Two comedy camels have been touring BT's UK call centres to raise money for Red Nose Day. Called Camela and Humphrey, they were set to meet at the company's Warrington call centre on the day of the telethon. BT's campaign manager, Kevin Lamey, said: "This is one of the year's biggest BT Comic Relief fundraising activities and we aim to visit as many BT sites as possible."

Volunteers taking calls on the day include BT staff at the company's call centres in Belfast, Blackburn, Cardiff, Doncaster, Glasgow, Newcastle, Sheffield and Warrington and at BT Tower in London.

Pictured in Glasgow (back from left): Libby Barr, director of consumer sales; Judy Thompson, sales manager; John Petter, managing director, consumer, and bagpipe player (non BT), Kenneth Hill; front: Ross Hassan, customer operations manager.

● ***Call Centre Europe will again be publishing a big picture feature on the Red Nose Day telethon. If you wish your call centre to be included, please ask the editor for guidance notes by email: editor@call-centre-europe.com***

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PC problem? Let's chat about it

IN THE first 12 months of using live chat for IT support, Aviva is said to have saved £1.5m.

Now it has 75 agents in York handling queries from its 46,000 staff in the UK and worldwide. They use a product called WhosOn, supplied by Parker Software.

Parker reports that, earlier, IT support staff used two costly channels: phone and email. Then two senior managers, chatting by instant messenger, recognised that live chat could be used.

The head of Aviva's IT service centre, Mark Bennett, said that a year after a chat icon was placed on staff PCs, 77 per cent of employees had tried it.

At first, some support analysts were assigned the additional duty of handling chat.

Mr Bennett said: "In our experience, having analysts handle both phone and chat support cases hasn't been as effective; we're now separating those duties".

In addition, he said, they felt that quality could be maintained and time saved if agents were limited to three simultaneous chat sessions.

To make further improvements, Aviva commissioned Parker Software to design a "dashboard", displayed on seven flat screen monitors, which shows figures such as such as the average wait time before live chats are taken and number missed.

Mr Bennett said: "As we became more efficient we were able to reduce the number of analysts handling live chat and reallocate those FTEs to other areas to provide service."

Mr Bennett said other departments, including HR, now wished to use the service. He said: "Because we're well beyond a trial and the benefits are well established, offering web chat to support other departments will go quickly."

● Contact: ian@parkersoft.co.uk

New system boost efficiency and cuts costs for motor insurer

AUTO Direct is said to have achieved a first call resolution rate of 95.8 per cent with the use of customer interaction software. And enquiry processing efficiency has risen by 50 per cent.

In addition, calls are said to have dropped by 23 per cent due to online self service and email management.

Auto Direct is part of Ageas UK, formerly Fortis UK, which has 7.6m policyholders, 4,000 staff and has its HQ in Eastleigh.

As part of a drive to move many insurance processes online, it bought a system from Eptica.

Auto Direct had 45 different email accounts. Now it has a central platform to manage all online enquiries more efficiently. And, by using web self-service to provide immediate online answers, the number of people who go on to send an email query has dropped to less than two per cent.

Queries which formerly took seven minutes to process by phone now take half the time with the new system.

The head of call centre at Ageas Insurance Solutions, Ray Westwick, said that, as well as higher service and lower costs, the company could now offer more competitive pricing.

Changes to policies – such as a new car or additional driver – are now handled with web forms completed by policyholders. It means that agents have the information they need to calculate a quote or amend the policy. Payments can also be made online.

Postal mail is now digitally incorporated, cutting processing time and costs.

www.eptica.com