

John Nightingale
Head of Revenues and Benefits
London Borough of Bromley
Civic Centre
Stockwell Close
Bromley
BR1 3UH

Date: 15th June 2016

Our Ref: AIF/GT

Dear John,

As we approach the July Executive & Resources PDS meeting where we consider and review the performance of the Benefits service, we take this opportunity to write to you with Liberata's assessment of the performance of this critical, high profile service that we provide to London Borough of Bromley (LBB) and its citizens.

We are very pleased to report that Liberata continues to make significant improvements in the performance of the Benefits Service. Our close partnership working with both the Housing and Leaving Care Team has continued to grow with strong liaison between all parties. This has resulted in claims being processed quickly and queries being resolved in a timely manner.

Liberata are very pleased to inform that we have retained our CCA Global Standard version 6 accreditation for Customer Service which is one of the most prestigious awards for Customer Service Excellence, Innovation, Inspiration and Leadership. This is a great achievement for our Shared Service Contact Centre and recognition of our staff who have delivered an award winning service for our customers.

This summary covers performance for the period 1st April 2015 to 31st March 2016.

1. Current Status of the Benefits Service

The Benefits caseload, which measures all households receiving Housing Benefit and/or Council Tax Support, was 21,324 as at the end of March 2016. This has reduced from the end of March 2015 when the caseload was 22,180.

In terms of our current position for the nationally recognised Right Time Indicator, our average performance as at 31st March 2016 was 11.02 days compared to

13.85 days for the same period last year. This is against an annual contractual target of 13 days.

The processing performance of New Claims was 18.84 days and Changes was 8.43 days. The DWP acceptable levels of performance are 31 days for New Claims and 16 days for Changes.

The improvement in processing time is as a direct result of the processes put in place in 2014/15. We continue to focus on building and improving these processes further to deliver an exceptional service to our customers.

We can confirm that the workload continues to be processed within compliance and requests for further information are sent to customers within 10 working days.

1.1 Temporary Accommodation

We continue to see a significant number of customers accessing the Temporary Accommodation channel. This is as a result of the shortage of affordable privately rented accommodation within the Borough which continues to be an issue for customers. In addition, we are still seeing the affect of the Benefit Cap as customers that previously had their benefit restricted and continued paying their rent are increasingly unable to afford these properties.

The joint working between Liberata's dedicated Temporary Accommodation resource and the Housing teams has proven to be effective. This is relayed to Liberata during the regular liaison meetings with our stakeholders and the appropriate teams within the Council.

We have significantly reduced the number of queries from our stakeholders by implementing both phases of the automated reporting as to the status of benefit claims. These outline the current position of a customer's benefit claim and their assessed entitlement once the claim has been calculated.

We offer verification training to all Council and stakeholder new starters. This allows the staff to verify original documents to the DWP's standards and enables claims to be processed promptly, as requestes for further information are minimised.

1.2 ATLAS

ATLAS is a process of transferring data from the DWP systems to the Local Authority systems. The data reports on changes which may not have been reported by the customer. These changes enable us to ensure the entitlement of customers is correct and consistent with the information held by the DWP. All three phases of ATLAS are now live with a high number of welfare Benefits being

reported on. The number of ATLAS files, and the volume of data contained in them, continues to inflate the number of outstanding workload items.

We are able to automate many of the DWP benefits which are reported to us through the ATLAS process. This includes the automation of changes to Working Tax Credits and Child Tax Credits. However, we are continuing to investigate further automation on areas such as Pension Credit changes and Disability Benefits.

1.3 Real Time Information

Based on the success of the Real Time Information (RTI) pilot, the HMRC initiative to reduce fraud and error, the DWP have decided to continue with this initiative for 2015/16. We have created a total of £1.7m worth of overpayments as a direct result of RTI data matched for the period April 2015 to March 2016.

Early this calendar year the DWP advised that Authorities will receive 'Optional' RTI files. These are likely to be three times the volume of the current mandatory RTI files which we process. Although the processing of these is not mandatory, LBB have opted into the initiative on the basis that otherwise claimants listed could continue to receive the incorrect level of assistance.

1.4 Quality

We have continued making significant improvements in the quality of the assessments which we carry out. The average error rate for the period April 2015 to March 2016 was 2.50% compared to 5.49% for the same period in 2014/15.

We are very pleased with the level of quality and continue to focuss on reducing errors. The robust quality management framework which we have in place ensures that claims are processed to a high standard which minimises the potential to create errors.

1.5 Overpayment Strategy

The creation of overpayments is a natural bi-product of the administration of Housing Benefit & Council Tax Support, with recovery needing to be sought from some of the most vulnerable members of the community.

The recovery rate as at 31st March 2016 was 75.69%. This figure was adversely impacted by the creation of overpayments as a result of the RTI initiative. The recovery rate excluding RTI overpayments at the end of March 2016 was 84.22% against a target of 83%.

We have increased the level of resource on our overpayments team to ensure that we maximise our recovery capacity.

The incentive/penalty scheme has been suspended as agreed at the recent meeting of the Executive. However, Liberata continues to report on recovery performance on all overpayment debt which has been created.

Our recovery process utilises proactive measures to maximise collection. All debts over £2,000 are sent to a solicitors firm to assist in obtaining County Court Judgements.

We are now using Direct Earnings Attachments as a recovery method. This allows us to recover a customer's debt directly from their earnings.

Blameless tenant recovery continues to be a highly effective mechanism in recovering debts from landlords that receive benefit for multiple tenants. Since the initial implementation of Blameless Tenant we have seen landlords repay overpayments promptly to prevent this form of recovery taking place.

1.6 Universal Credit

Bromley has now gone live with the first phase of migration to Universal Credit which only covers single working aged claimants.

The impact of the migration to Universal Credit has been minimal, however as further areas of the caseload transfer we will begin to see a more significant effect. We are seeing more effort required in dealing with the requests received from the DWP in relation to complex housing costs and rental information. We have a dedicated resource that is the Single Point Of Contact (SPOC). The SPOC liaises directly with the DWP by email and telephone and ensures any requests which we receive from them are dealt with promptly and within the DWP service level of 5 days.

2. Call Centre & Customer Services

The number of Revenues & Benefits customers seen in Customer Services for the period 1st April 2015 to 31st March 2016 totalled 44,220. During this period 74% of customers were seen within 15 minutes, against a target of 85%. During the same previous 12 month period the team saw 49,992 customers and delivered a service level of 88%. Although footfall numbers have fallen from the previous period, the team have had to deal with increasingly more complex queries, many of which were from customers affected by the Welfare Reform changes. There is also more focus on first time resolution, which has the knock-on affect of making the transaction times longer, but has the positive affect of reducing visitor numbers.

During the same period, the Contact Centre (Help Line) received 198,483 calls with 88% answered. In the equivalent previous 12 months, the Contact Centre received 232,304 calls. This demonstrates that channel shift has been effective in

the 2015/16 financial year, as the team continue to promote the online forms, information on Council's website and the My Bromley portal.

3. Service Developments

Liberata's goal is to continue to improve and enhance the services provided to the Council and its citizens through the introduction of innovative and effective solutions.

Examples of current year new and ongoing initiatives;

- Implementation of online Change of Address form
- Implementation of Academy 'Insight' which is the upgraded software to the previous Academy 'Decisions & Appeals' which will play a significant role in ensuring process compliance and minimising delays with processing times
- Further recruitment of a new team of assessors who will be based at our Burnley office
- Automation of 'Benefit Cap' cases
- Automation of Real Time Information (RTI) HMRC data matches
- Piloting the cross working of call centre and back office staff
- Implementing a new scanning process where documents will be scanned at the point of submission by customers at reception
- Implementation of 'Capita Connect'. This will allow customer to use online forms to make a new claim or report changes to an existing claim. The information on the forms will be integrated with the back office processing system
- Introduction of a Triage reception within our Customer Services area. Customers are now able to submit documents quickly without having to take a ticket and wait for their number to be called

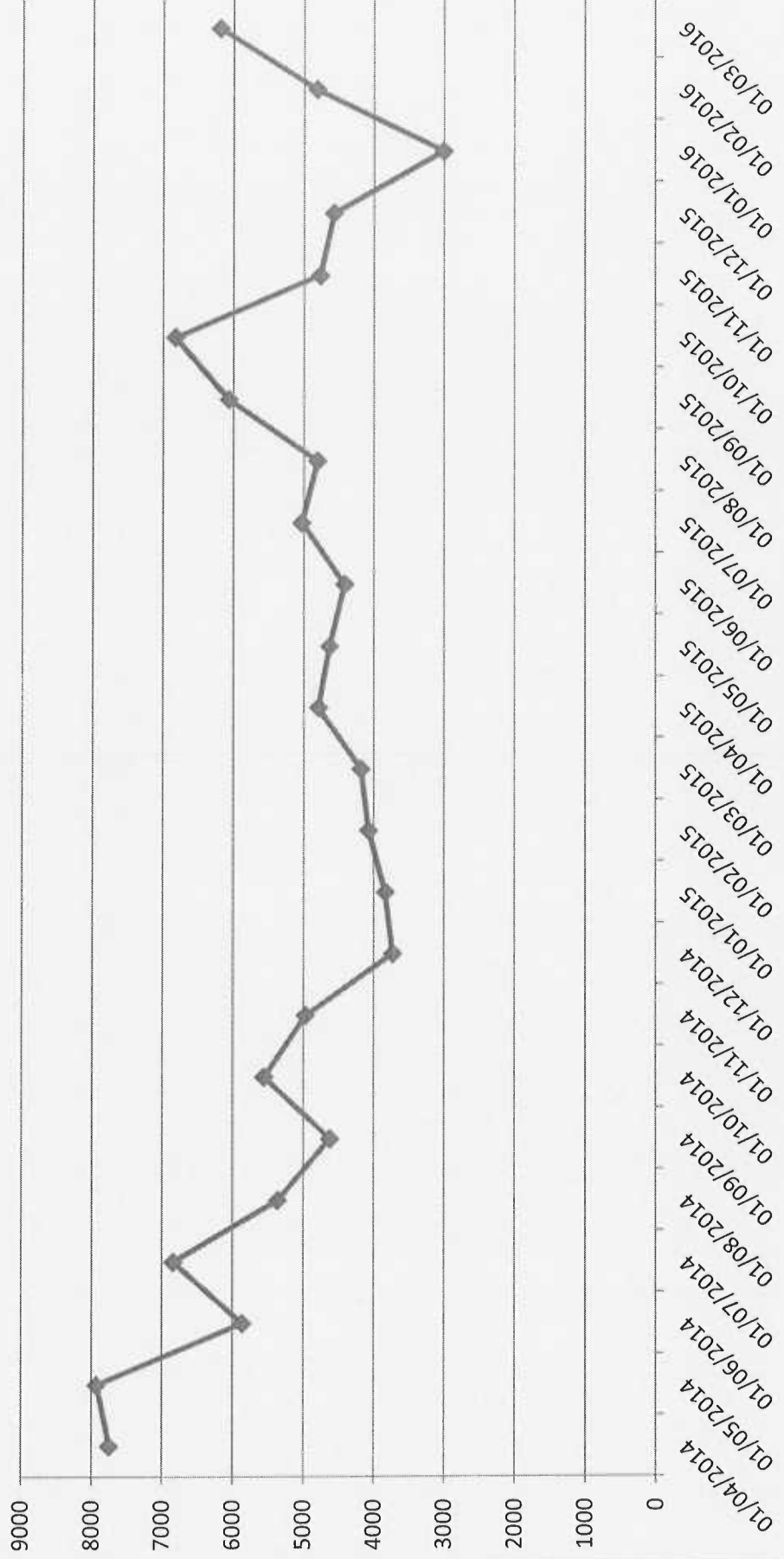
Liberata remains firmly committed to delivering an outstanding service to the London Borough of Bromley and its citizens.

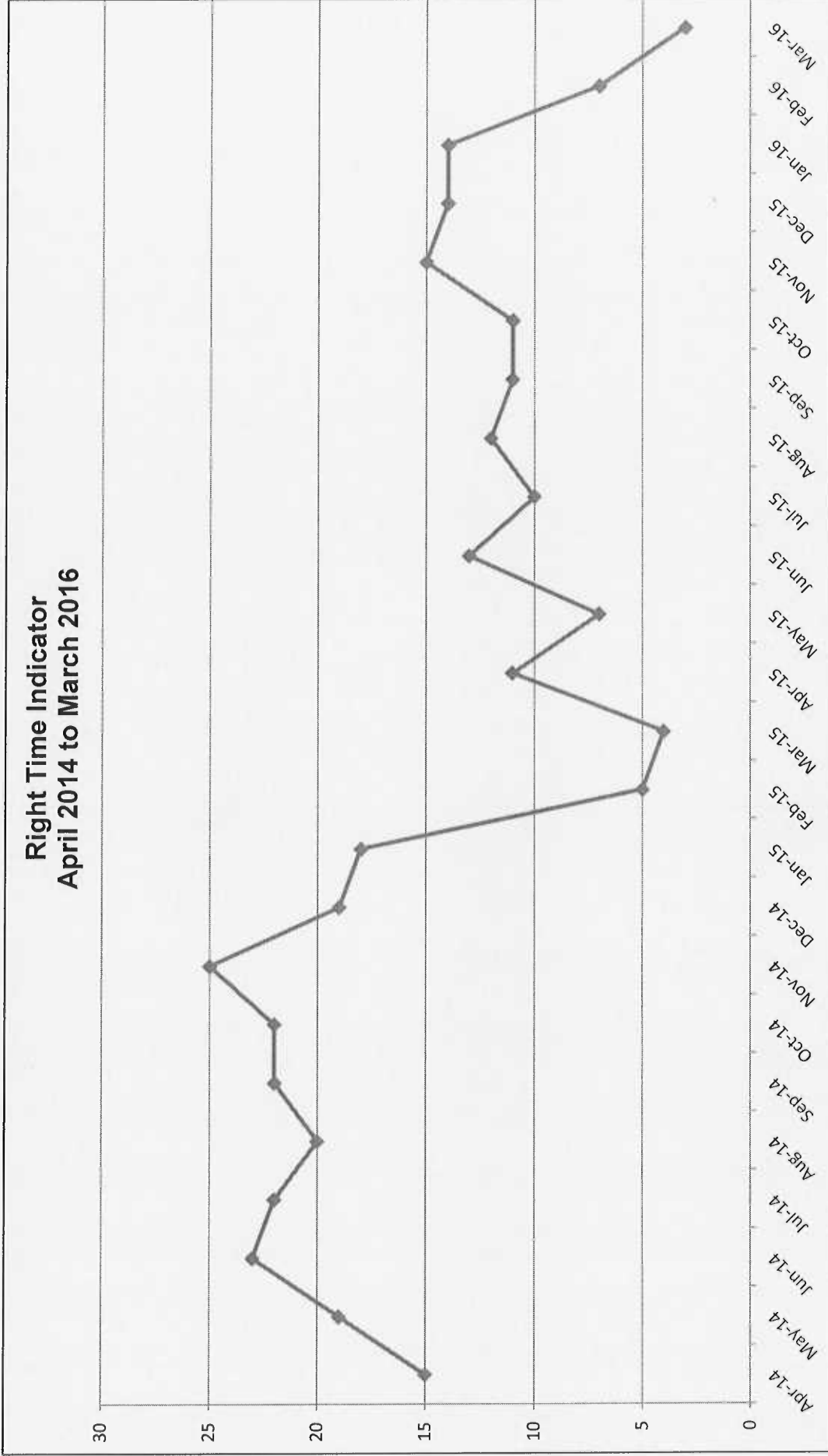
Yours sincerely,



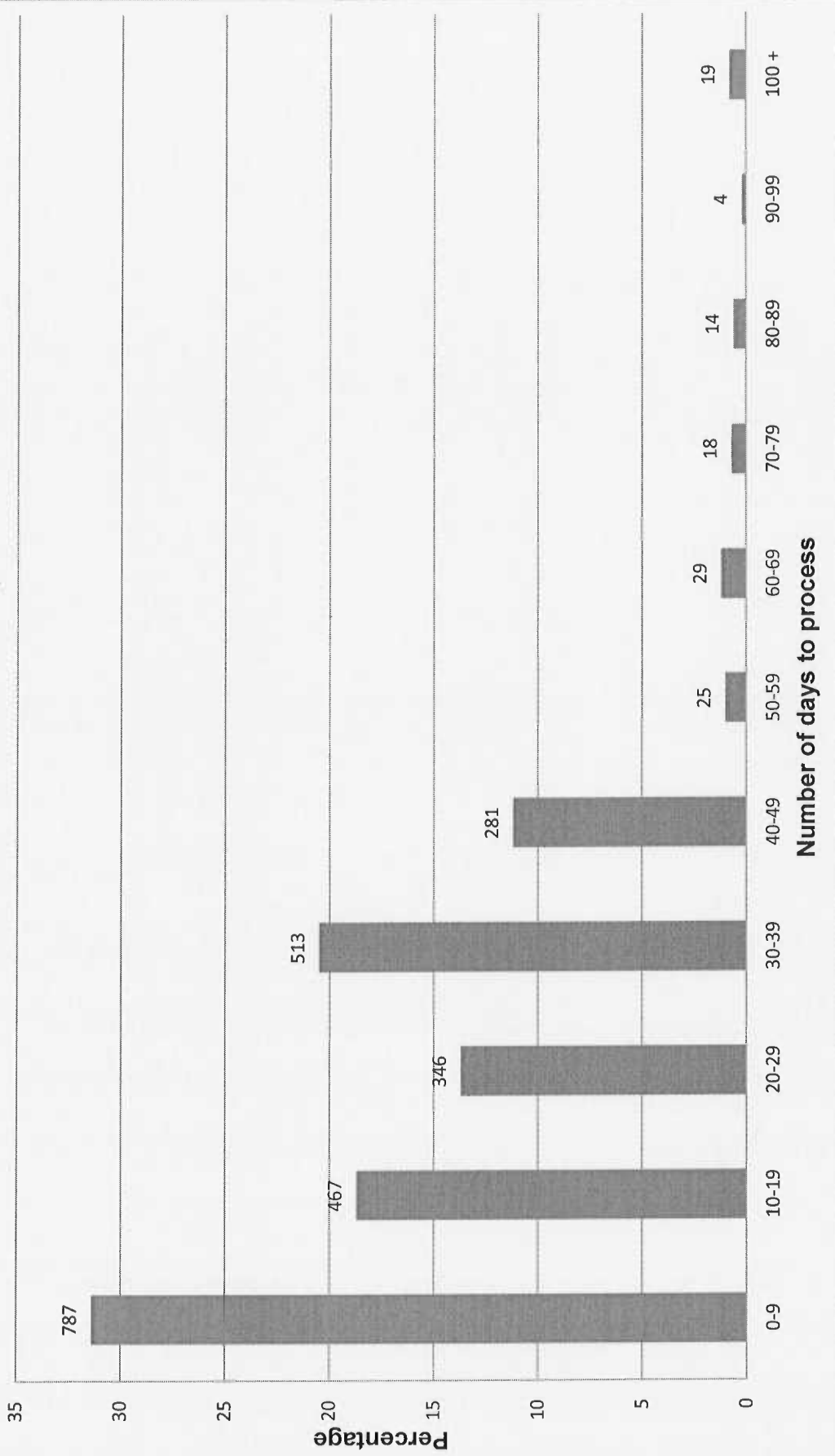
Amanda Inwood-Field
Contract Director

**Total Pending and Outstanding Work
April 2014 to March 2016**



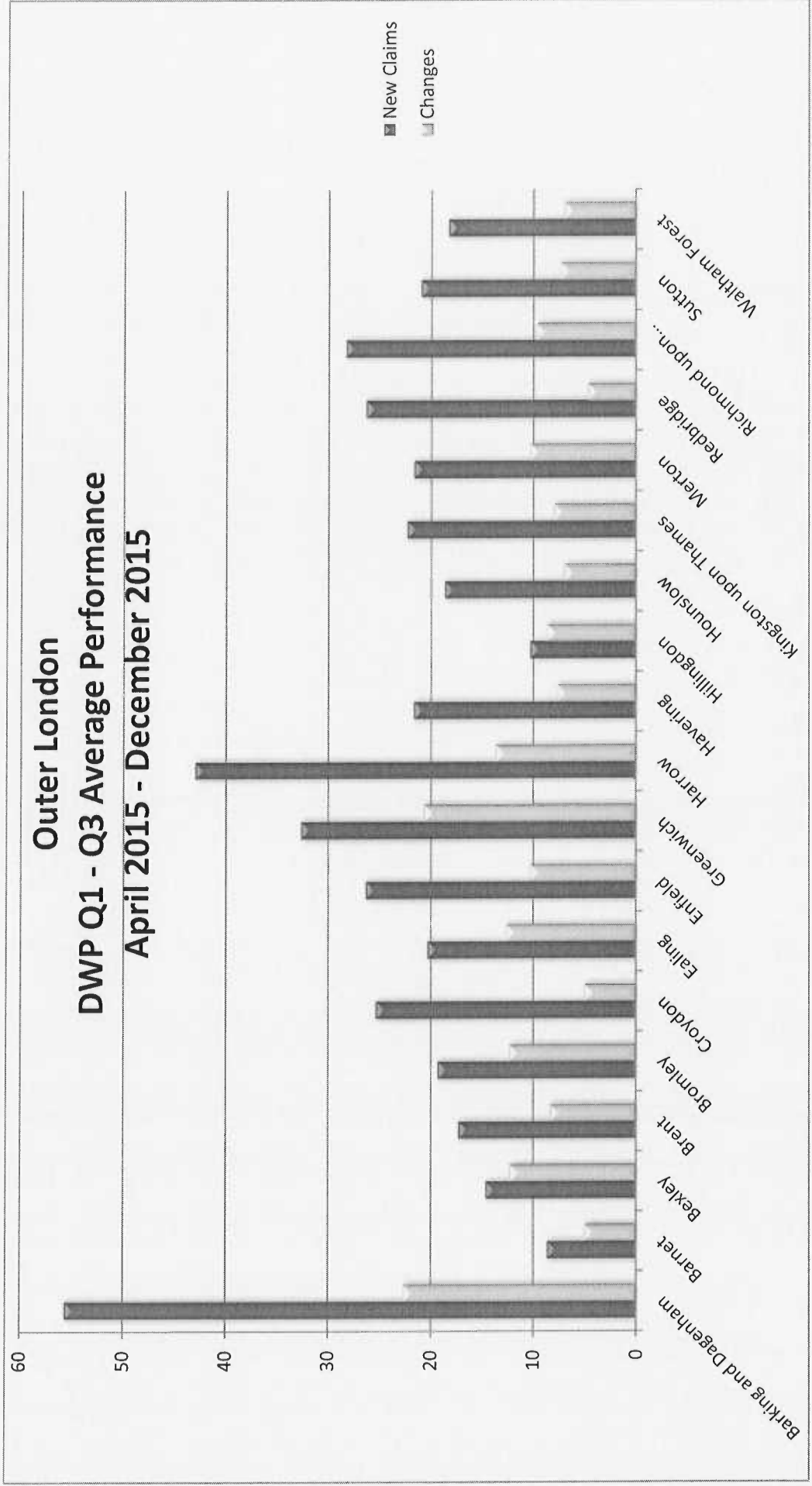


Housing Benefit - processing time breakdown October 2015 to March 2016
 New Claims (2503 cases)

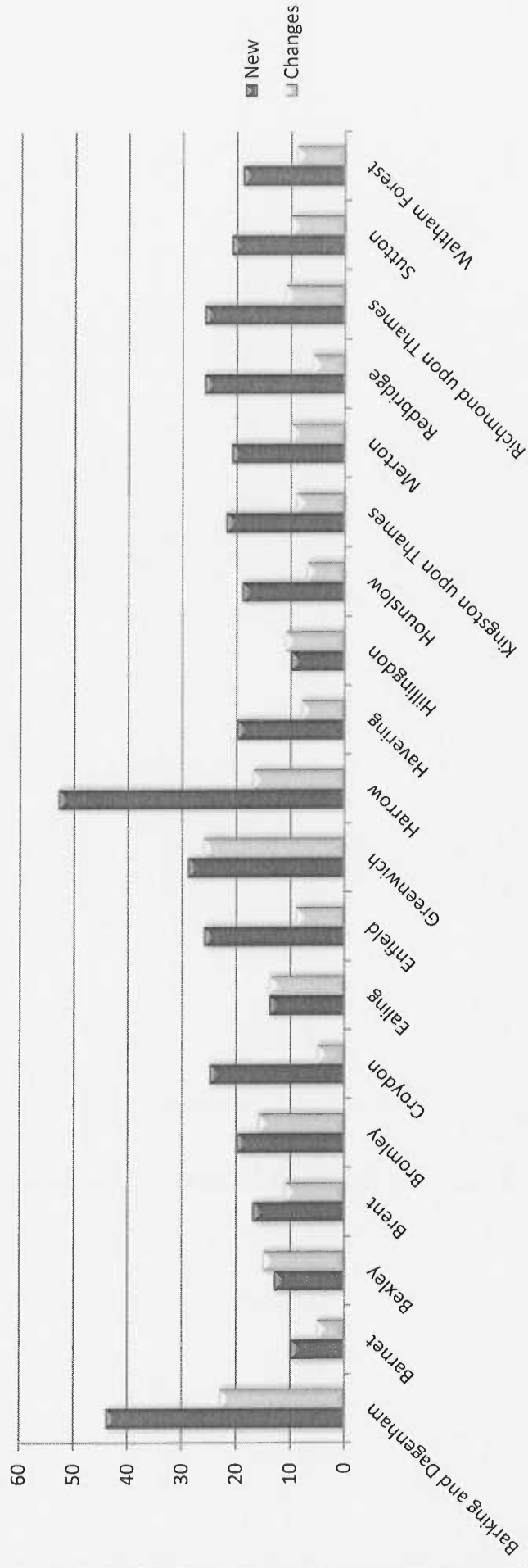


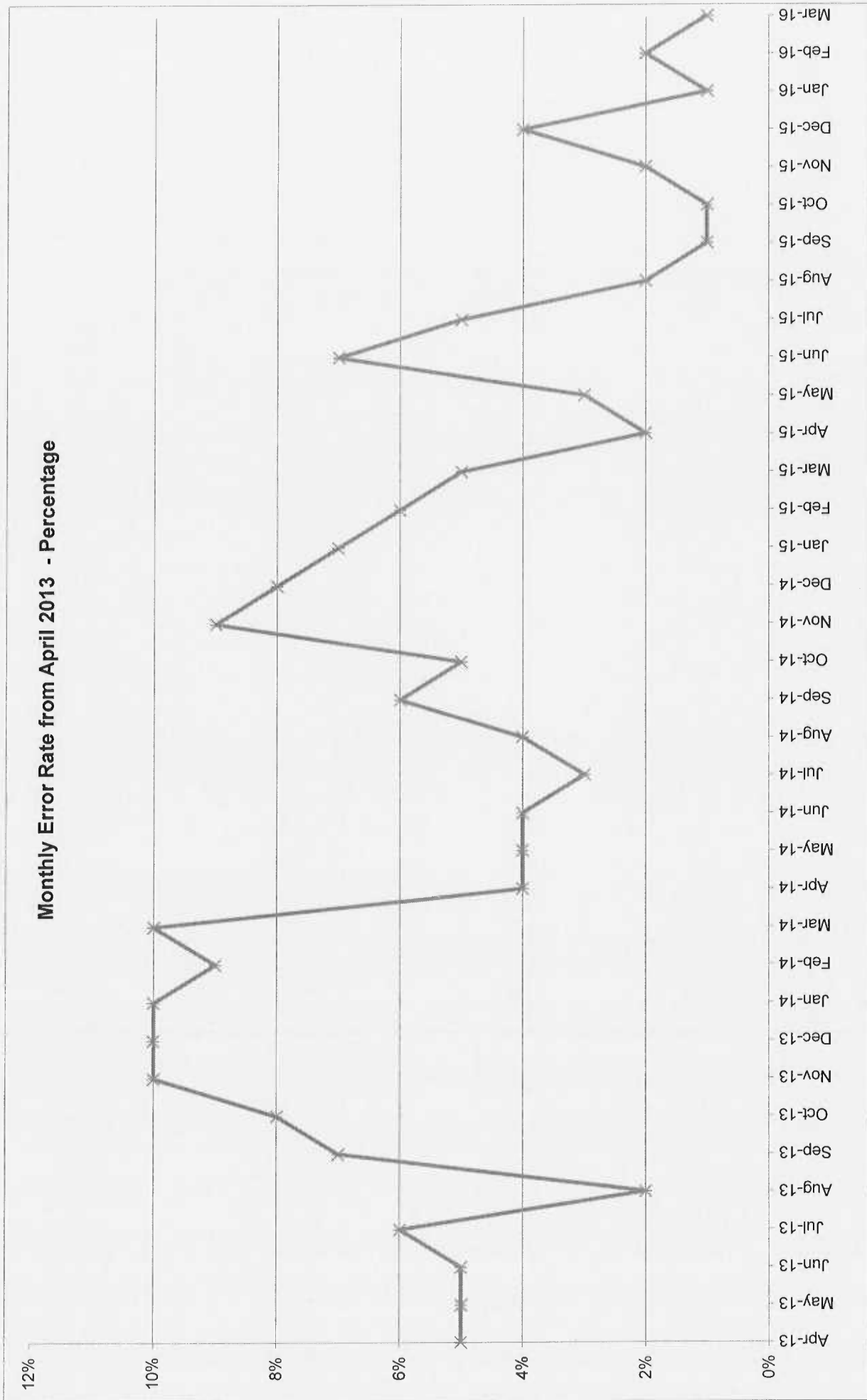
**Housing Benefit - processing time breakdown October 2015 to March 2016
Change in Circumstances (49439)**



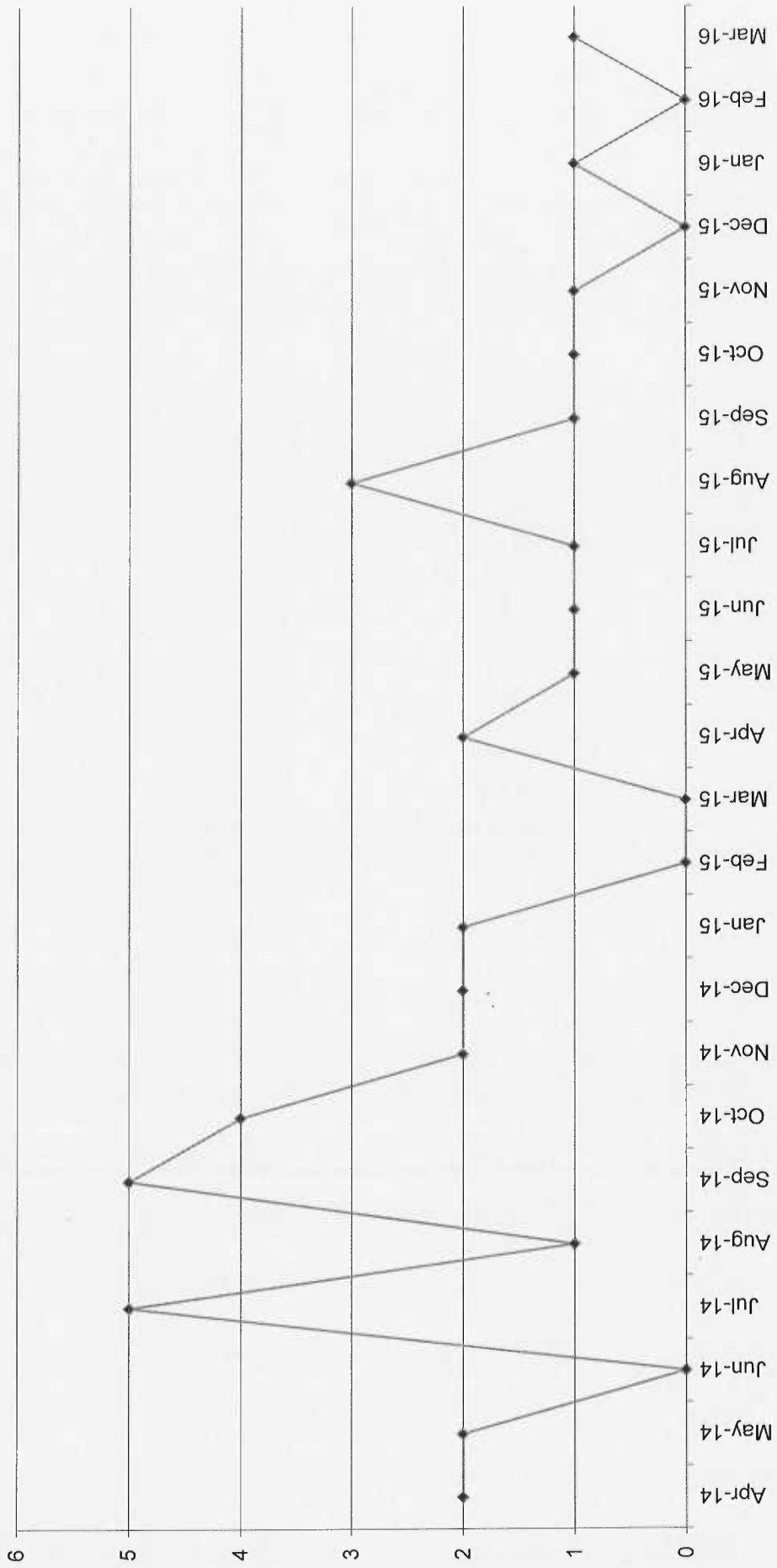


Outer London DWP Q3 Average Performance October 2015 - December 2015

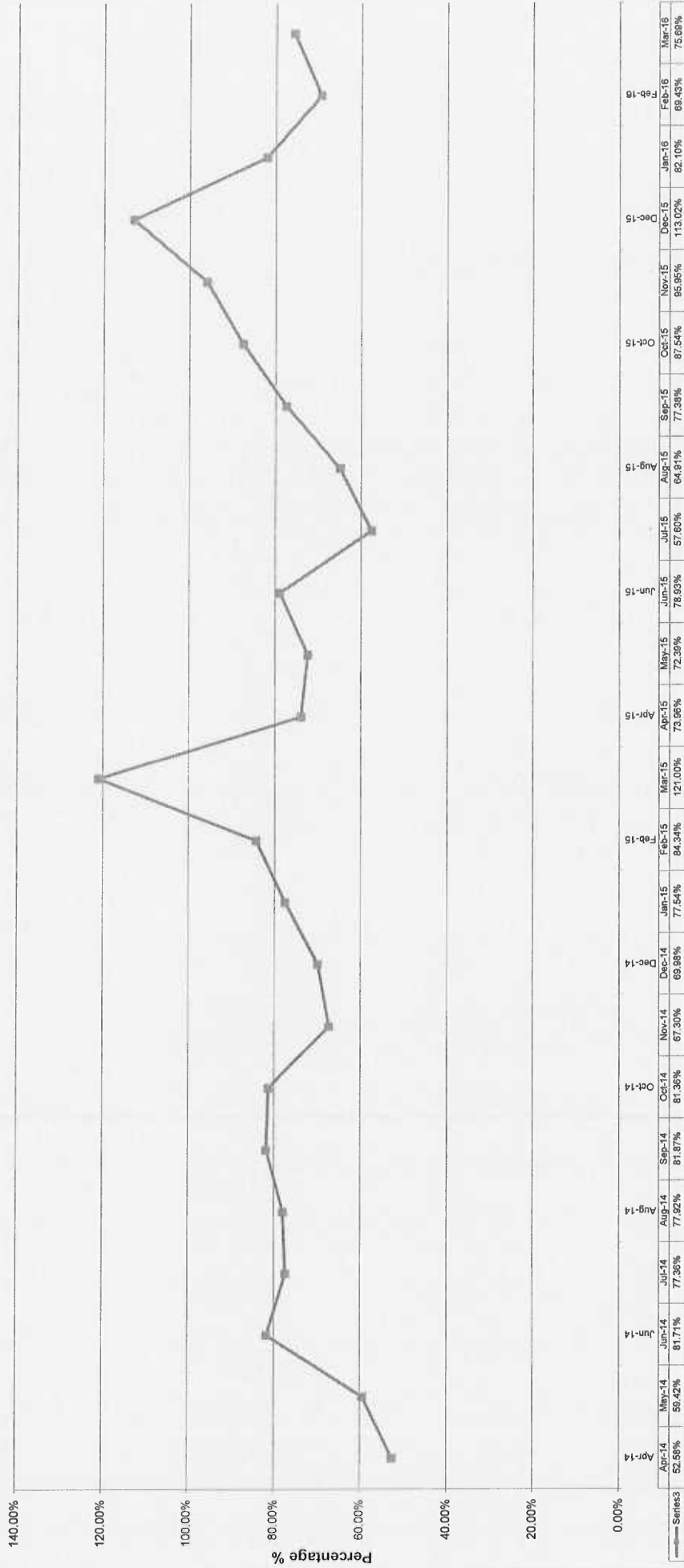




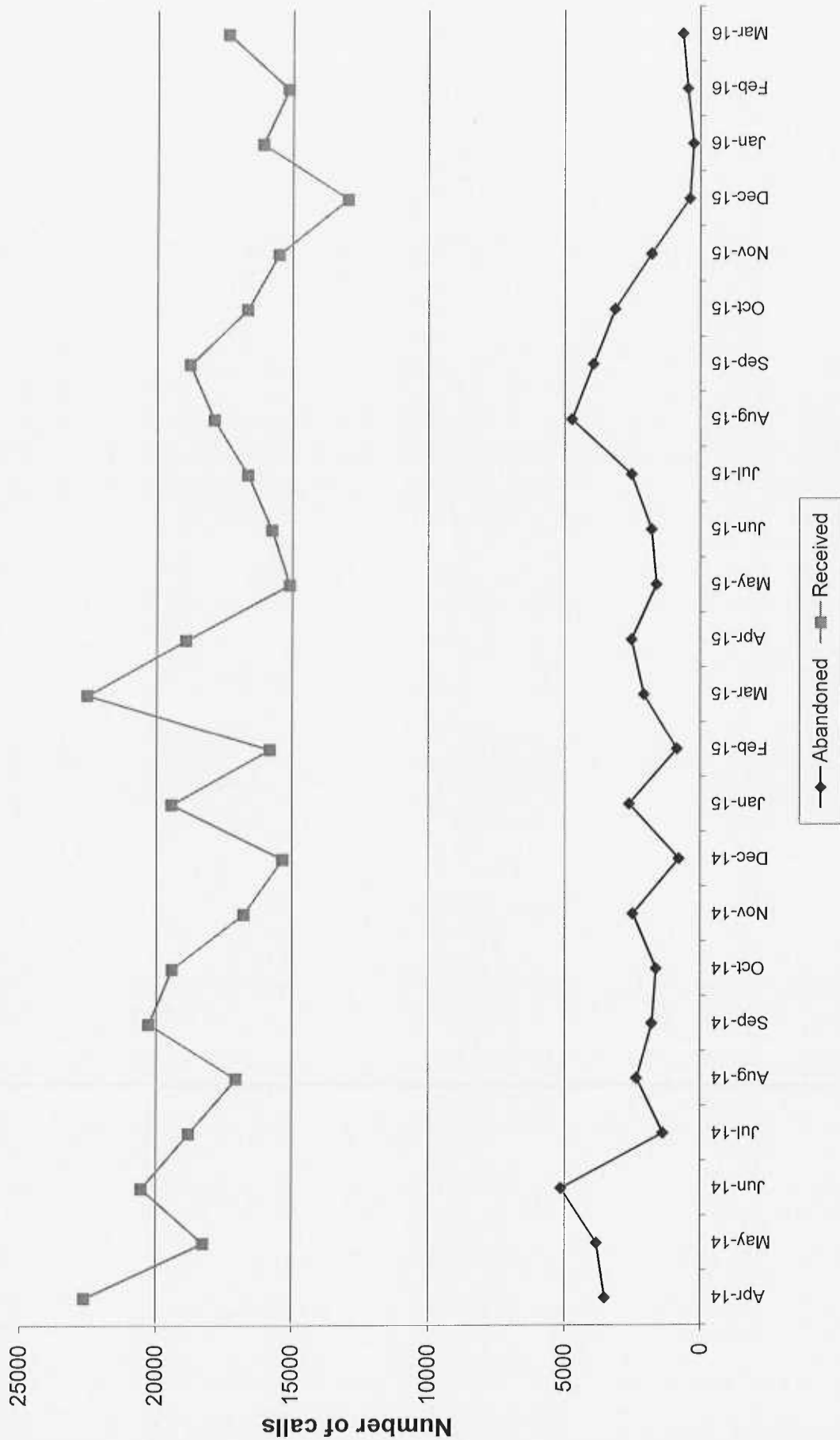
Housing and Council Tax Benefit Stage 2 Complaints from April 2014



Monthly Overpayment % recovered against that created From April 2014 every 2 months



Calls Received and Abandoned by Month from April 2014



Caseload from April 2014 every 2 months

