

### **Project Title**

Improving NTFGH Medical Social Worker (MSW) Response to Inpatient Referrals from Business Office (BO)

### **Project Lead and Members**

Project lead: Chew Tee Kit

Project members: Chin Chi Hsien, Cindy Ng Xin Ting, Mastura Abdullah, Nurfarahhin Jumali

### **Organisation(s) Involved**

Ng Teng Fong General Hospital (NTFGH), Jurong Community Hospital

### **Healthcare Family Group(s) Involved in this Project**

Allied Health, Healthcare Administration

### **Applicable Specialty or Discipline**

Medical Social Services, Business Office Shared Services

### **Project Period**

Completed date: Sep 2021

### **Aims**

This project intends to reduce the number of days taken for MSWs to reply BO post-referral from 19 working days to 3 working days by September 2021.

### **Background**

See poster appended / below

### **Methods**

See poster appended / below

## **Results**

See poster appended / below

## **Lessons Learnt**

1. Open communication from both departments helped in identification of root causes and brainstorming of potential solutions.
2. To take system limitations into considerations e.g. limitations of NeMSW system and BO's limited access of EPIC functions.

## **Conclusion**

See poster appended / below

## **Project Category**

Care & Process Redesign, Quality Improvement, Workflow Redesign, Access to care

## **Keywords**

Financial Assistance, Hospital Bills, Payment

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# IMPROVING NTFGH MSW RESPONSE TO INPATIENT REFERRALS FROM BUSINESS OFFICE

- ☑ SAFETY
- ☑ QUALITY
- ☑ PATIENT EXPERIENCE

- ☑ PRODUCTIVITY
- ☑ COST

CHEW TEE KIT<sup>1</sup>, CHIN CHI HSIEN<sup>1</sup>, CINDY NG XIN TING<sup>1</sup>, MASTURA ABDULLAH<sup>2</sup>, NURFARAHHIN JUMALI<sup>2</sup>  
<sup>1</sup>MEDICAL SOCIAL SERVICES; <sup>2</sup>BUSINESS OFFICE SHARED SERVICES

## Define Problem, Set Aim

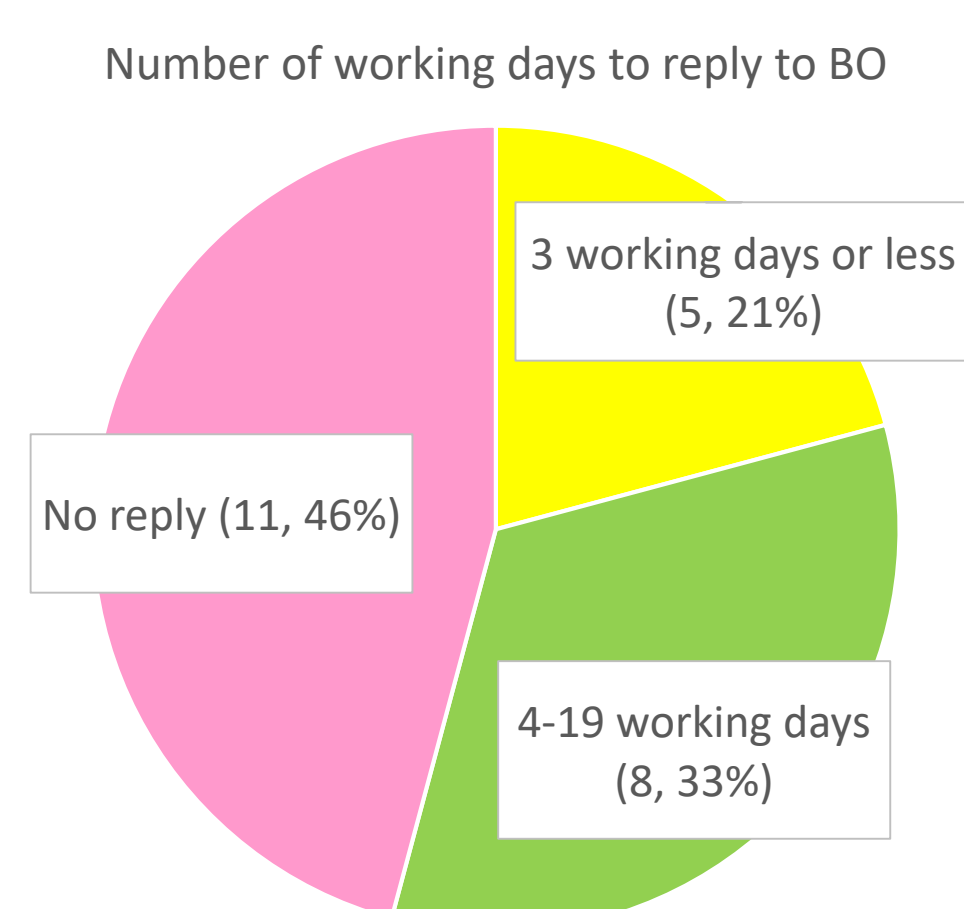
### Problem/Opportunity for Improvement

It was observed that in January 2021, MSWs took a median of 19 working days to respond to Business Office (BO) regarding the outcome of the referral for financial assistance. As a result, patients are anxious about their outstanding hospital bills. In addition, BO is not able to follow-up with patients promptly for payment, resulting in debts for the organization.

This project intends to reduce the number of days taken for MSWs to reply BO post-referral from 19 working days to 3 working days by September 2021.

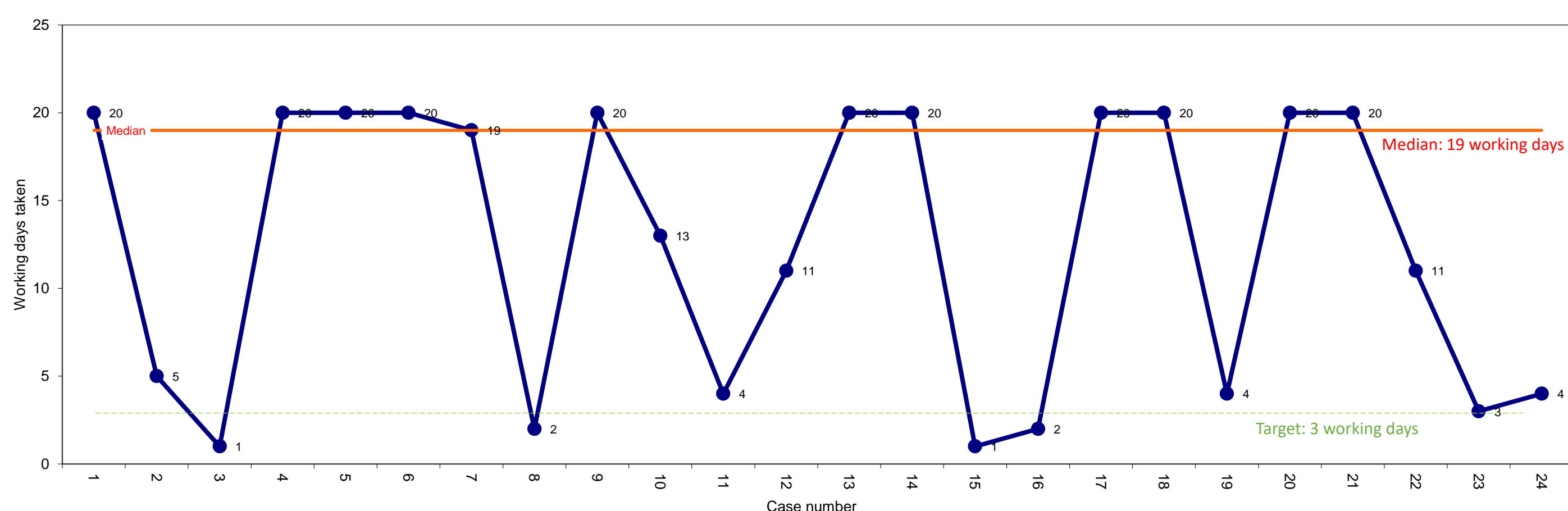
## Establish Measures

### Performance before intervention:



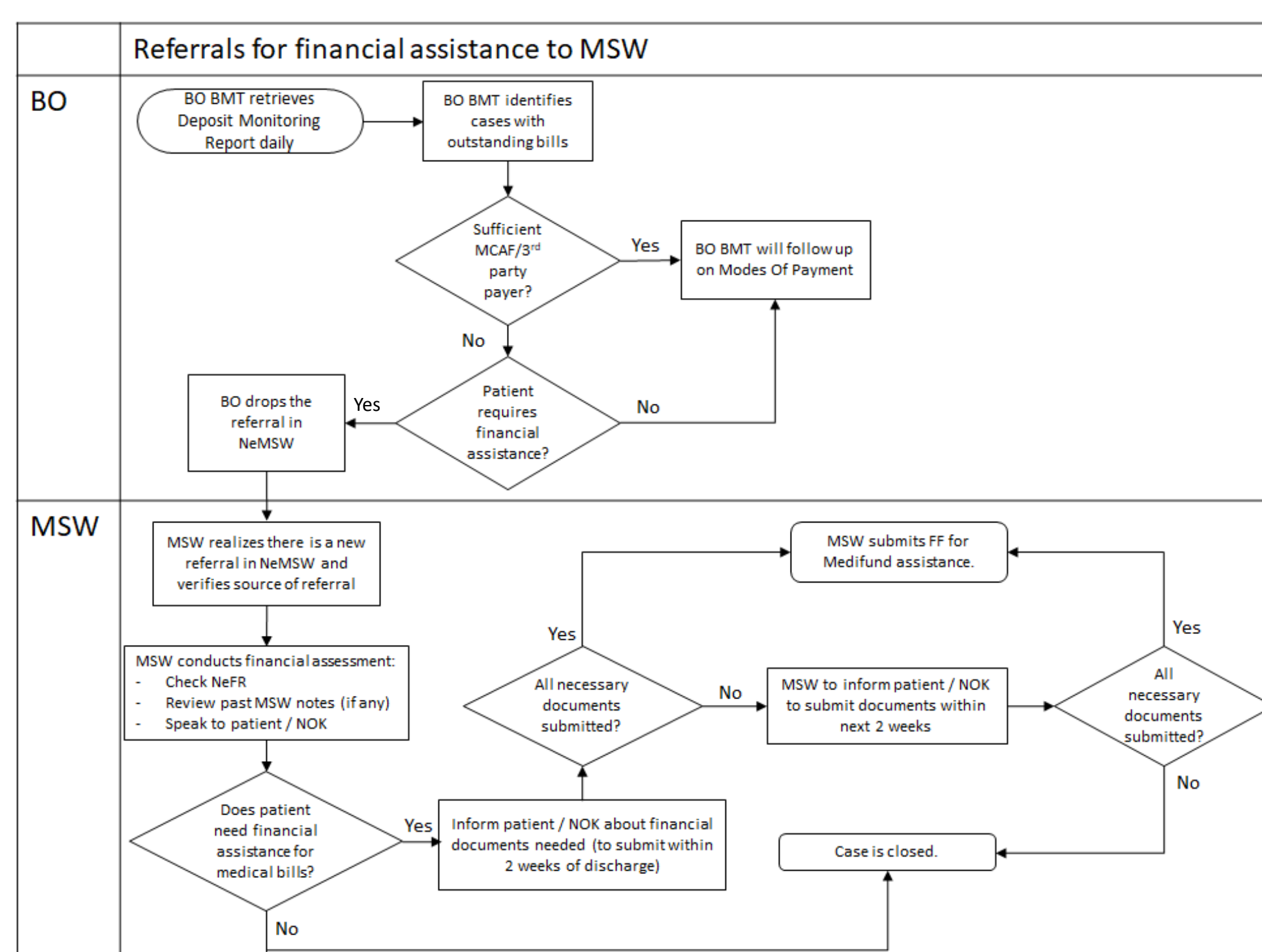
46% of the referrals were assigned a response time with a value of "20 working days" as there was no reply from MSW for more than 1 month. Sample size = 24 cases

Number of days taken for MSW to reply BO (post referral)

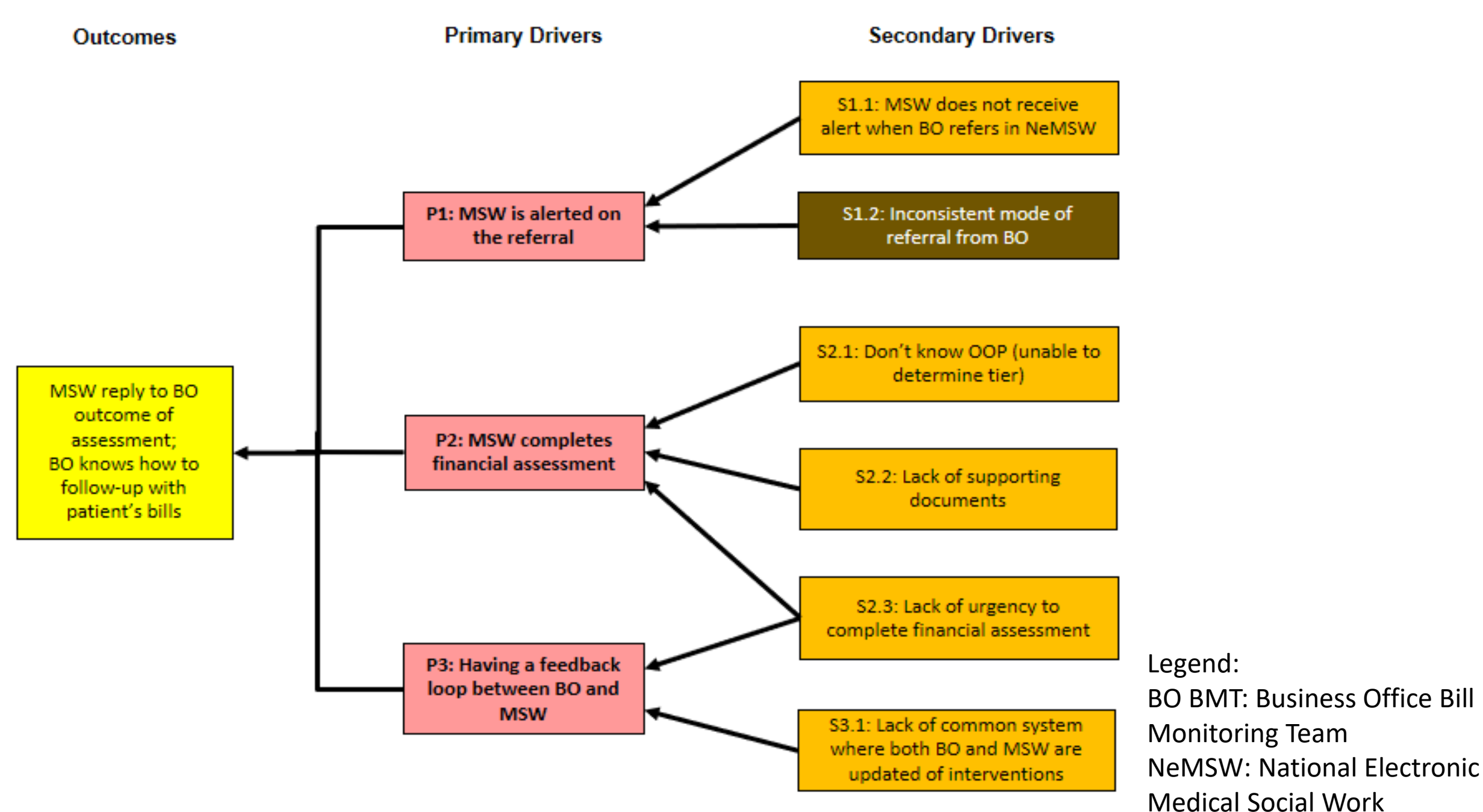


## Analyse Problem

### Workflow



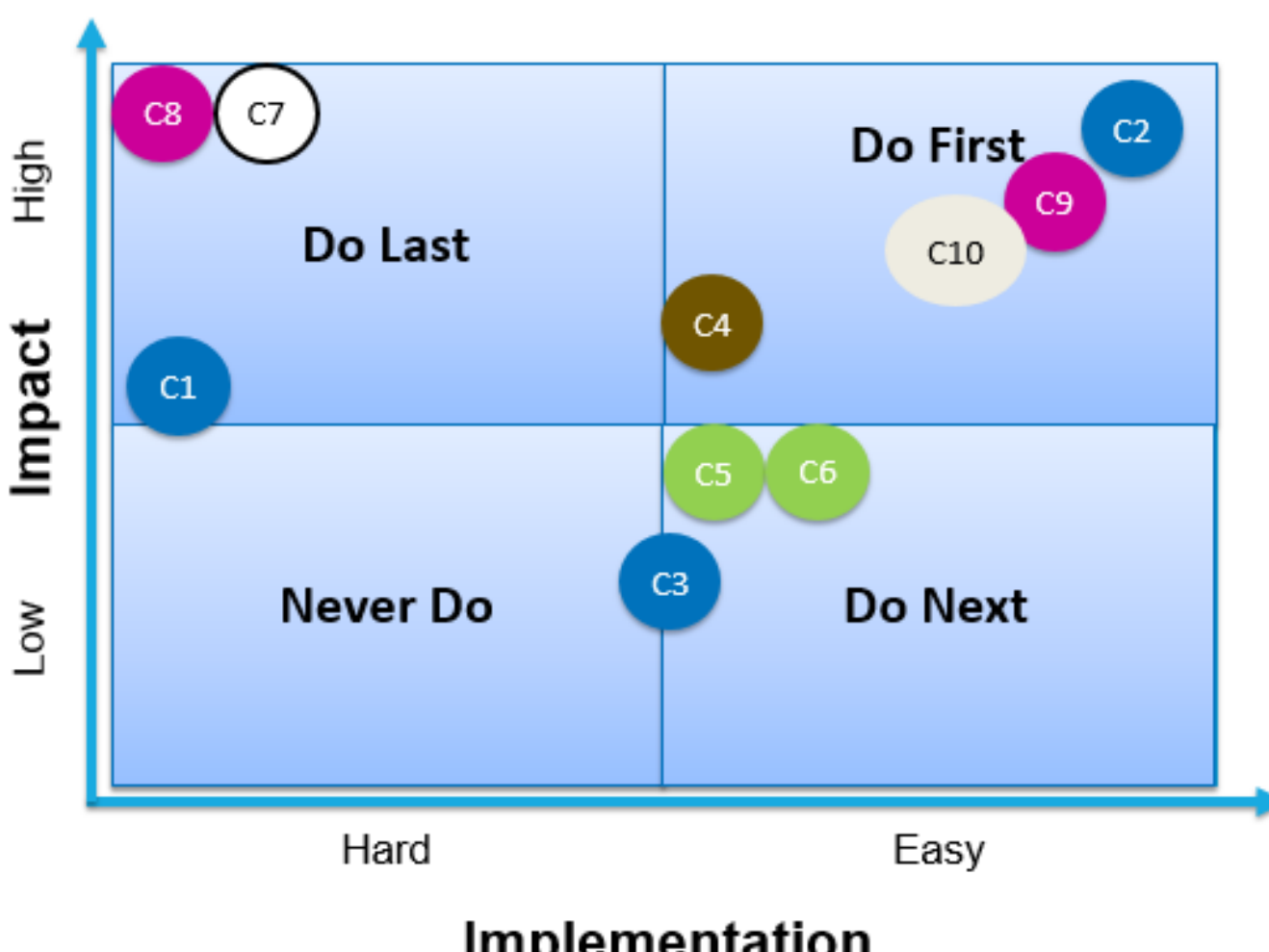
### Driver diagram



## Select Changes

Root Cause	Potential Solutions
MSW is not alerted on the referral	C1: Increase vigilance in NeMSW
	C2: Turn on email alerts in NeMSW
	C3: Educate MSWs on how to read the referral source
	C4: BO to refer via NeMSW and email only
MSW completes financial assessment	C5: MSW informs patient on timeline for submission of documents
	C6: MSW informs BO to follow-up with patient on payment
Lack of feedback mechanism between BO and MSW	C7: BO to refer via EPIC in-basket
	C8: BO drop order via EPIC for MSW
	C9: BO to initiate email to MSW upon NeMSW referral
	C10: Redesign of SWC's role to attend to BO referrals

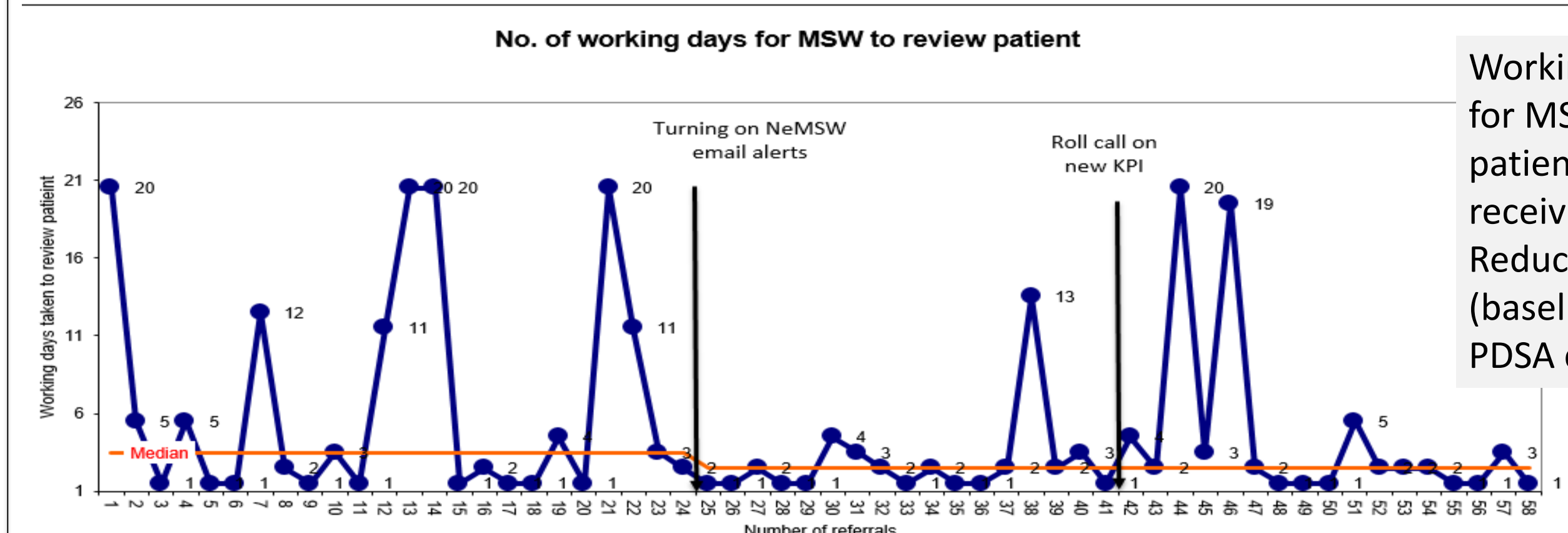
We selected C2, C4 and C9 for PDSA cycle 1. For PDSA cycle 2, we focused on C3, C5 and C6. We did not carry out C10 due to manpower changes in the MSW department.



## Test & Implement Changes

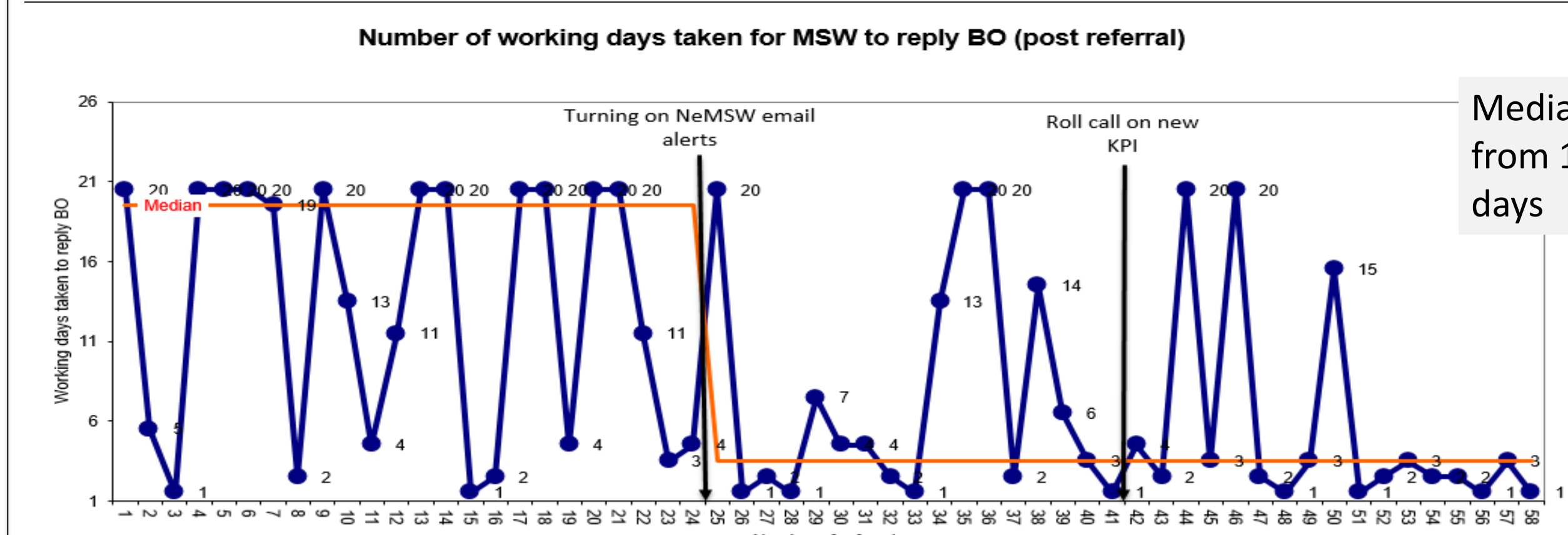
CYCLE	PLAN	DO	STUDY	ACT
1	Ensured MSW is notified of referral.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communicated to MSW to turn on email alert from NeMSW</li> <li>BO to send an email to MSW so that MSW can reply on outcome of financial assessment.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduction in days taken for MSW to reply to BO.</li> <li>However there was no special cause variation.</li> </ul>	Revised guidelines for MSW financial assessment.
2	Educated MSW on use of NeMSW and clarity on guidelines for financial assessment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conducted a roll call to MSWs.</li> <li>Continued to collect data.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Median of 3 working days was sustained.</li> <li>Reduction in number of outliers.</li> </ul>	Adopted change

Process Measure 1: Number of working days for MSW to review patient after referral from BO



Working days taken for MSW to review patient upon receiving BO referral: Reduced from 3 days (baseline) to 2 days in PDSA cycles 1 and 2.

Outcome Measure 1: Number of working days taken for MSW to reply BO (post referral)



Median dropped from 19 to 3 working days

## Spread Changes, Learning Points

### Strategies to spread change after implementation:

- Having email alerts from NeMSW and BO was effective in improving MSW's response time to BO (from 19 to 3 working days).
- MSW and BO agreed to continue the new work process and to include this in the orientation / on-job-training to new colleagues in respective departments.

### Key learnings from this project:

- Open communication from both departments helped in identification of root causes and brainstorming of potential solutions.
- To take system limitations into considerations e.g. limitations of NeMSW system and BO's limited access of EPIC functions.