE22 7LA

Email: [janice.hutton.7074@northumbria.pnn.police.uk](mailto:janice.hutton.7074@northumbria.pnn.police.uk)

# Operation Arrow & Spear

## **Summary**

A two for the price of one project that reflects problem solving in complex environments.

## **Scanning:**

Newcastle saw the Street Community grow and crime issues ranging from aggressive begging, anti-social behaviour, substance abuse and other criminality increase. Despite previous initiatives the problems persisted and by November 2017 the number of street beggars had risen from 25 to around 200 and with it associated criminality and exploitation of an already vulnerable community.

## **Analysis:**

Analysis of the problem identified three factors:

- A cohort of multiply excluded individuals, causing the most demand, yet receiving the least amount of support. Potentially leading to criminalisation of vulnerable people via police intervention.
- Availability of substances of abuse, particularly in the City Centre, driving an increase in crime and ASB.
- A lack of appropriate accommodation (subjective assessment provided by the offenders themselves) means people would rather sleep on the streets rendering individuals more vulnerable to being pulled into substance misuse culture and other criminality.

These are vulnerable people who through a variety of reasons and complex needs have difficulty engaging with services.

The POP methodology brought us to the crucial question “‘Is Begging’ the problem or the symptom?” and allowed us to rethink the nature and design of our policing strategy.

## **Response:**

- We instigated a range of integrated responses to achieve sustainable change.
- We used partnership knowledge of the community to develop intelligence and progress coordinated yet vulnerability focused partnership interventions.
- Enforcement linked to ethically sound interventions triaged through a Common Case Management Group with the aim of finding long term solutions to improve vulnerable person’s circumstances and diverting them to the appropriate support. We designed and implemented an Ethical Enforcement Pathway that reflected the chaotic nature

of life on the streets, but safeguarded the most vulnerable whilst addressing their impact on the wider community.

- When confronted by the emergence of SPICE use, we were responsive enough to enact a secondary operation (Op Spear) to directly tackle that problem.

**Assessment:**

Prior to 2018 meaningful or sustainable outcomes evaded us. Through this new approach we achieved:

- housed 5 homeless people who otherwise would still be at risk on the streets
- 45% reduction in reported ASB linked to begging
- 19% reduction in begging prosecutions

and the whole approach is now mainstreamed in business as usual.

Word Count: 381

## Description

### Scanning:

“I see the same groups of people, working with one another, handing the money over to dealers in exchange for drugs. They sit in set patches at set times. It is like something from Victorian times, it’s quite Dickensian like Oliver Twist and Fagin.”

Father Nicholas Buxton talking about homeless and drug use  
in the grounds of St John the Baptist church, Newcastle

Despite a decade of initiatives, the cumulative effects of economic upheaval, poverty and deprivation found the city of Newcastle Upon Tyne striving to tackle the problem of homelessness; the tide of rough sleepers and street beggars continued to rise and with it an increase in aggressive begging, anti-social behaviour, substance abuse and other criminality. By November 2017 Newcastle City Council’s own figures indicated that over a period of just two to three years the number of street beggars had risen from 25 to around 200 (Riddell, 2017)<sup>1</sup>.

Police data drew a strong correlation between those sleeping rough in the city and those perpetrating crime and ASB, in particular in respect of substance misuse, begging and acquisition crime. There was also a strong correlation between begging and substance misuse leading to ASB. The nature of this ASB was wide ranging and took the form of groups congregating or public drug taking and often escalated to violence in the Northumberland St area in particular but was also evident across the wider city environment.

Direct feedback from the community showed that many people found such behaviour upsetting and threatening. We also had specific feedback from Visitors and businesses within the City centre who complained of the negative impact that both, rough sleeping and the associated crime and disorder, was having.

Homelessness or rough sleeping creates significant vulnerability and a pattern of substance misuse exacerbated this. The people entangled in substance misuse required money in order to sustain their dependencies so consequently acquisitive crimes such as shoplifting,

---

<sup>1</sup> Riddell, K. (2017). Organised begging to make cash plaguing Newcastle city centre streets. *Chronicle Live*. [online] Available at: <https://www.chroniclive.co.uk/news/north-east-news/organised-begging-make-cash-plaguing-13977650> [Accessed 9 Dec. 2018].

begging and more serious crimes, such as robbery, were directly linked with the street community of the City.

Initial data showed reports of begging appeared to be impervious to interventions and despite considerable effort remained pretty much constant, whilst street drug use, particularly the use of emerging Novel Psychoactive Substances were increasing:

	<u>Begging Reports :-</u>	<u>NPS:</u>
Jul-17	77	15
Aug-17	94	13
Sep-17	60	12
Oct-17	95	18
Nov-17	66	21
Dec-17	68	18
Jan-18	83	20
Feb-18	65	28

Crime figures and incident levels for Northumberland Street, one of our main shopping streets was particularly high. A significant proportion of the recorded crime related to retail crime and three of the most significant hotspots for retail crime in the force area were all in this same locality.

Whilst retail crime may not have a direct visible impact on the public, the intelligence picture indicated that the Street Community funded their alcohol and drug use from the proceeds of this crime, which in turn fuelled further crime and disorder. Notwithstanding how that then drove further problems in the Street Community, each report of retail crime also had an impact on police demand and resources.

## **Analysis:**

Our Local Authority had at various stages in the past achieved national recognition in tackling homelessness. We had dedicated officers carrying out Rough Sleeper checks on a daily basis High Vis patrol in high foot fall areas and weekly analysis by Intelligence Officers producing Hotspot maps. We used Dispersal orders and were chasing the problem around the city, displacing not dealing with the problem and the begging issue persisted with no notable change.

Using the Problem Analysis Triangle, we considered what we knew about the problem and our Analysis of the problem showed the following:

### **Offender:**

- A cohort of rough sleepers existed within the city, many were not homeless but chose to engage in street community 'culture' such as begging for a variety of reasons. Substance misuse was a large contributory factor
- We were able to identify a cohort of 61 persistent beggars who were engaged in ASB and Crime
- Looking at this list and cross referencing it with the list of top shoplifters there was a cross over. There are however some anomalies which are not engaged in the cohort.
- Furthermore some of the most prolific beggars are not recorded for shoplifting. This could be due to finding begging lucrative enough.

A trusted study in 2017 by the Experts by Experience Network of FLNG (Fulfilling Lives Newcastle Gateshead Programme, 2017) sought to give a voice to people engaged in begging activity in Newcastle, found the following:

- Generally a participants' reason for engaging in begging activity was not to support their basic needs for food or housing or clothing, but was to secure money to support an addiction to drugs or alcohol. Any response to tackling this complex issue should explore solutions to breaking the cycle of chaotic substance misuse and changing entrenched street based lifestyles. It appears as though several interventions need to come together at a critical time when motivation to change is high to support people to move on from street based lifestyles.

- There are a wide range of options available to meet people's basic needs, particularly access to food, most participants accessed food kitchens and/or food banks.
- Participants were grateful to members of the public who offered hot drinks and food and appreciated the social interaction this offered but this was not their motivation for begging and they describe being given more food and hot drinks than they could consume. This indicated that the goodwill of the general public could be directed in a different way
- Access to benefits impacted on the prevalence of participant's begging, and appears to be connected to a wider problem around rent arrears and moving in and out of temporary accommodation and rough sleeping. Anecdotally the lengthy wait for a benefits claim to be processed has seen some Fulfilling Lives NG clients dip back into begging activity.
- For some their begging became less prevalent when they were housed and they connected this to being better able to access substance misuse treatment services
- Participants who were not currently begging were on a script or in recovery, and described how they were starting to see that life could be different for them, they described being in a 'good place' and on the right footing to access services.
- There appeared to be a link between secure housing coming together at the same time as drug and alcohol treatment, because at this point participants reported feeling ready to reduce begging activity.

#### Place (Location)

- Rough sleeper hot spots have been mapped
- Haymarket Metro Station, Greggs Northumberland Street, Milligan's Northumberland Street, McDonalds & Burger King Northumberland Street. (the last four being takeaway food premises)
- Begging is obviously most prevalent in areas of high footfall.
- Places which have recesses such as fire escapes still allowing visibility onto the main thoroughfare are more desirable.
- Low level drug dealing among those engaged in Street living takes place in areas which are enclosed. (e.g. Telephone kiosks etc).



## Target / Victim

- Commuters, Business Owners, Wider Public - This is overt issues in the street. The problems are obvious for all to see and do not discriminate. People more susceptible to feeling intimidated will be more effected however this will be felt by all the community.
- Those in our community who are most vulnerable are known to be involved and identified as offenders / rough sleepers. However they themselves are at risk. By lacking access to housing or using substances these people are putting themselves in an increasingly vulnerable position.

We formed the following hypothesis based upon our analysis:

1. A cohort of multiply excluded individuals (those who have disengaged with numerous services) are now causing the most demand / risk and receiving the least amount of support. This is inevitably leading to criminalisation of vulnerable people via police intervention.
2. A lack of adequate accommodation (subjective assessment by the offenders) means people would rather sleep on the street. This makes the individual more vulnerable to being pulled into the substance misuse culture which then needs to be sustained.
3. Availability of drugs, particularly in the City, leads to increased crime and ASB due to intoxication.

We also looked at the evidence base for interventions to compare that against what we had previously employed, and in particular at the Joseph Rowntree funded research (Johnsen and Fitzpatrick, 2008) that considered the impact of enforcement on street users. In that report they had looked at the following enforcement interventions available at that time:

- **ASBOs**
- **Acceptable Behaviour Contracts (ABCs)** and **Acceptable Behaviour Agreements (ABAs)**
- **Injunctions**: the 1972 Local Government Act (Section 222) enables local authorities to apply for injunctions against behaviour that is a public nuisance. The 2003 Anti-Social Behaviour Act allows for the power of arrest to be attached to such injunctions where the behaviour complained of involves violence, threats of violence or a risk of harm.

- **1824 Vagrancy Act:** this legislation specifies that both begging (Section 3) and persistent begging (Section 4) are arrestable offences. The Vagrancy Act (Section 4) can in certain conditions also makes it an offence to sleep rough
- **Controlled drinking zones**
- **Dispersal Orders**
- **Designing out:** manipulation of the built environment to make 'hotspots' of street activity less habitable for street users
- **Alternative giving schemes or diverted giving campaigns:** these typically involve publicity campaigns to discourage the public from giving directly to those begging

Their findings and recommendations of the report were wide ranging and helped inform our responses, but we took particular note of the evidence base that said:

- The specific actions and personal circumstances of street users must be taken into account in making a considered judgement on whether enforcement action is both necessary and likely to be effective in each particular case.
- Given the potential for serious negative impacts on the well-being of street users, 'harder' enforcement measures should only be used as a last resort, when a street user persistently refuses to engage with supportive interventions and continues exhibiting ASB. They should never be used with extremely vulnerable street users, particularly those with serious mental health problems
- For enforcement to have a reasonable prospect of prompting a positive response from any street users, it must always be carefully integrated with individually tailored and (immediately) accessible supportive interventions; involve effective interagency working; and be articulated in such a way as to emphasise the positive options open to a street user, particularly the availability of appropriate accommodation and support.
- All relevant support providers should be represented at interagency operational forums to safeguard the well-being of vulnerable street users and ensure that supportive interventions are tailored appropriately to meet their needs.

Einstein's definition of insanity is often cited in Problem Solving circles, but it was clear that what we were doing wasn't working and we couldn't carry on doing the same thing. The problem wasn't inherently Rough Sleeping, nor was it intrinsically the act of Begging, we concluded that vulnerability was at the core of our crime problem, and Rough Sleeping and Begging were just symptoms of the bigger issue.

“We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them.” –  
Albert Einstein

Of course, this wasn't radically new thinking; vulnerability had long been acknowledged in the Local Authority strategies and indeed in our own policing effort, but usually seen as a consequence of a lifestyle rather than the major cause of the problem.

### **Response:**

#### **Op Arrow:**

We broke down our responses across the three elements of the problem analysis triangle.

### **Offender**

First and foremost, working with our partners, a clear set of ethical support and diversion pathways were created which recognised the importance of 'stepping back' from the presented issue (ASB for example) and considering the wider opportunity to break the cycle, whether it be rough sleeping / ASB / substance misuse.

We identified that too often police officers were acting in silos and using simple short term enforcement tactics to resolve a 'here and now' issue without any longer term impact.

These pathways were consulted upon among a wide variety of partners and senior stakeholders and achieved broad buy in. They created clear points of accountability among partners in respect of support and diversion prior to enforcement. The pathways also created additional safeguards regarding the type of enforcement that would ultimately be used and included positive requirements within injunctions etc. A copy of the pathways is included at the end of this submission.

Secondly, Operation Arrow included a dedicated team of police officers who deployed with the aim of reducing the negative impact of ASB on the community. whilst addressing the vulnerability of the individual.

Crucially though when behaviour does enter the realm of outright criminality we still took robust and action to protect the communities of Newcastle. But in doing so we recognised

that there was a lower level routine element to this behaviour within the City which needed to be addressed more holistically as it usually contained those with the highest levels of vulnerability.

#### Crowd Mapping Rough Sleeping

Newcastle Council introduced an innovative use of crowd mapping to enable the public to raise concerns regarding vulnerable people rough sleeping. (see Fig 1).

#### SLEEP (Street-Life Early Engagement Panel):

Practically, those individuals amongst the street community, who were engaged in ASB, are identified and dealt with in accordance with the agreed engagement pathway, which had the buy in of all the support services. But key to this working correctly was a newly established working group known as SLEEP (Street-Life Early Engagement Panel). This was the mechanism we used to ask support services to work with us in diverting the individuals from their disruptive behaviour, and addressing their key support needs.

This is obviously a complex matter to tackle and every individual had their own story, their own history and their own unique set of problems, however drugs and alcohol were anecdotally the major contributory factor.

We determined that we would only seek civil injunctions, in consultation with the local authority, should the pathway intervention prove unsuccessful. Importantly, whilst this included preventative conditions, it was not exclusively enforcement driven; Instead it concentrated on the support needs of the individual, working in conjunction with support services, using enforcement as a tool to drive the engagement and support. This is a much more ethical approach and sought to address the cause (vulnerability) not the symptom (anti-social behaviour).

#### **Location**

##### Design Out Crime:

At locations like the Grainger Market we became aware of issues on Clayton Street centred on the benches opposite the Harm Reduction Service. We started the process of having them removed which we calculated would also alleviate the requirements of having large commercial bins around the nearby phone boxes which serve to conceal illicit drug related activities. We also identified a workstream with a number of retailers around building recesses and other issues such as outside premises lighting to deter offending.

### CCTV:

Work with local authority and internal departments to analyse crime and disorder. This will be cross referenced with CCTV coverage and default positions to ascertain improvements.

### Northumberland Street Regeneration:

We engaged with partners within the local authority to identify crime and ASB hot spots and influence design ideas to help decrease crime and ASB.

### Newcastle POP:

Develop a multi agency working group which will meet 3 monthly to discuss issues in the City which require a multi agency problem solving approach. This will be chaired by the police (Sgt 466 Whyte). Problems will be submitted and circulated prior to the meeting and stakeholders will be invited and actions set, The aim is to streamline designing out crime and be more unified in our approach.

## **Victim**

### Newcastle Retail Crime Partnership:

We have developed a new relationship with Newcastle Retail Crime Partnership which in essence replaces "ShopWatch" and is not run by police. At the moment around 75% of retail businesses are attending the monthly operational meetings. Here we are engaging with businesses and changing the culture within their store from detection to prevention. We have identified those businesses which have a culture of detention as a performance indicator for their staff. Strikingly Primark staff told us this is an issue which is a matter of policy. This will be addressed with their management. In circumstances of less overt performance cultures we are providing crime prevention workshops with NRCP and providing the correct intelligence to help prevent crime occurring.

### Alternative Giving Campaign:

We worked with the local authority to develop an alternative giving campaign in relation to vagrancy. This gave members of public the option to give, but in a more controlled way, which reduces the vulnerability to the individual.

### Online PACT:

As a force we have PACT meetings (Partners And Communities Together), but for this project we have begun to engage with our community on-line, this includes the wider community and businesses. We found that people are often too busy and unable to take the time to attend a "drop in" however people are very willing to engage in a more convenient business friendly way. Online PACTS permit dynamic engagement enabling us to understand issues more from the perspectives of the community, improving our response cycle and concentrate our efforts in the areas which matter to our community.

#### Operation Spear: An unexpected Feedback Loop

In the life of any project, but I suppose particularly when dealing with a complex client group, many dynamic changes can occur. During the course of 2018 our city centre saw a dramatic uptake in street drug taking which caused significant problems that impacted severely not just on the Street Community, but everyone who came into contact with them. The drug of choice was Spice (a Novel Psychoactive Substance) and its impact threatened to undermine the whole ethos and intent of our work with the Street Community.

Because of the foundations laid by our analysis and the partnerships built in the scanning and response stage of OP Arrow we were better placed to respond to this emerging issue. We mounted a secondary series of responses under the collective banner of Operation Spear and it saw us engage in an upgraded enforcement plan that in itself linked back into Operation Arrow. The secondary operation included:

- We utilised various surveillance tactics under a RIPA authorisation.
- A dedicated team attached to the operation tasked by a surveillance officer to intervene prior to consumption exercising various powers including those under s23 of the Misuse of Drugs Act.
- Gathering information regarding the supply of drugs with a view to developing the intelligence picture.
- The operation ran at peak incident times (Monday to Friday 8am – 4pm).

#### Rough Sleeping Social Impact Bond

In 2018 Newcastle, amongst other North East local authorities achieved funding from Central Government for a Rough Sleeping Social Impact Bond. This project, delivered by a service provider called Changing Lives (working with Oasis Aquila) will run for 42 months and will work with people who are 18 or over with complex and co-occurring needs and a history of rough sleeping and homelessness. The project aims to shift the focus from a 'housing

related support' response to one which recognises how unmet 'underlying issues' and health needs in particular, prevent a transition to independence and an improved quality of life that can be sustained.

An appropriately skilled workforce is pivotal to the success of this SIB, and in response they have commissioned an integrated multi-disciplinary team (MDT) which includes a co-located Mental Health Social Worker and Addictions Nurse Specialist. The aim of the Social Impact Bond is to offer people personalised integrated and humane responses to meet their accommodation, health and care needs across both Newcastle and Gateshead

## **Outcomes**

- Entering accommodation
- Sustained accommodation (at 3, 6, 12, 18 and 24 months)
- General wellbeing assessments
- Entry into mental health services
- Sustained engagement with mental health support
- Entry into alcohol misuse treatment
- Sustained engagement with alcohol misuse treatment
- Improved education/training
- Volunteering (at 13 and 26 weeks)
- Part time work (at 13 and 26 weeks)
- Full time work (at 13 and 26 weeks)

## **Assessment:**

Despite the dynamic environment and the complexity of the challenges we have made significant progress during 2018. We started to specifically track the issue of Begging and Vagrancy in July 2017. (See Fig 2 & 3)

- In the last six months of 2017 (July to Dec) there had been a total of 460 incidents of begging/vagrancy. In the whole of 2018 there were 934 incidents but that includes a summer period when we were taking direct action to tackle the impact of the drug Spice on our Street Community (note: we had 515 incidents alone between March and August). In 2017 the average number of incidents in a month was 77, in 2018 it was 78 and in the first four months of 2019 it is 48.
- In 2017 there were 31 begging prosecutions this year we have reduced that by 19. 4% to 25 and things are looking positive for the year ahead.
- We have referred 8 people into the SLEEP- Street life early intervention hub.

- We have housed 5 vulnerable people into appropriate accommodation
- 2 individuals were subject to injunction hearings in January 2019 and 1 application for a Criminal Behaviour Order was successful.
- We have a safeguarding adult's process chaired by the LA to monitor displacement and reduction in service access. None of the services report any decrease in service access due to this activity.
- We have started to monitor rough sleeper numbers by doing a joint rough sleeper count with support services.

Any quantitative gains are really quite small steps in comparison to the major structural achievements of the new partnership approach.

The Problem-Solving process we utilized in Operation Arrow gave us a renewed clarity about the issues and how we should be thinking about the problem.

It allowed us to shift the focus of how we tackle this problem and put in place an ethical and sustainable procedure that can address the needs of the vulnerable Street Community in the years ahead.

Many words have been written about Problem Solving over the years, and still more about Policing, but the greatest reward for any of us involved in public service is to know we have made a difference, so I would like to conclude with the words of one past member of our Street Community, once homeless and desperate, now housed and in recovery, who made this telling contribution to the debate about the best way of dealing with the problem. He said...

*“Now, I’m in a relationship, I’ve got a massive 2 bed house, I get bathed every day, I own a ridiculous amount of trainers, the biggest thing, I’m hygienic. I contracted hepatitis C at 17, I’ve done the treatment, I go to bed at night, I haven’t hurt anybody and I wake up in a bed -, and I’m living a life beyond me wildest dreams. I am hoping to apply for an apprenticeship that is available next year, do that and eventually go into full-time work. I’ve passed my driving test so am saving up the money for a car – It never came into my thoughts. I sort of accepted I was a junkie and would die a junkie. I just sort of accepted that was the hand I got dealt.”*

Word Count: 3,830



# Appendix

Fig 1: Crowd Mapping Rough Sleeping in Newcastle city centre

[Home](#)   [Organisations](#)   Newcastle City Council – Reporting Sleeping Rough

## Newcastle City Council – Reporting Sleeping Rough



If you have any concerns about a person who might be rough sleeping then you can report it.

**Telephone:** 0191 278 3899

**Website:** [newcastle.gov.uk/housing/housing-advice-and-homelessness/what-to-do-if-you-see-a-rough-sleeper](http://newcastle.gov.uk/housing/housing-advice-and-homelessness/what-to-do-if-you-see-a-rough-sleeper)

**Email:** [roughsleeping@newcastle.gov.uk](mailto:roughsleeping@newcastle.gov.uk)

**Cost:** Free

**Address:**  
Housing Advice Centre  
112 - 114 Pilgrim Street  
Newcastle upon Tyne  
NE1 6SQ

Find Newcastle City Council – Reporting Sleeping Rough on Google Maps

Last updated: March 21, 2019

**Share page**

- Email page
- Print page
- Save page as PDF

**Favourite this page**

Please [login](#) or [register](#) to favourite this page.

Fig 2: Begging Vagrancy Reported Incidents

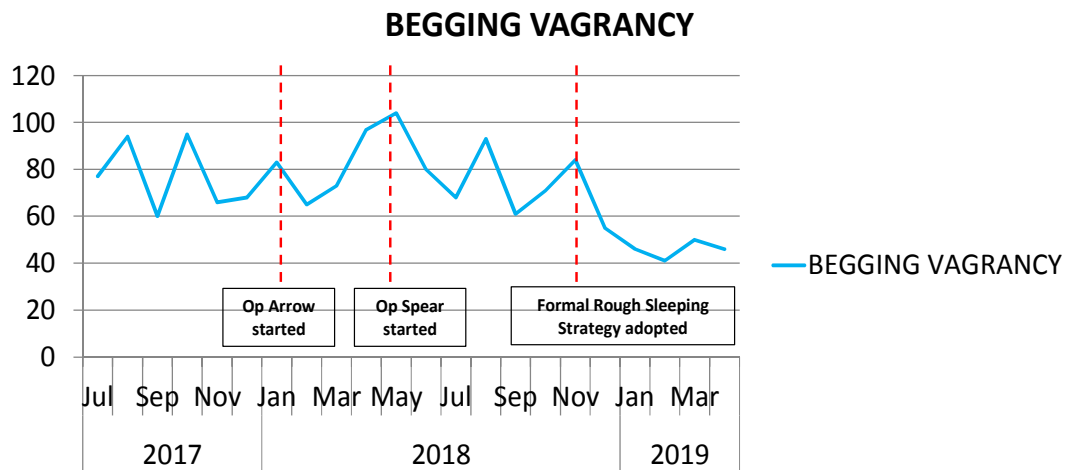


Fig 3: Begging Vagrancy Reported Incidents

	BEGGING VAGRANCY	
2017	Jul	77
	Aug	94
	Sep	60
	Oct	95
	Nov	66
	Dec	68
	Jan	83
	Feb	65
	Mar	73
	Apr	97
	May	104
	Jun	80
2018	Jul	68
	Aug	93
	Sep	61
	Oct	71
	Nov	84
	Dec	55
	Jan	46
2019	Feb	41
	Mar	50
	Apr	46