

Supermarket giant opens call centre in next move to become a full-service bank

THE first 500 call centre agents have started taking calls at Tesco Bank's new site on Quorum Business Park, near Newcastle.

At the official opening, Philip Clarke, who will take over as chief executive of Tesco plc in March 2011, said: "Today is an exciting step in our journey to becoming a full-service bank. At Tesco first class customer service is central to how we work and as we expand the business, it is crucial that the people we recruit can be true ambassadors for Tesco Bank. The region offers excellent financial customer services talent. We have already got a great team in place which we will continue to build over the next few years."

Within five years the bank expects to have 1,000 staff in place in Newcastle to handle sales and

service calls for its car and home insurance products.

The building, called Q8 and offering 100,353 sq ft, has been leased for 15 years at a quoted price, according to Property Week, of £14.95 sq ft. Quorum Business Park is in Longbenton, 10 minutes from the city centre, and has its own shuttle bus

Advertised salaries for team manager are £25,000-£30,000, plus such benefits as a share scheme and a 10pc discount in Tesco stores.

The bank's chairman, Andrew Higginson, said that he and the chief executive, Benny Higgins, had been impressed by the people who had been attracted to the new office.

He added: "We have a rigorous training programme currently in place and, in addition, are



"Exciting step": Philip Clarke at the opening

encouraging staff to work towards professional qualifications as well as offering them the support they need to get on in their careers. We want to become an employer of choice here in Newcastle."

Tesco said that additional customer service jobs will be created over the next two years as

well as up to 250 new roles for claims managers, team leaders and negotiators.

Tesco Bank's principal products are insurance (motor, home, pet and travel), credit cards and personal loans, personal savings, Tesco Compare and a network of ATMs. The insurance products are

Your Contact Centre Expansion and Savings Partner

providence BUSINESS SERVICES
the customer service company

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through Fortis UK, soon to become Ageas. Current accounts are set to follow in summer next year.

At the same time, the bank plans to begin offering mortgages and to handle sales and service it has

signed five-year deal with the big outsourcer, Vertex, which is hiring 200 staff for its site at Atlantic Quay, Glasgow.

In June last year, Tesco Bank set up its HQ in InterPoint, a new 47,000

sq ft building in Haymarkets Yard, Edinburgh. Twelve weeks later, it took a 20-year lease on Broadway One, a seven storey building with 125,466 sq ft on the corner of Renfield Street and Renfrew Street, Glasgow – just over a mile from the Vertex site – to house a customer service centre for bank account holders. (See Call Centre Europe, issue Nos. 84 and 85.)

Tesco Bank was formerly Tesco Personal Finance which began in 1997 as a joint venture between Tesco and Royal Bank of Scotland and in December 2008 Tesco bought out RBS for £950m. Several hundred RBS staff have transferred to the bank.

● Tesco Telecoms has signed a five-year deal with Vertex to support Tesco's national roll-out of bundled fixed line and broadband. Vertex, which has had a six-year relationship with Tesco Telecoms, will handle customer contacts through 100 staff at its site in Prescot, Liverpool.



Andrew Higginson (left) chairman of Tesco Bank, and Benny Higgins, chief executive



Move for car call centre

FORD'S customer call centre has moved about 20 miles to Daventry and is seeking 40 more staff.

Seventy employees are making the move to a refurbished part of the Ford Distribution Centre, on the Royal Oak Industrial Estate.

It was formerly based at the Jaguar engineering plant, alongside the Jaguar Land-Rover customer call centres. Since the two brands were sold to Tata two years ago, Ford said it made sense to make the move to a Ford site.

Open on weekdays, 9am-5.30pm, the call centre has 12 lines and makes use of VoIP.

The call centre is operated by Percepta, a joint venture between Ford and Teletch which was founded in 2000.