

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

Date: 03 December 2019

Our Ref: AIF/GT

Dear John,

As we approach the January 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.

This summary covers performance for the period 1 April 2019 to 30 September 2019.

1. Current Status of the Benefits Service

The Benefits caseload, which measures all households receiving Housing Benefit and/or Council Tax Support, was 18,169 as at the end of September 2019. The caseload at the same time last year was 19,434.

In terms of our current position for the nationally recognised Right Time Indicator, our average performance was 6.62 days. This is against an annual contractual target of 13 days. This is a significant improvement from the previous year where the average performance was 9.88 days.

As at the end of September 2019, the amount of outstanding work totalled 2,600 items. This included 1,382 items pended which were awaiting information from the claimant and/or third-party. This is a reduction since the same period in 2018 when the outstanding work was 3,152 and pended items were 1,843.

1.1 Temporary Accommodation

Our monthly Service Review meetings with the LBB Housing teams, Orchard and Shipman and Mears Group continue to be a useful arena to deal with any specific assessment queries and fast track cases. This ensures that delays are minimised and enables housing staff to engage with tenants early on to robustly manage potential rent arrears.

Our experienced dedicated Temporary Accommodation Assessment staff have formed strong relationships with LBB Housing staff and stakeholder staff with the focus being to ensure that Benefit claims are paid as quickly as possible.

1.2 Verify Earnings and Pensions (VEP) Alerts Service

The VEP alerts, which we receive from the DWP, have proven to be an effective tool in ensuring the earnings and pension information contained on our systems is accurate. The VEP alerts draw relevant information held by different organisations and provide 'real time' information which is imperative for Benefit Administration. Processing the alerts ensures that we are significantly reducing the potential for overpayments which the customer may have incurred if they had not notified us of any changes in their household income.

1.3 ATLAS

ATLAS is a process of transferring data from the DWP systems to the Local Authority systems. This will include state benefits changes which may not have been previously notified to us by the customer. Processing the ATLAS files ensures that the data we hold on the Authority's Benefits system is accurate and current. Through automation of the ATLAS files we have eliminated the potential for inputting error by assessment officers that would have previously manually handled the alerts.

1.4 Quality

We continue to be firmly focused on quality and strive to eradicate error from the assessment process. The average financial error rate for the period April 2019 to September 2019 was 2.1%. Compared to a contractual target of 5% and a 'soft' target of 4%.

New and upskilled employees undergo an intense training program with significant post completion monitoring to ensure accuracy levels remain at a high level. Regular Refresher training is also undertaken for all staff to ensure that their understanding is consistent with our policies, procedures and current legislation.

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 Housing Benefit recovery rate as at 30 September 2019 was 97.62%. Liberata continues to effectively recover debts by using a variety of techniques including Blameless Tenant recovery, Direct Earnings Attachment and Debt Collection Agencies. These recovery techniques remain highly effective tools in securing the repayment of these debts.

1.6 Universal Credit

Since Universal Credit "Full Service" went live for Bromley we have continued to see significant increases in enquiries from the DWP in regards to housing costs. The number of Universal Credit cases where Council Tax Support has been claimed and put into payment increased from 2,037 in April 2019 to 3,137 in September 2019. These volumes continue to increase on a monthly basis.

Liberata continue to receive Universal Credit notifications on a daily basis and are currently testing an automated solution which will upload the notifications directly into the Authority's Benefits system. This will ensure that assessment errors in re-keying data are significantly reduced and also increase performance in updating customers' claims.

Liberata has a dedicated Single Point of Contact (SPOC) that liaises directly with the DWP to ensure that any requests are dealt with within the agreed 5 days service level with the DWP.

Liberata's Customer Services team play an active role in sign posting customers to the Job Centre Plus if they visit the Civic Centre reception and are unclear as to where to claim assistance with their rental costs.

2. Corporate Visiting Team (CVT)

The CVT Visiting Officers continue supporting all service lines and provide an effective channel for vulnerable customers to access services. This has created resilience for the service lines as back office staff can focus on processing the workloads of their service lines.

3. Call Centre & Customer Services

The number of Revenues & Benefits customers seen in Customer Services for the period 1 April 2019 to 30 September 2019 totalled 14,634. This is a reduction of 20% on the same reporting period for last year. During the period under review 86% of customers were seen within 15 minutes.

The Contact Centre (Help Line) received 61,541 calls with an abandonment rate of 5%. Call volumes have fallen by 16% compared to the same period in 2018, but notably the average talk time per call has increased by 16% to 6 minutes and 10 seconds. Footfall and call volumes have reduced as a result of the continuing success of customers using the self-serve facilities available via the LBB website.

4. 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.

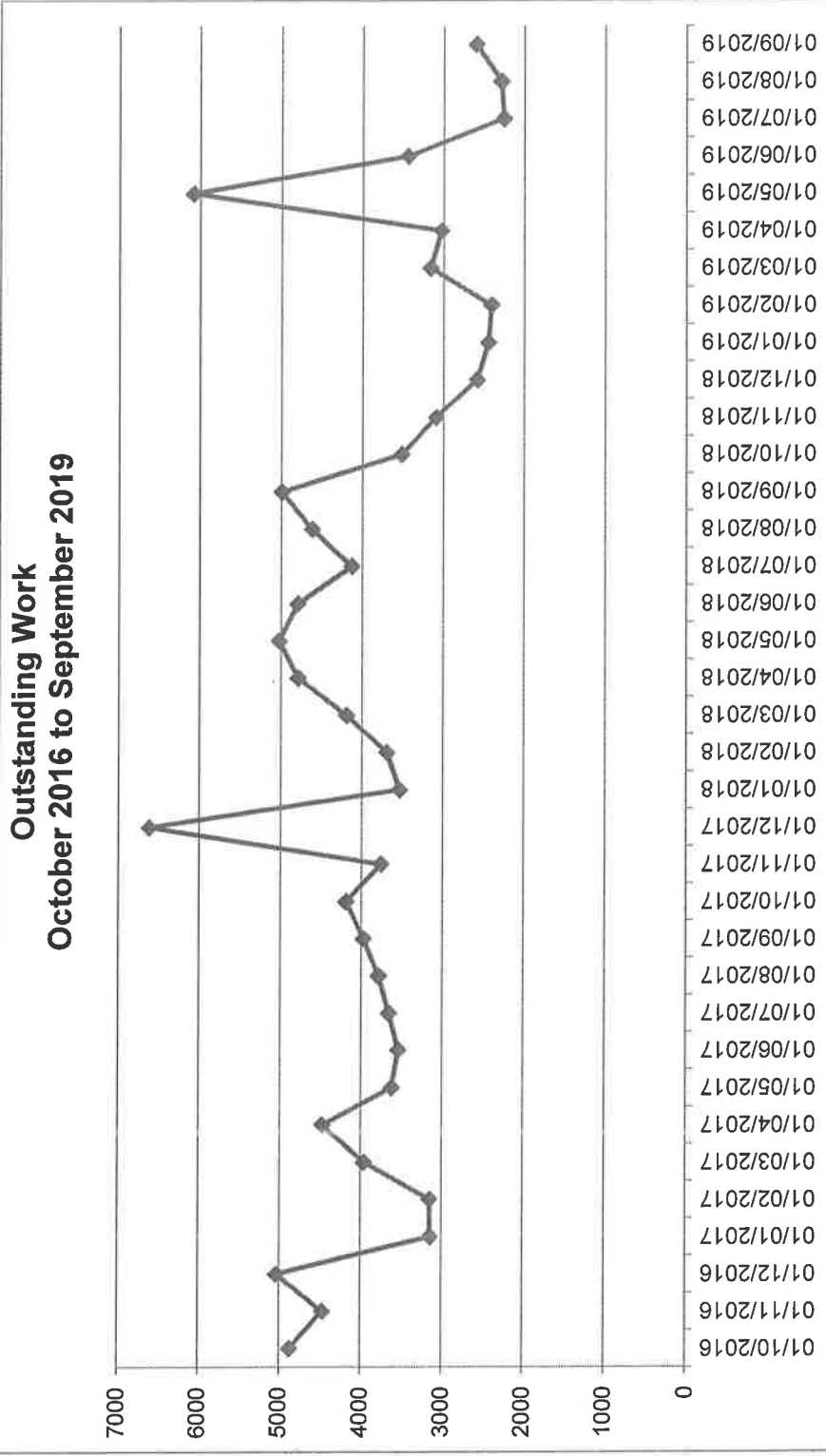
Examples of current year new and ongoing initiatives;

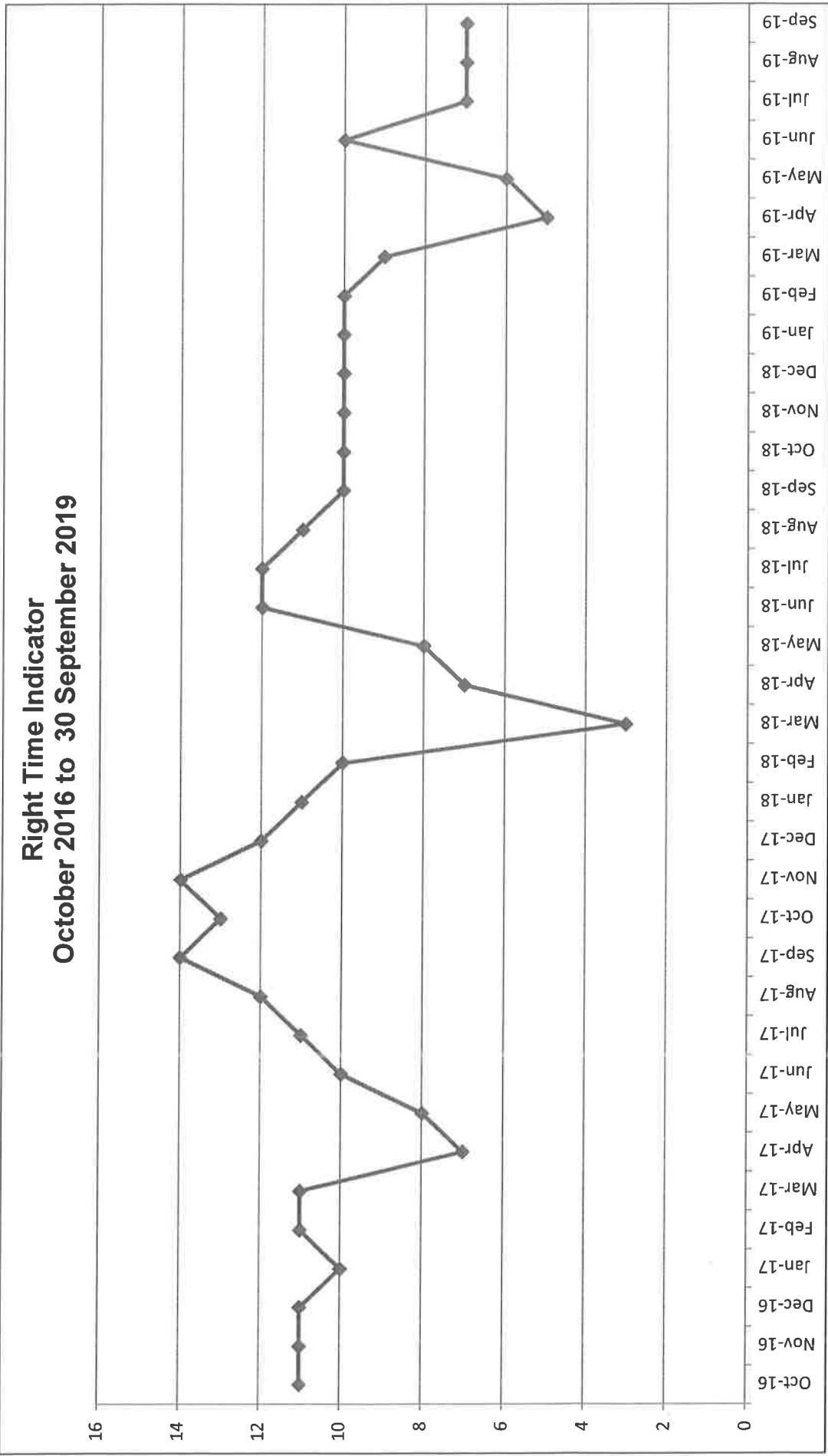
- On-going annual reviews of Self Employed cases to ensure that the Benefits database remains accurate and Benefit entitlements are correct.
- On-going implementation of the Capita Advantage Digital product. This will enable customers to use online forms to make a new claim or report changes to an existing claim. The information on the forms will be integrated with the back office processing system.
- Risk Based Verification (RBV); the policy has been devised and approved at the recent Audit Sub Committee meeting. This can now be used in conjunction with the eClaims and eChanges module of the Capita Advantage Digital product which will provide customers with an enhanced customer experience and improved processing times for both new claims and changes.
- Liberata are reviewing the content of the LBB website and also the letters which are sent out by the Benefit Service. This is planned to drive those customers that are able to use the online functionality as part of our going digital transformation programme.

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

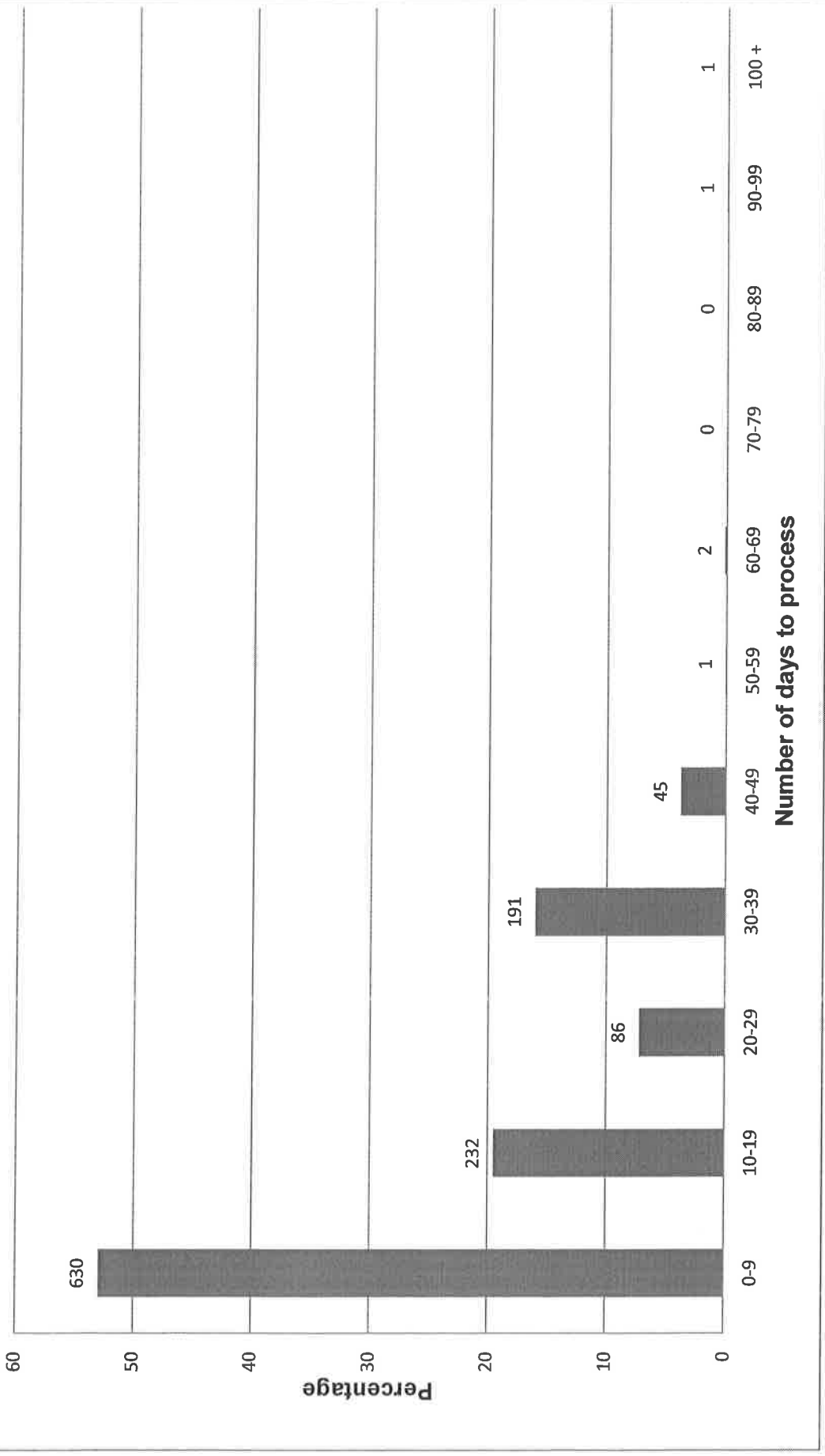
Yours sincerely,

Amanda Inwood-Field
London Regional Contract Director

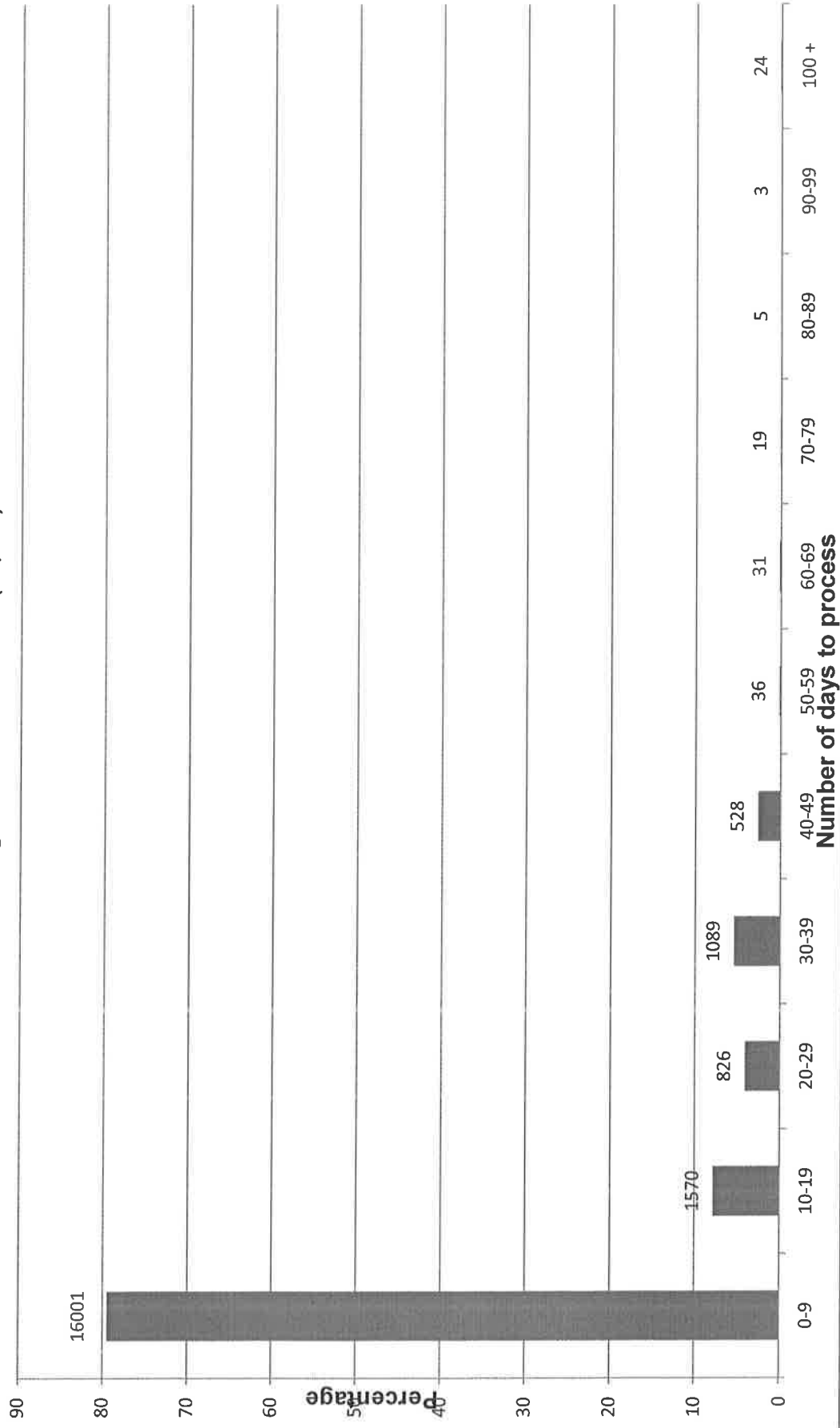




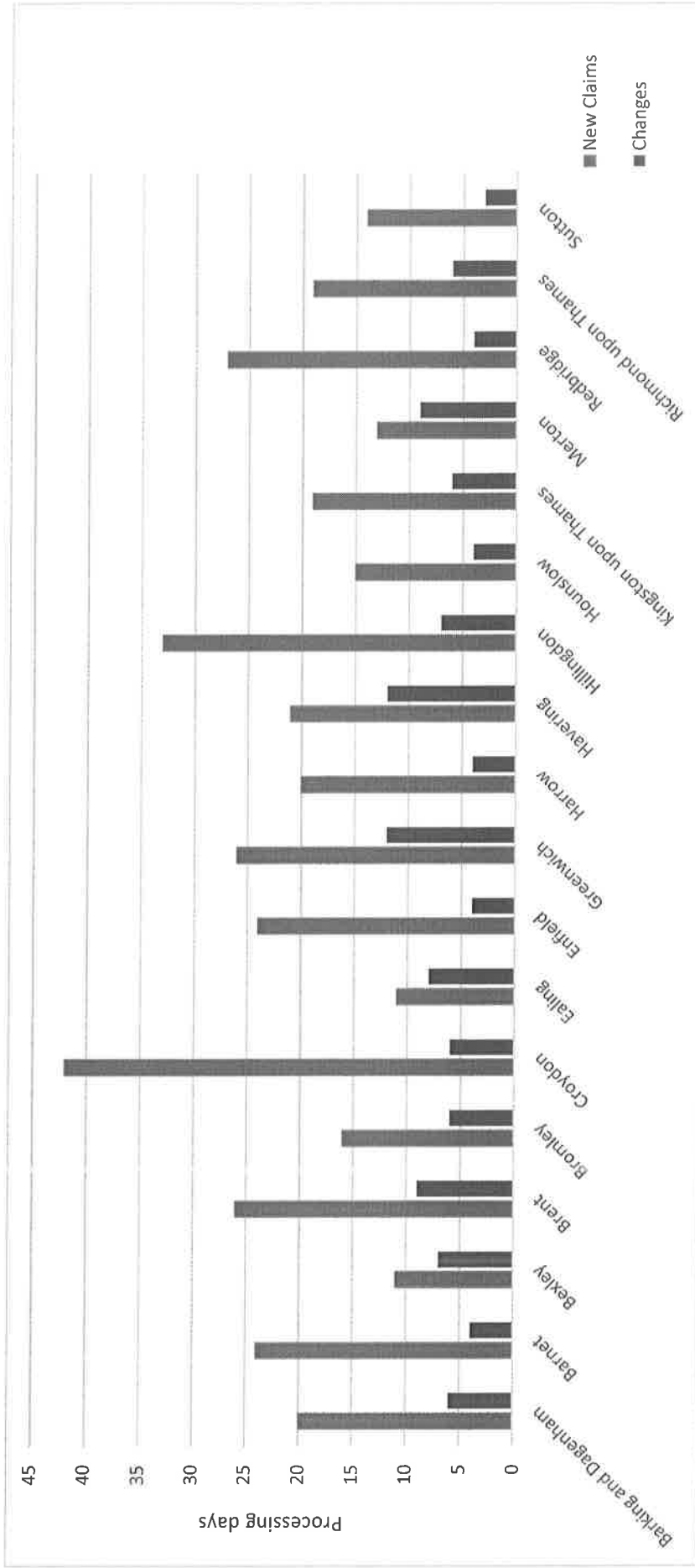
Housing Benefit - processing time breakdown April to September 2019 New Claims (1189 cases)



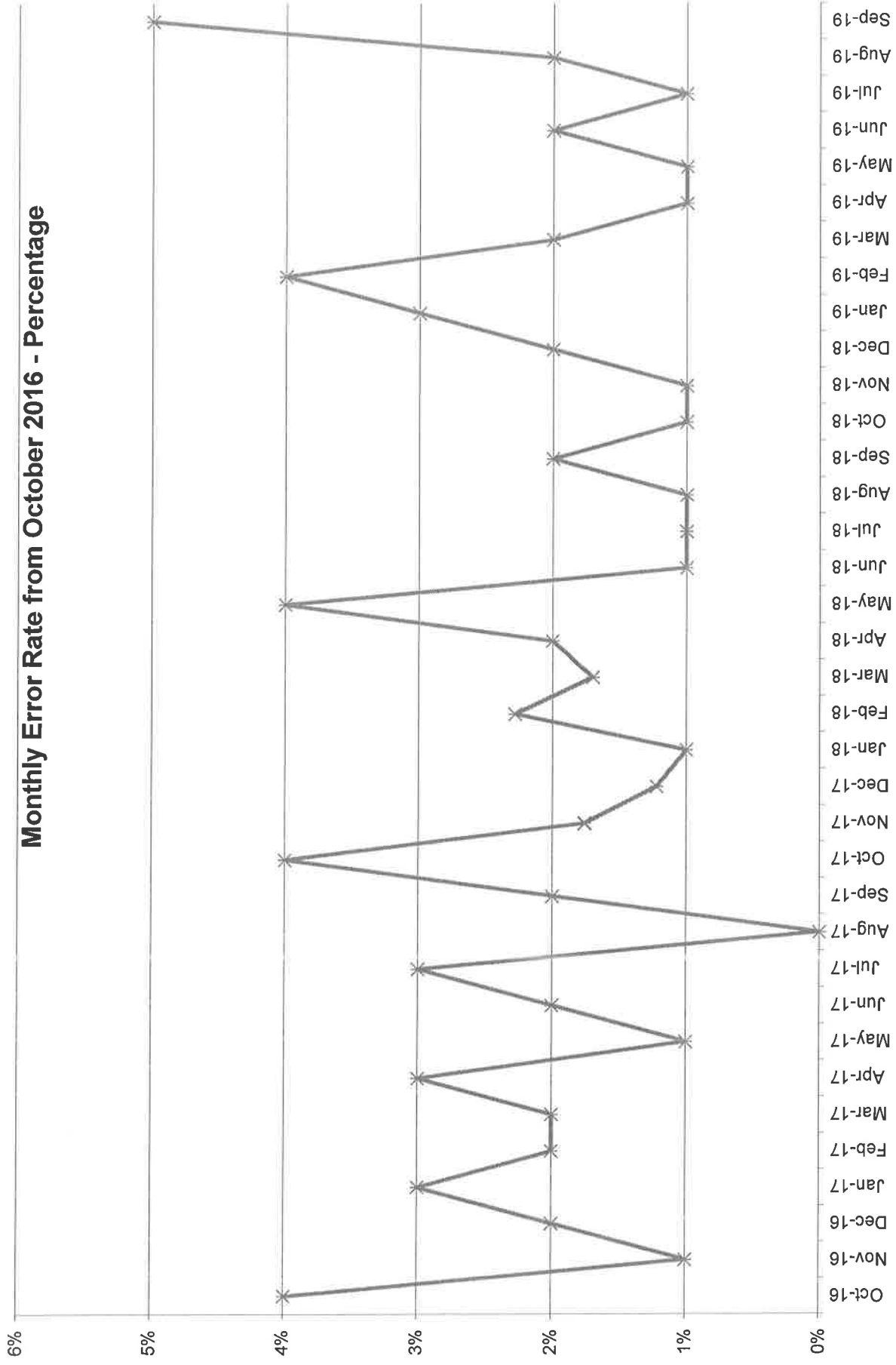
Housing Benefit - processing time breakdown - April to September 2019
Change in Circumstances (20,132)



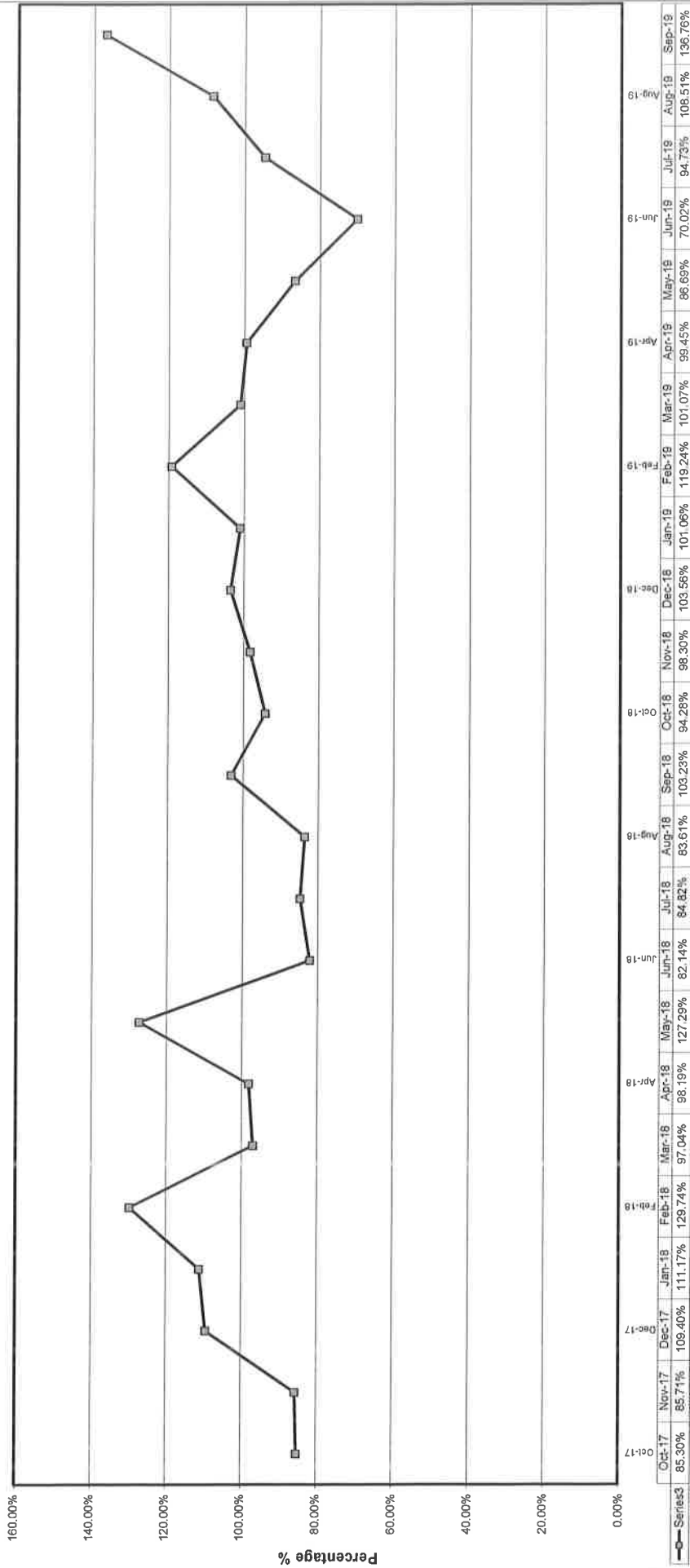
DWP benchmarking – Outer London – 2019/20 Quarter 1



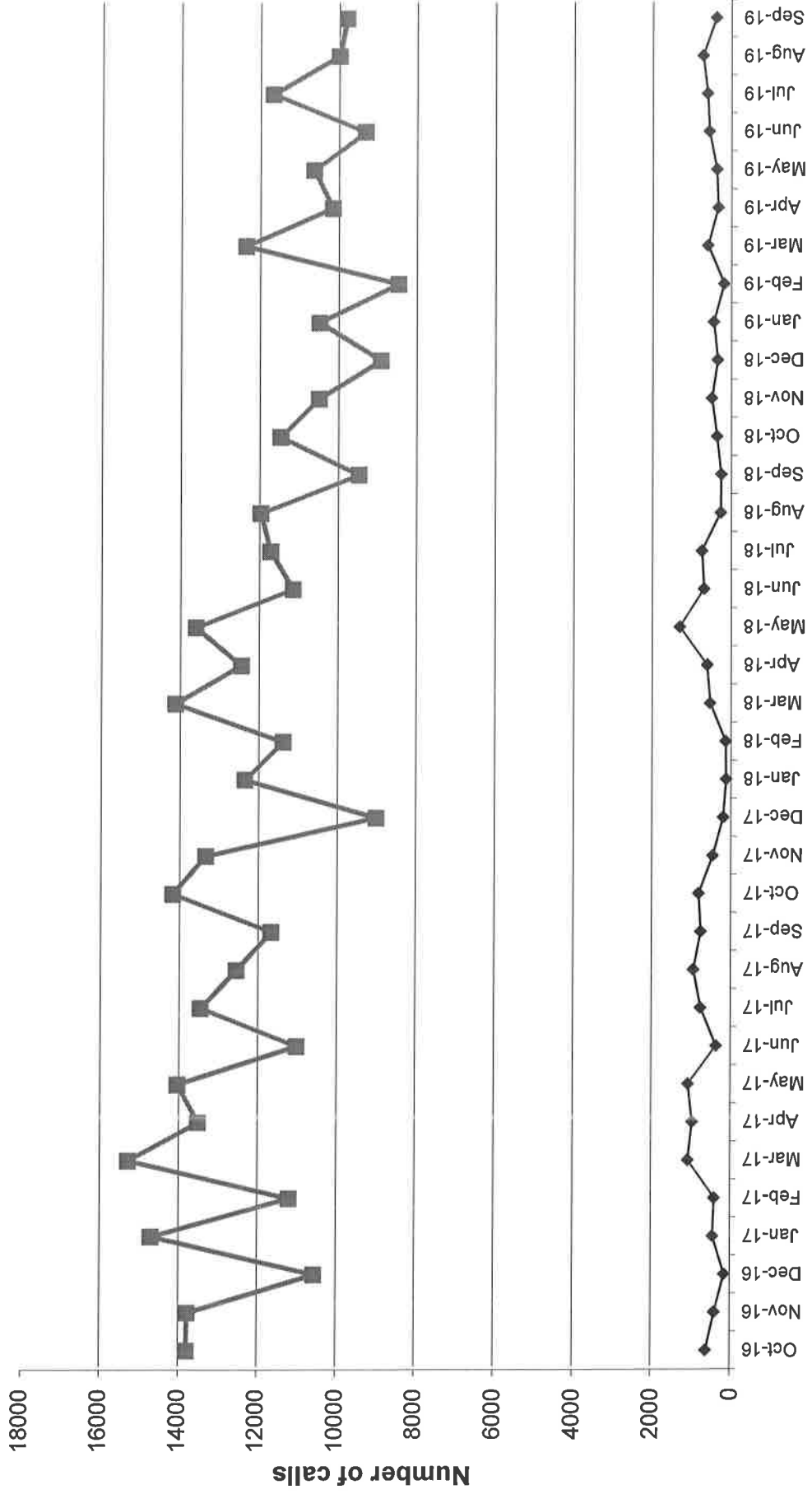
Monthly Error Rate from October 2016 - Percentage



Monthly Overpayment % recovered against that created from October 2017



Calls Received and Abandoned monthly from October 2016



—◆— 613 394 150 440 403 1067 ...

Caseload from October 2016 - every 2 months

