

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

Date: 1st November 2017

Our Ref: AIF/GT

Dear John,

As we approach the November 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 it's citizens.

This summary covers performance for the period 1st April 2017 to 30th September 2017.

1. Current Status of the Benefits Service

The Benefits caseload, which measures all households receiving Housing Benefit and/or Council Tax Support, was 19,989 as at the end of September 2017. The caseload at the same time last year was 20,714.

In terms of our current position for the nationally recognised Right Time Indicator, our average performance was 9.76 days compared to 10.02 days for the same period last year. This is against an annual contractual target of 13 days. For this reporting period the average processing times for New Claims was 21.09 days and Changes was 9.09 days.

Liberata is firmly committed to delivering continuous improvement and driving down the processing days of new claims and changes where possible. The continued use of the Capita 'Insight' software enables us to ensure that claims are managed within an automated compliance process, this has a positive effect on our processing times.

As at 30th September 2017, the total amount of outstanding work was 3,977 items. This includes 2,085 items pended which are awaiting information from the claimant and/or third-party. This is a significant reduction compared to the same period last year where there were 5,481 items outstanding.

1.1 Temporary Accommodation

We continue to work closely with the LBB Housing teams, Orchard and Shipman and Mears and have formed good working relationships. We meet monthly to discuss benefit issues and specific assessment queries with a view to minimising any potential delays in the processing of claims. During these meetings, Liberata promote the benefits of verification training for staff which enables them to verify a customer's evidence to the DWP's standards and reduces any delay when claim forms are submitted to us.

We have continued to build and improve the suite of automated bespoke reports which we provide to our stakeholders. These weekly reports provide an accurate position of a customer's benefit claim. This enables housing staff at the earliest opportunity to engage with their tenants to address rent arrears. The automated reporting also significantly reduces the number of queries which we previously received from our stakeholders and customers.

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. Notification of these changes ensures the entitlement of customers is correct and consistent with the information held by the DWP. We have automated the updating of the ATLAS files into our back office processing system. This has eliminated the potential of error through manual handling of this work and has provided an enhanced customer experience as claims are updated promptly and minimise the potential of overpayments being created.

1.3 Quality

We continue to remain firmly focused on quality and drive to eradicate any financial error within the assessments carried out. The average financial error rate for the period April to September 2017 was 2.0% compared to 2.7% for the same period last year.

Our accuracy level demonstrates that the robust quality management framework is highly effective. We regularly review our quality procedures and remain committed to ensuring that claims are processed accurately and to a high standard, minimising the potential for error and the requirement for reworking.

1.4 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 30th September 2017 was 90.84%. Liberata continues to effectively recover debts by using a variety of techniques including Blameless Tenant recovery and Direct Earnings Attachment.

We continue to receive Real Time Information (RTI) data matches from the DWP. These include both 'Mandatory' RTI files and 'Optional' RTI files. LBB opted to receive the Optional files which were introduced last year. They have proven to be as successful as the Mandatory files in identifying undeclared or incorrect financial information pertaining to the customer.

Last year, the DWP advised that Authorities will be given access to 'Wider Use of Real Time Information' (WURTI). This system will allow benefit assessors to view a customer's working income in real time. This will reduce the delay associated with requesting further information on earned income and increase the overall processing time of claims. WURTI will also enable accurate assessments of benefit entitlement and reduce the potential for overpayments to be created.

1.5 Universal Credit

Bromley is now live with the first phase of migration to Universal Credit which only includes single working aged claimants. Whilst we have seen a slight reduction to the caseload, we continue to receive a significant amount of queries from the DWP in relation to these claims. Bromley are still on track to be fully live with Universal Credit for all new claim types from May 2018. Our dedicated Single Point of Contact (SPOC) liaises directly with the DWP by email and telephone ensuring any requests from them are dealt 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 2017 to 30th September 2017 totalled 18,723. During this period 83% of customers were seen within 15 minutes. This is an improvement on the same period last year when 81% were seen in 15 minutes.

During the same period, the Contact Centre (Help Line) received 76,234 calls with 94% answered. The 94% is however less favourable than the previous 6 months (i.e. October 2016 to March 2017) when the abandonment rate for the period was 4%.

We do appreciate however that the 94% answered (or 6% abandonment) is over the 5% abandonment KPI target. When looking at the numbers in more depth, it is evident that we are seeing a change in customer behaviour with more customers going on-line to interface with the R&B service. We can evidence from our telephony system that customers are being less patient in waiting to have their call answered and we believe this is in part, due to the customer being directed by the IVR to use Bromley's website to interact with the R&B Service.

Throughout this year, the team have been trying to encourage more customers to use the on-line services available to them to self-serve – a facility that is available 24/7. In addition we have been meeting regularly to implement and promote the Capita ADP (automatic data processing) product which allows customers to interact on-line directly with their council tax account and/or benefits claim. The number of customer transactions using Capita ADP has increased by 90% since June 2017

This data would seem to provide evidence that our drive and promotion of on-line services is having a positive effect.

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;

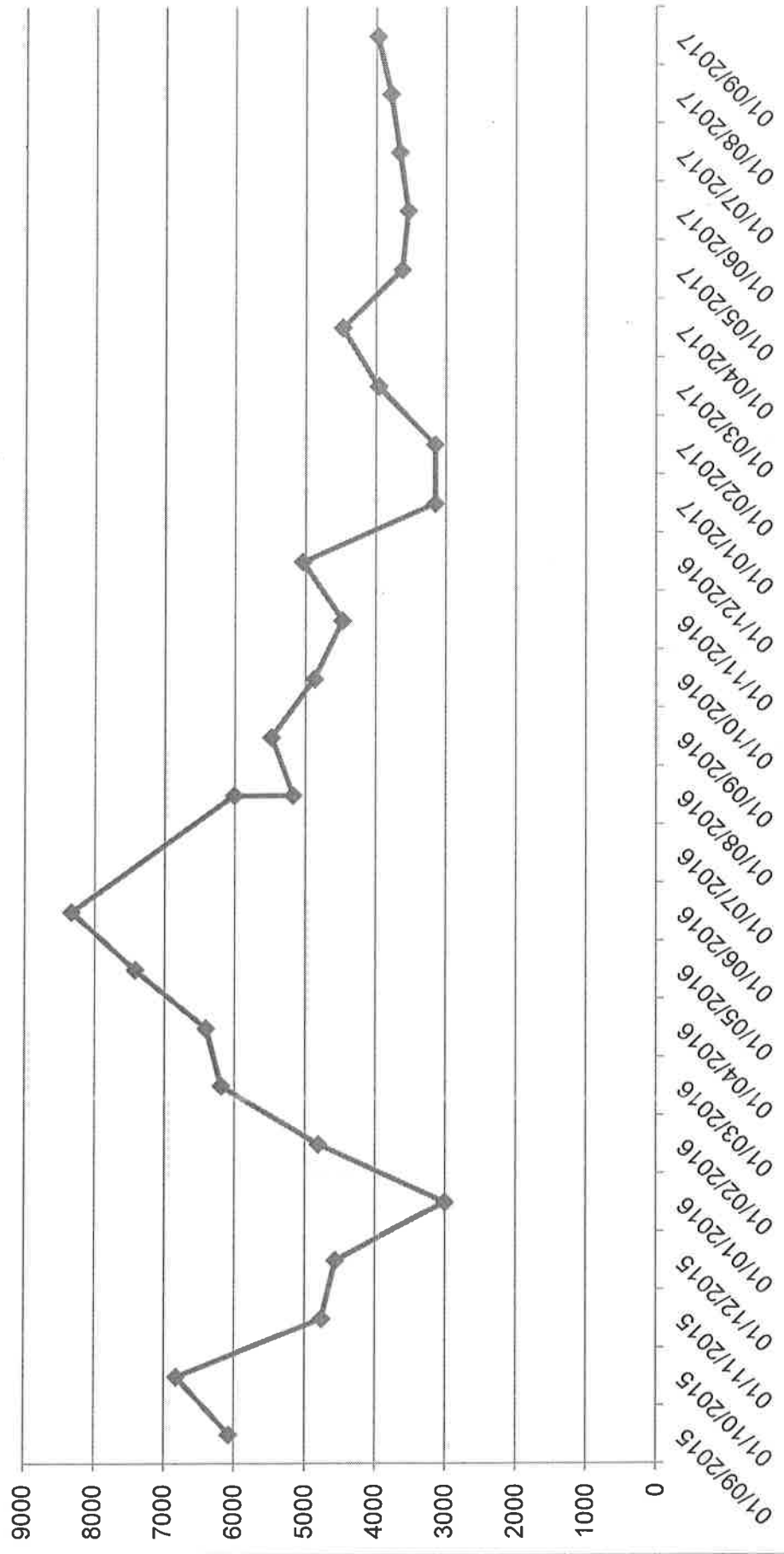
- On-going implementation of Capita Advantage Digital product. This will enable customers to use online forms to make a new claim or report changes to an existing claim. The information on the forms will be integrated with the back office processing system
- Investigating the benefits of improved reporting capability within 'Insight' which specifically uses SHBE data
- Automation of Real Time Information (RTI) HMRC data matches
- Continued piloting of the cross working of call centre and back office staff. This enables Call Centre Advisors to assist with processing of correspondence during quieter periods throughout the day
- Implementation of WURTI (Wider Use of Real Time Information); this is a DWP initiative which allows benefit assessors to access a system and view a customer's salary information in real time
- Further investigation on how the Corporate Visiting Team (CVT) can assist other departments within LBB and Liberata

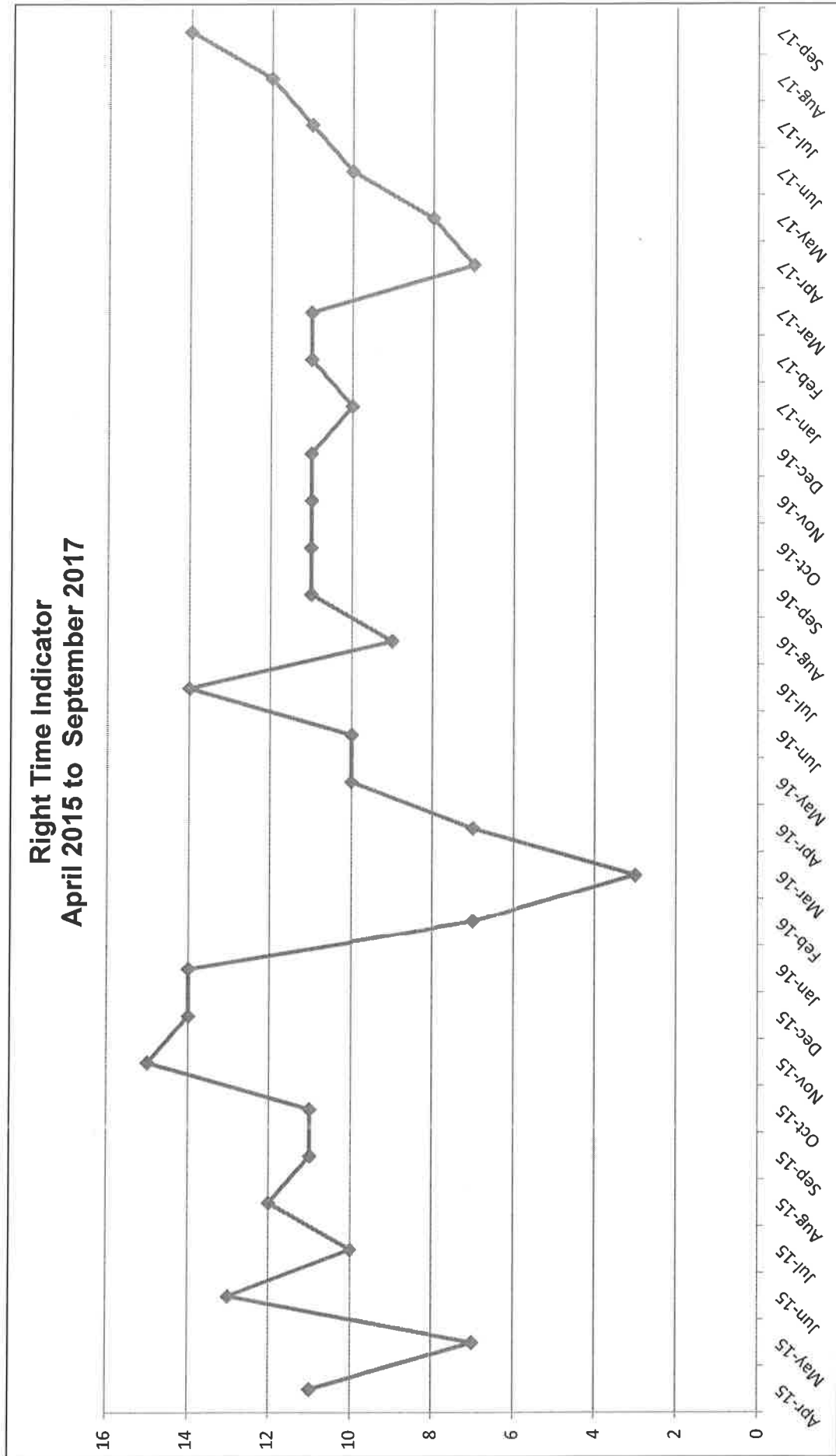
Liberata remains firmly committed to delivering an outstanding service to the London Borough of Bromley and its citizens.

Yours sincerely,

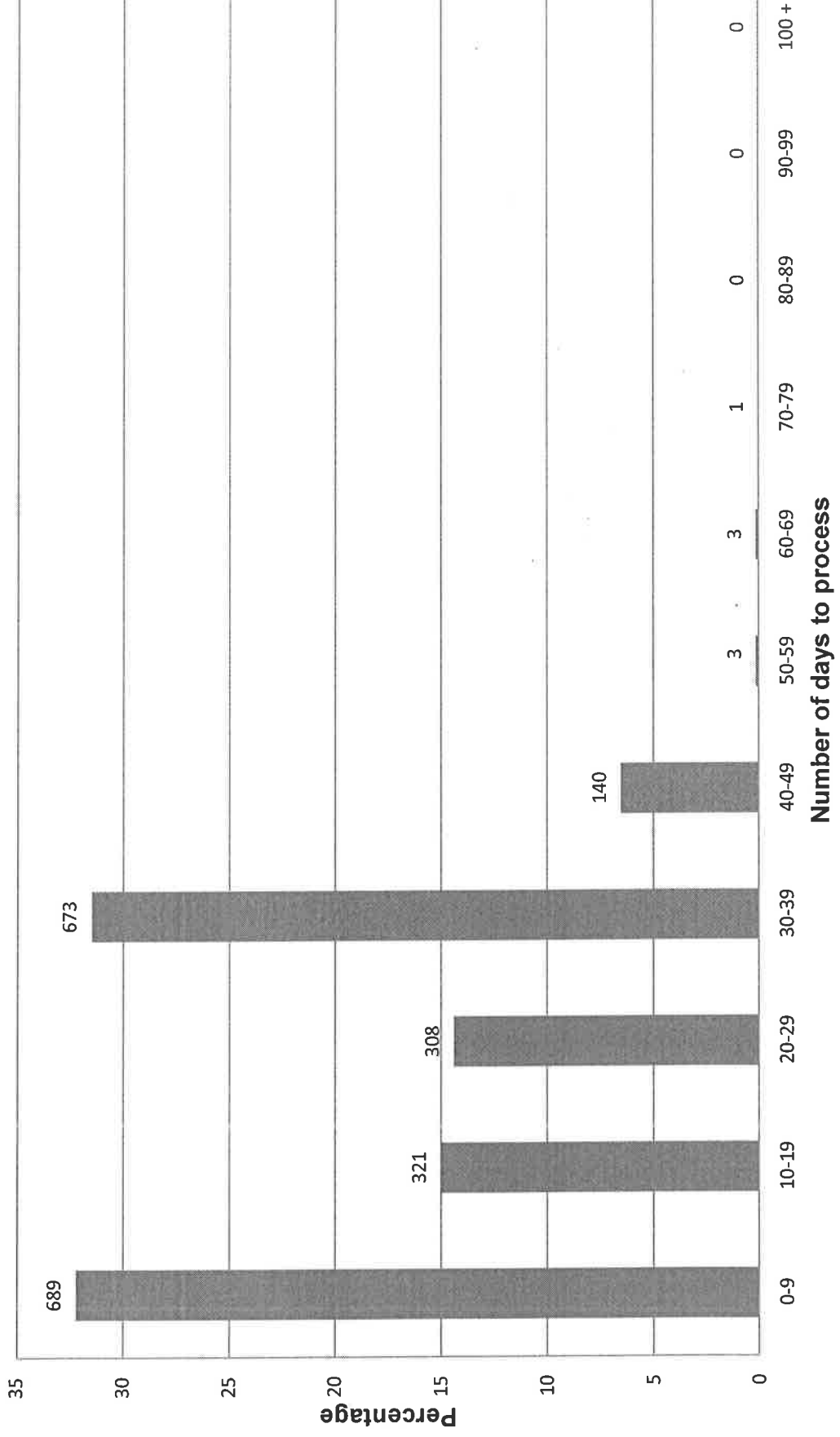
Amanda Inwood-Field
London Regional Contract Director

Total Pending and Outstanding Work September 2015 to September 2017

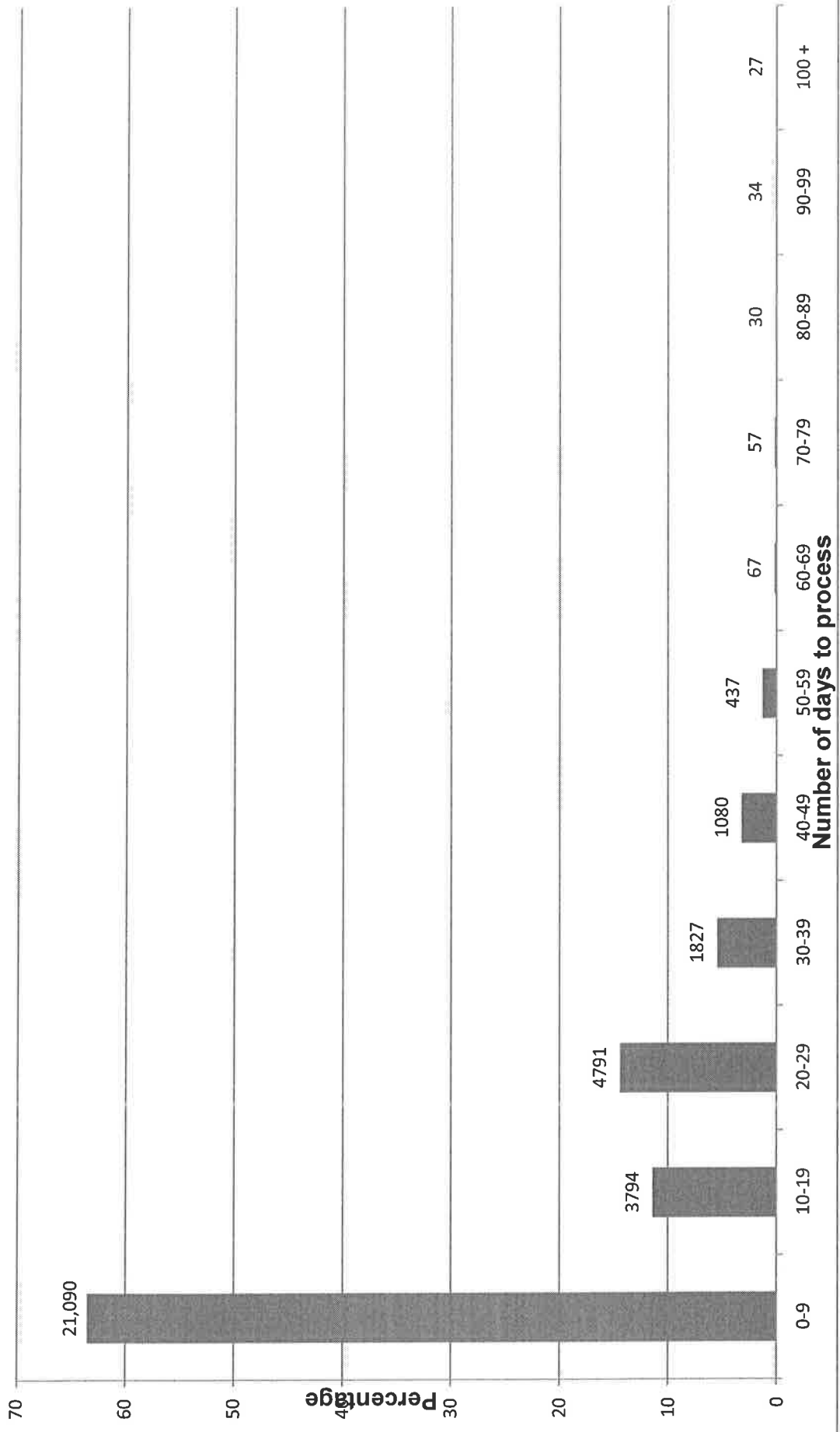




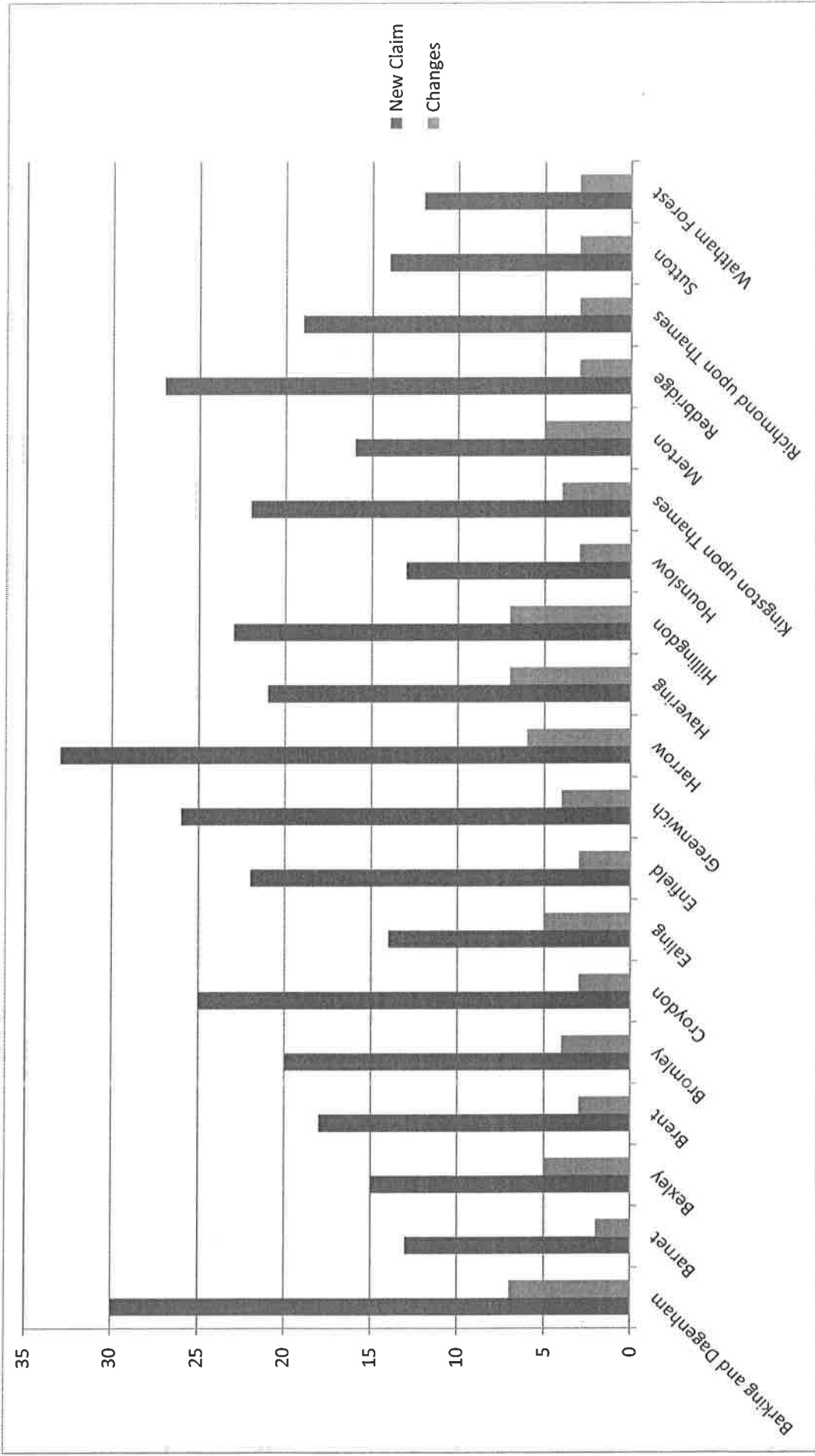
**Housing Benefit - processing time breakdown April to September 2017
New Claims (2138 cases)**



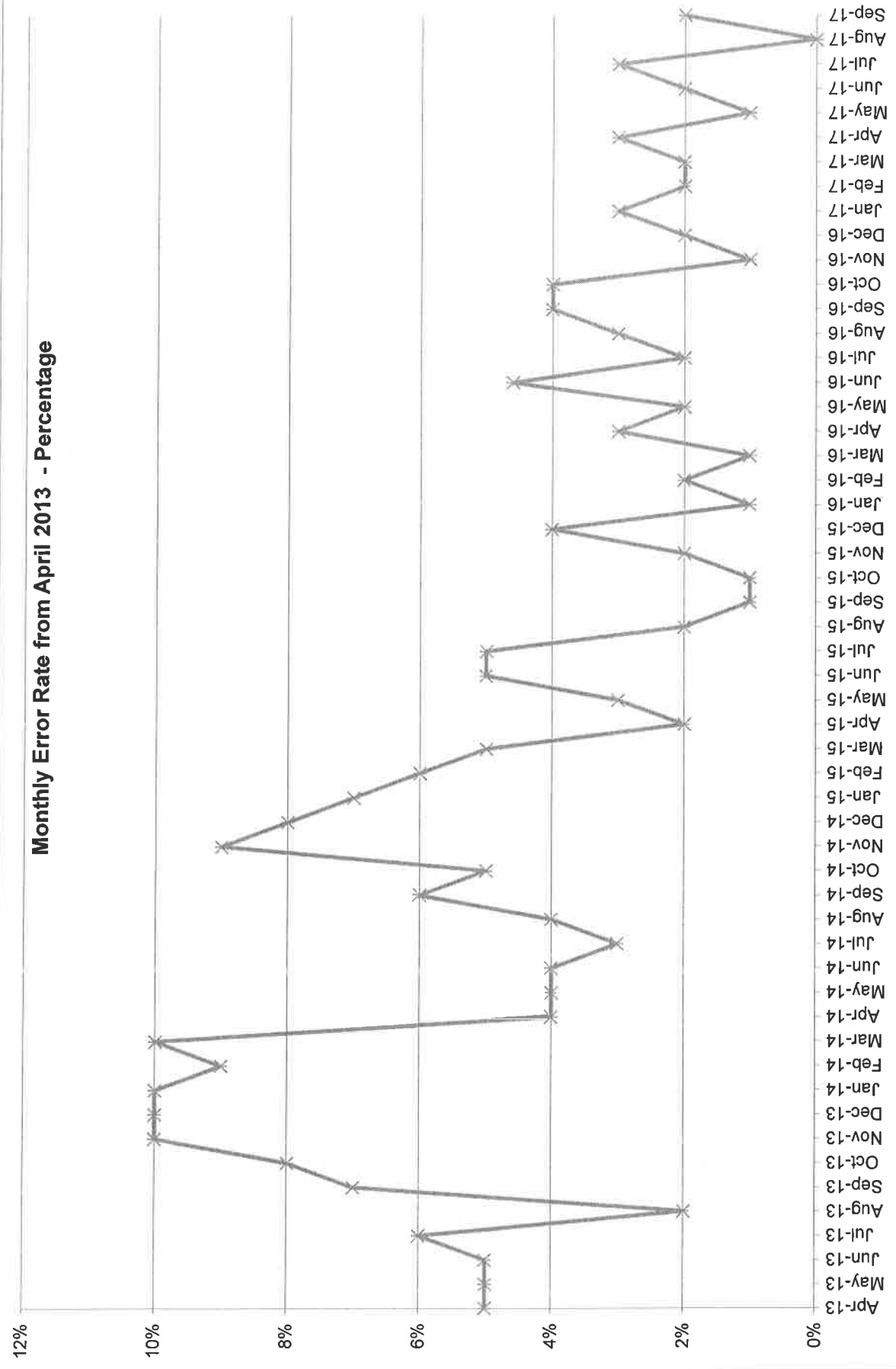
Housing Benefit - processing time breakdown - April to September 2017 Change in Circumstances (33,234)



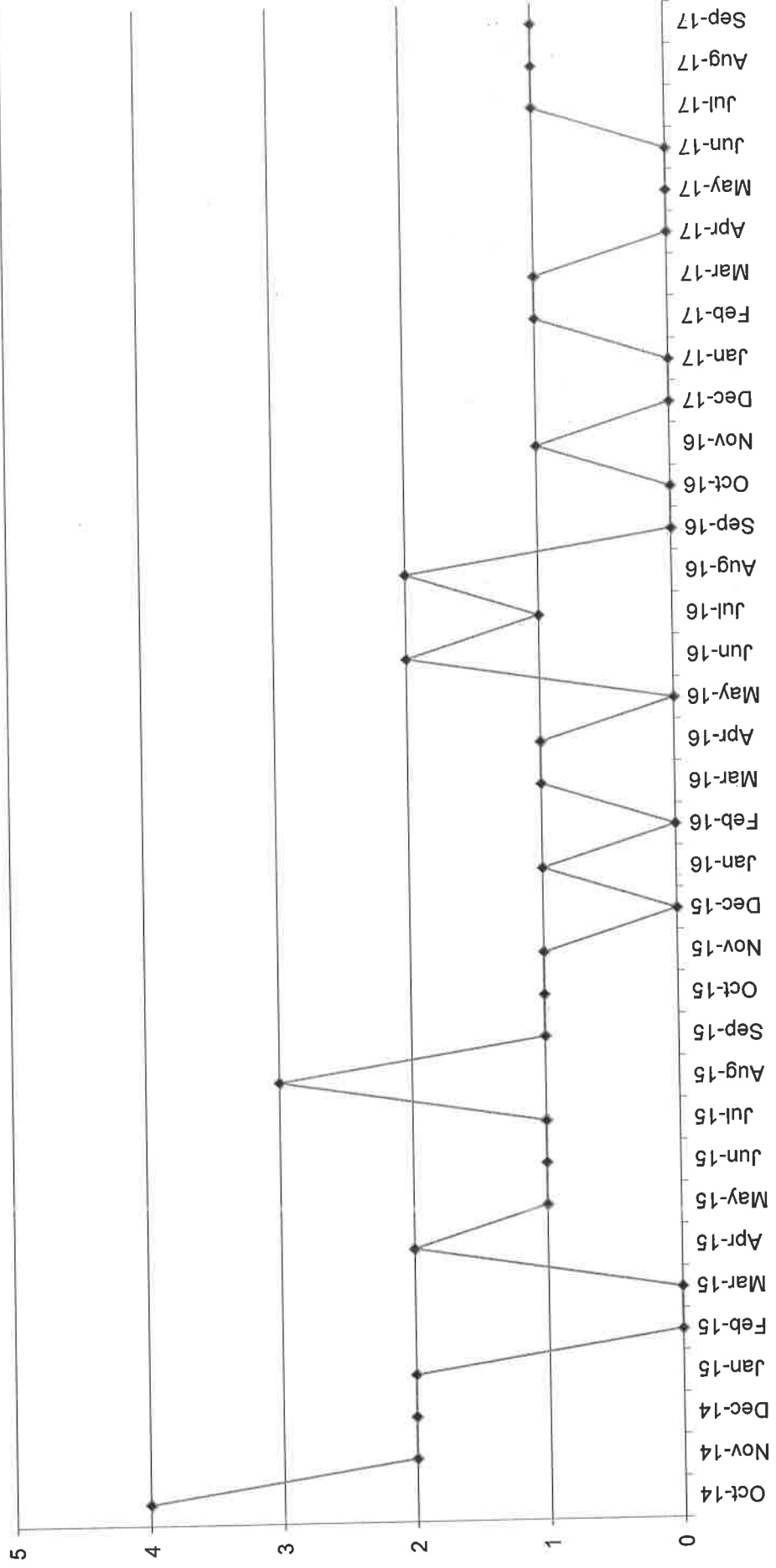
DWP Housing Benefit Speed of Processing for New Claims and Changes – Quarter 4 (Jan 2017 – Mar 2017)



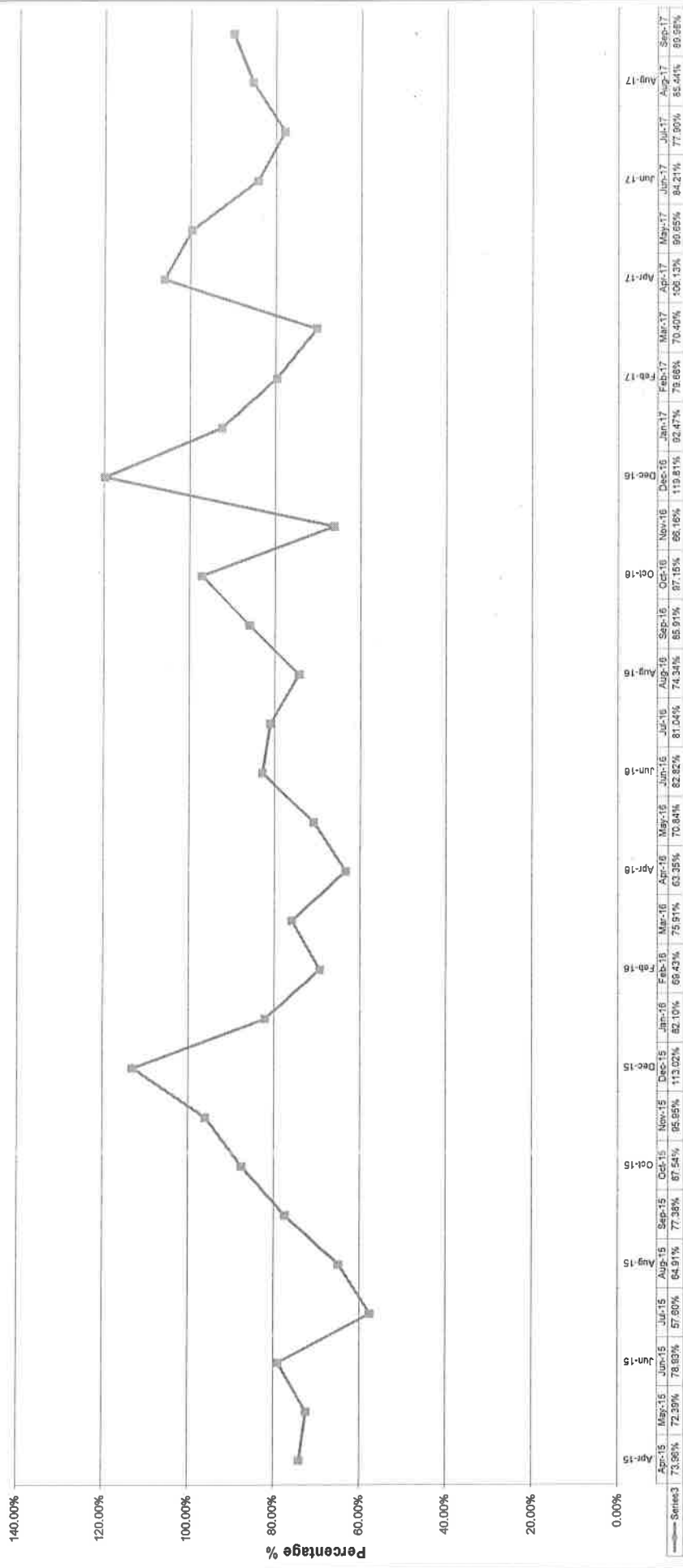
Monthly Error Rate from April 2013 - Percentage



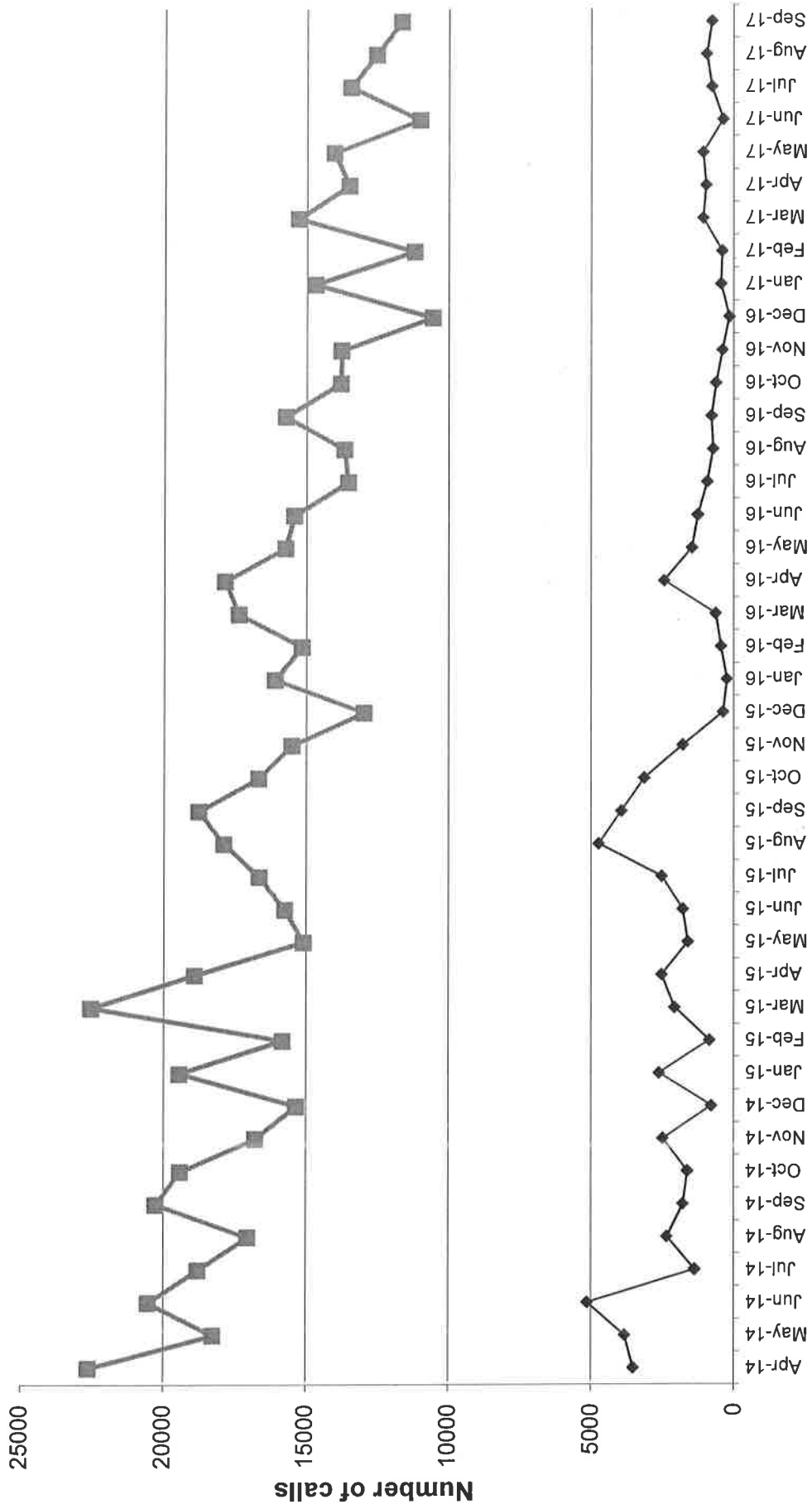
Housing and Council Tax Support - Stage 2 Complaints from October 2014



Monthly Overpayment % recovered against that created From April 2015 - every 2 months



Calls Received and Abandoned by Month from April 2014



Abandoned Received

Caseload from April 2015 - every 2 months

