

Police Service of Northern Ireland

Use of Force Statistics

1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020

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Table of Contents

	Page
1. Overview of Police Use of Force	3
2. Longer Term Trends	
i) Use of Attenuating Energy Projectile (AEP): April 2008 – March 2020	4
ii) Use of Police Baton: April 2008 – March 2020	5
iii) Use of Irritant Spray: April 2008 – March 2020	6
iv) Use of Firearms : April 2008 – March 2020	7
v) Use of Force involving Police Dogs: April 2008 – March 2020	8
vi) Use of Conductive Energy Device (CED)*: April 2008 – March 2020	9
vii) Use of Water Cannon: April 2008 – March 2020	10

Data Quality

When police officers use force in the course of their duties they are required to self report this on a specially designed intranet database within PSNI. The PSNI's Statistics Branch then undertakes various completeness and accuracy checks of the submitted data before completing this statistical report. Whilst every effort is made to ensure that all incidents of use of force by the police are reported on this system, there is the possibility that some under-reporting exists and this should be borne in mind when using these statistics.

**Formerly referred to as TASER stun guns in this report. TASER is a trademark of Axon Enterprise Inc.*

Overview of Police Use of Force

Recommendation 21 of the Northern Ireland Policing Board’s Human Rights Annual Report (2008) requires the PSNI to, “provide the Policing Board with statistics on all categories of uses of force recorded on the PSNI electronic use of force monitoring system on a six monthly basis.” This report outlines the occasions of Police Use of Force up to 31st March 2020. This report will be updated every six months via pre-announced dates on the PSNI website with the next update due in December 2020.

Summary table police use of force between 1st April 2019 and 31st March 2020 compared to the same period last year.

Use of Force	1 Apr 2018 – 31 Mar 2019	1 Apr 2019 – 31 Mar 2020	% change ^(c)
AEP Pointed	39	49	+26%
AEP Discharged	4	4	-
AEP Total	43	53	+23%
Baton Drawn Only	330	271	-18%
Baton Drawn & Used	162	117	-28%
Baton Total	492	388	-21%
CS Drawn (not sprayed)	219	186	-15%
CS Sprayed	199	172	-14%
CS Total	418	358	-14%
PAVA Drawn (not sprayed)	0	0	-
PAVA Sprayed	3	5	+67%
PAVA Total	3	5	+67%
Firearm Drawn or Pointed	520	505	-3%
Firearm Discharged	0	0	-
Firearm Total	520	505	-3%
Police Dog Used	165	245	+48%
CED Drawn ^(a)	377	317	-16%
CED Fired ^(b)	22	26	+18%
CED Total	399	343	-14%
Handcuffs / Limb Restraints	5,064	4,348	-14%
Unarmed Physical Tactics	6,537	7,189	+10%
Water Cannon Deployment	0	0	-
Water Cannon Used	0	0	-
Water Cannon Total	0	0	-

^(a) Includes drawn/aimed and red-dot. ^(b) Includes Stun Drive. ^(c) % change figures rounded to nearest integer.

- AEP rounds were discharged on 4 occasions as a less lethal option during the reporting period. There were an additional 49 occasions during the same period when the AEP was pointed only; on 47 occasions as a less lethal option and twice during public disorder, when police were attacked with bottles, bricks and other missiles, resulting in 3 officers being injured.
- There were 388 occasions where batons were either drawn or used. The baton was drawn only on 271 occasions and on the remaining 117 occasions the baton was drawn and used.

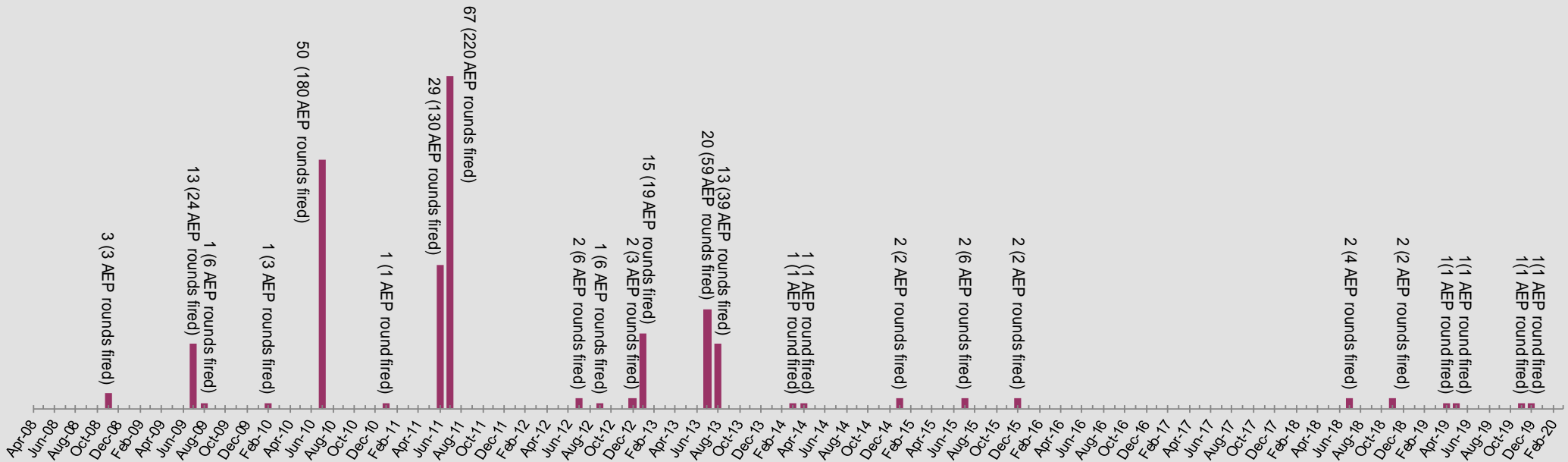
- There were 358 reported uses of CS spray, 186 of these resulted in the CS spray being drawn but not sprayed while on the remaining 172 occasions the CS spray was drawn and sprayed. PAVA was sprayed on 5 occasions.
- Firearms were drawn or pointed on 505 occasions. There were no discharges during this reporting period.
- Officers reported the use of a police dog on 245 occasions.
- Conductive Energy Devices (CEDs) were drawn^(a) on 317 occasions and were fired^(b) on a further 26 occasions.
- Restraints (handcuffs, flexi-cuffs and limb restraints) were used on 4,348 occasions and unarmed physical tactics (blocks/strikes, take downs, pressure points, physical restraints and other/improvised) were used on 7,189 occasions.
- There were no reported deployments of water cannon during the reporting period.

Appendix 1: Trend Information

(i) Attenuating Energy Projectile (AEP): April 2008 – March 2020

The AEP has been designed for use as a less lethal option in situations where officers are faced with individual aggressors whether acting on their own or as part of a group. It discharges less-lethal kinetic energy projectiles (impact rounds) and has two purposes. It can be used by a limited number of specifically trained officers in serious public order situations to fire at selected individuals. Secondly, it can be used by a small number of specifically trained firearms officers as a less-lethal option at firearms incidents (e.g. suspect wielding a knife or sword).

Figure A1: Number of occasions AEP discharged (number of rounds fired) trend information - April 2008 to March 2020

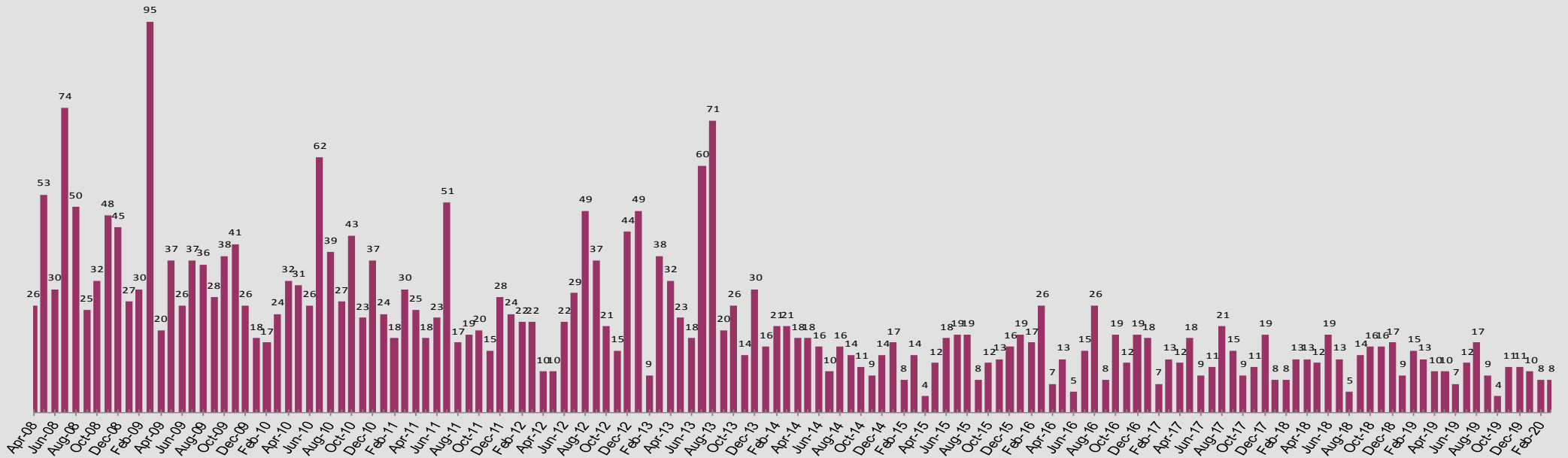


(ii) Use of Police Baton: April 2008 – March 2020

Officers will report any use of batons to their immediate supervisors as soon as practicable and submit an electronic use of force form, making their baton available for inspection. In addition, in circumstances where a baton has been drawn but not used, officers will submit a report (electronic use of force monitoring form) where it is reasonable to expect that a person (or persons) have anticipated a threat of force being used against them.

There may also be occasions where a supervisory officer gives a direction to other officers to draw their batons. This would most likely occur during serious public order situations. In such circumstances only the officer giving the direction is required to complete an electronic use of force monitoring form. However, if any officer has occasion to strike an individual(s) then they must submit an electronic use of force monitoring form to indicate 'baton used'.

Figure A2: Number of occasions Baton drawn & used trend information - April 2008 to March 2020



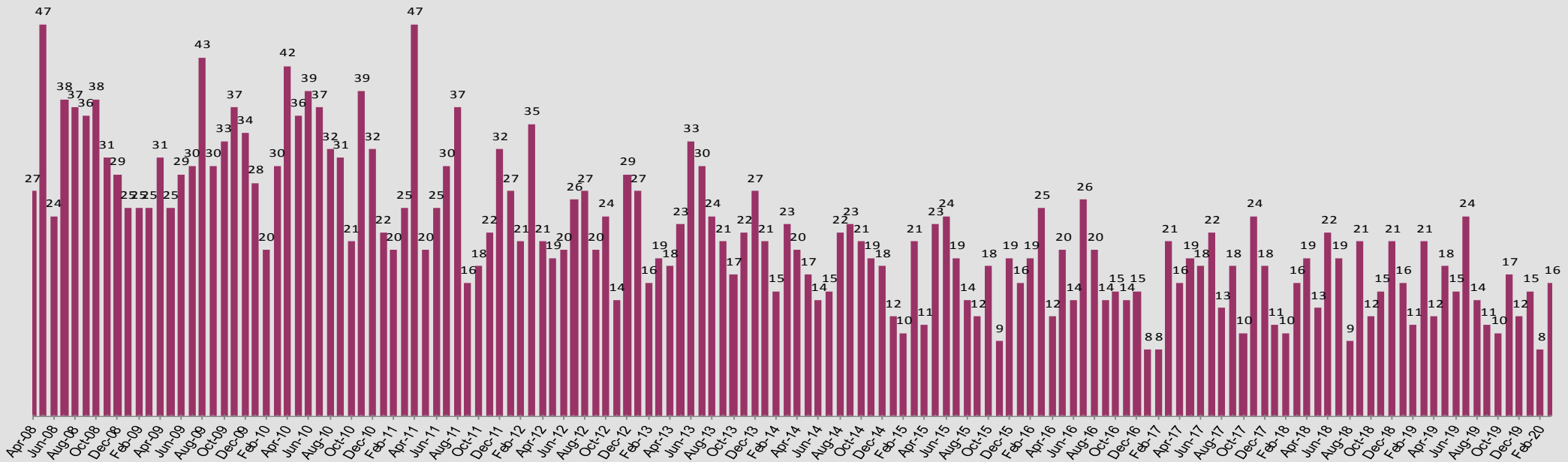
(iii) Use of Irritant Spray: April 2008 – March 2020

The PSNI uses a CS irritant spray that has a 5% concentration of CS in the solvent MIBK (Methyl Isobutyl Ketone). CS spray is issued to officers who have been trained in the Personal Safety Programme and is worn as part of the normal patrol equipment. Plain-clothes officers are also trained and issued with CS spray. Service policy states that CS Spray is not to be used during serious public order situations as a crowd dispersal tactic.

Upon impact the solvent evaporates rapidly leaving CS particles to gain compliance of the subject. Effects last on average for about 20 minutes. A person who has been sprayed with CS spray will be classified as ‘injured’ and police officers will if possible administer aftercare advice. An officer drawing or discharging the device, or once drawn, subsequently points the device at any individual or group, must record this use and any warning given.

PAVA Spray was introduced to PSNI in a limited pilot on 1st January 2016. During this trial PAVA Irritant spray has been issued to officers that carry Conductive Energy Devices and also some Portal officers. In addition to the CS spray detailed in the graph below, between April 2016 and September 2019 PAVA Spray was used on 13 occasions.

Figure A3: Number of occasions CS Sprayed trend information - April 2008 to March 2020



(iv) Use of Firearms: April 2008 – March 2020

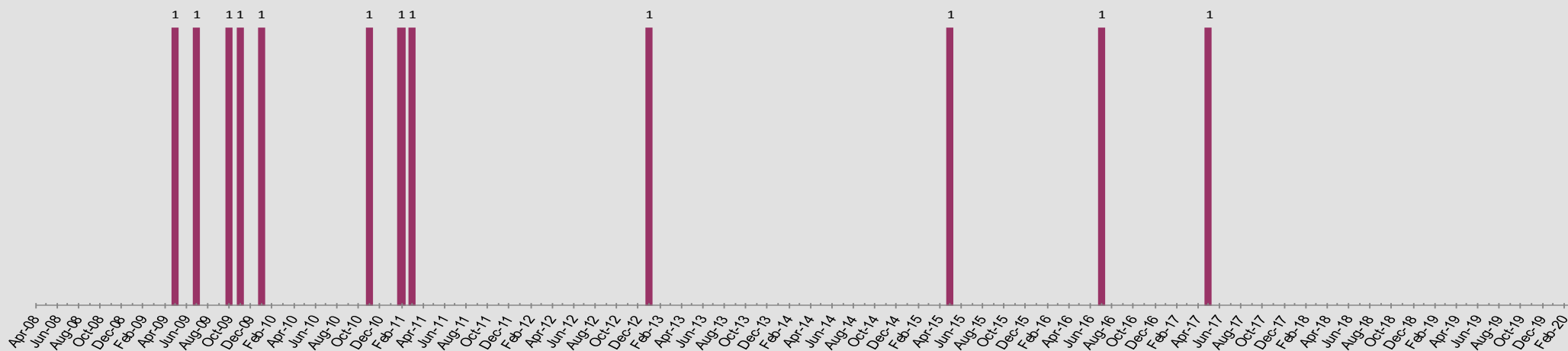
In recognition of the special circumstances prevailing in Northern Ireland, the Chief Constable has given standing authority for all officers, subject to successful training, to be issued with a personal issue handgun. This standing authority is kept under regular review. A police officer is deemed to have used a firearm when it is:

- (i) Pointed at another person;
- (ii) Fired at another person in self defence or in defence of another, whether or not injury or death results;
- (iii) Discharged in any other operational circumstances.

In addition officers are required to report any instance when they have occasion to draw their personal issue handgun.

District Commanders/Heads of Branch ensure that an appropriate number of officers are trained in order to meet locally identified needs, based upon an evaluation of the prevailing security situation and risk assessment. There are also a number of specifically trained firearms officers to deal with pre-planned and spontaneous firearms incidents. These officers deploy with H&K weapons and the Glock personal issue handgun but also have available other less lethal options including Taser and the Attenuating Energy Projectile (AEP) system.

Figure A4: Number of occasions firearm discharged trend information - April 2008 to March 2020

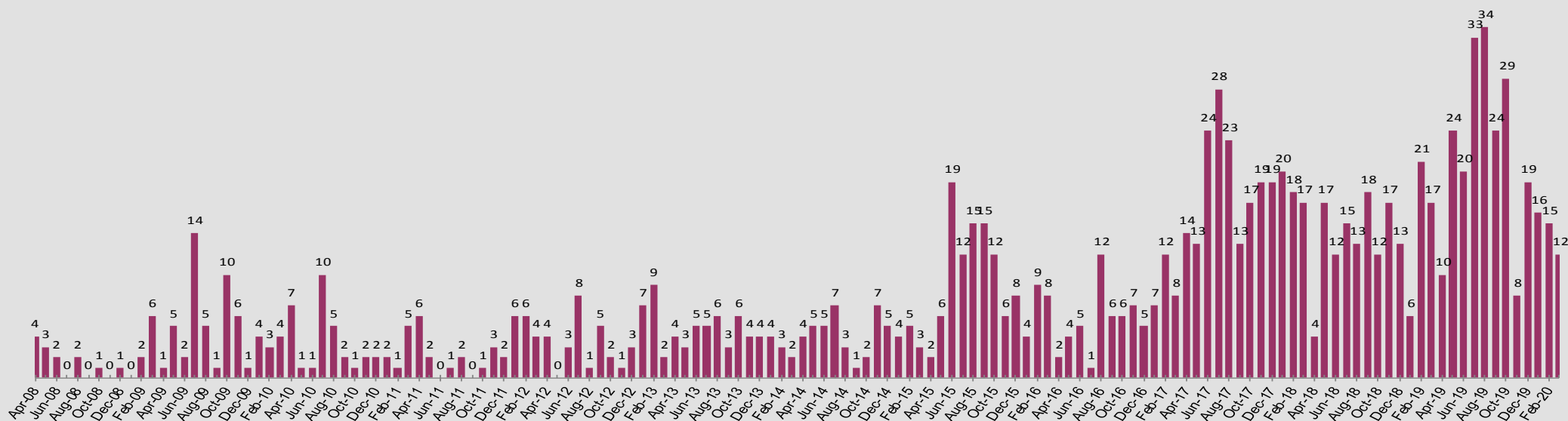


(v) Police Use of Force involving Police Dogs: April 2008 – March 2020

All Police dogs are under the control of Operational Support Department and can be used for a variety of purposes. Use of force only reflects a very small proportion of the overall work that police dogs carry out. The main types of force that are recorded for dog use include:

- when the dog is deployed to achieve control of an immediate threat to the handler, other officers, innocent persons or the dog itself whether or not the dog bites or causes injury
- when the dog is deployed to apprehend a fleeing offender/subject, whether or not it bites or causes injury
- when the dog bites at the direction of the handler and there is no injury
- when the dog bites not at the direction of the handler and there is no injury

Figure A5: Number of occasions Police Dog Used trend information - April 2008 to March 2020



(a) The categories used to record the level of police dog deployment were refined in April 2015

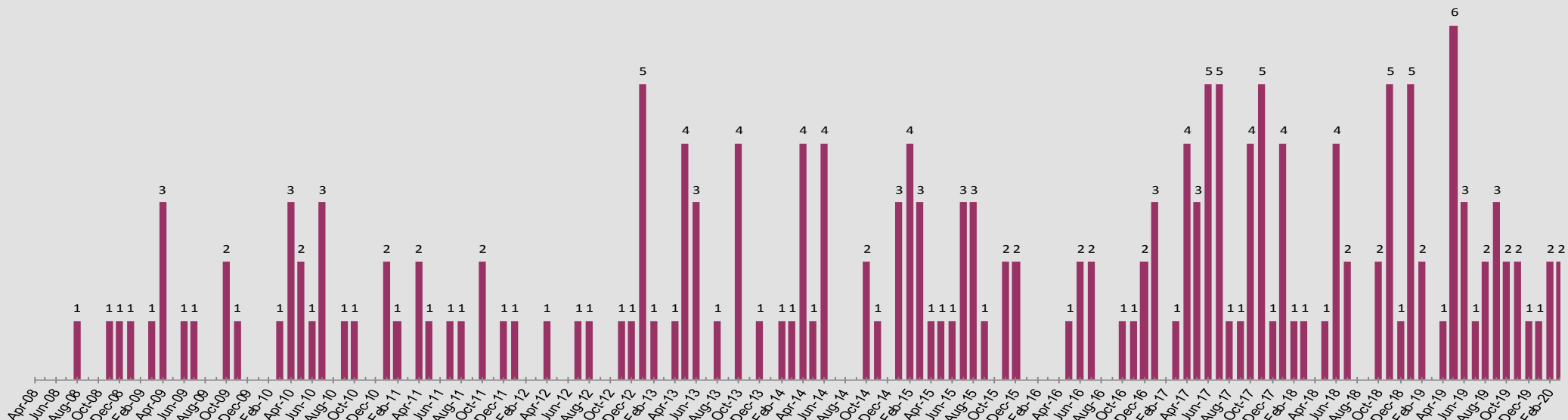
(vi) Police Use of Conductive Energy Device (CED): April 2008 – March 2020

The Conductive Energy Device (CED) is a single shot weapon designed to temporarily incapacitate a subject through the use of an electrical current, which temporarily interferes with the body’s neuromuscular system. Use of the CED is one of a number of tactical options available to an officer who is faced with violence or the threat of violence, which may escalate to the point where the use of lethal force would be justified. Its purpose is to temporarily incapacitate an individual in order to control and neutralise the threat that they pose.

Conductive Energy Devices were introduced to PSNI in a limited pilot on 25th January 2008. They were issued to specialist firearms officers and have also been made available to authorised firearms officers attached to Armed Response Vehicles (since 19th December 2008) who have completed NPCC approved accredited training in the use of the device.

In terms of use of force, the CED can be drawn/aimed, arced, red dotted (at which stage a red dot appears on the subject indicating where the CED would hit) or fired/discharged. The figure below shows the number of times that a CED was discharged.

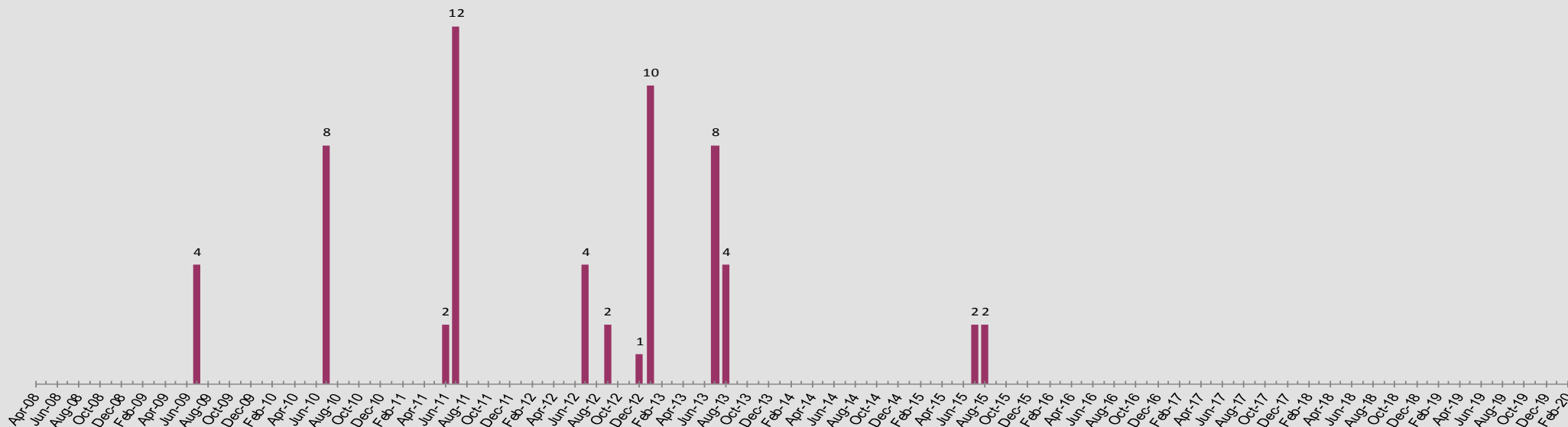
Figure A6: Number of occasions CEDs Used trend information - April 2008 to March 2020



(vii) Police Use of Water Cannon: April 2008 – March 2020

The PSNI has 6 water cannons at its disposal which are kept at different police locations within Northern Ireland to ensure that they can respond quickly to any incident. Water cannon vehicles are deployed and used only when authorised by appropriate officers in accordance with the NPCC manual of guidance, public order, standards, tactics & training.

Figure A7: Number of occasions Water Cannon Activated trend information - April 2008 to March 2020



(a) Following a review of the Use of Water Cannon graph, the figures for the months between August 2008 and February 2011 were updated on 16th December 2016.