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Halifax Community Bank Newsletter - February 2012

The New Year has commenced where the old one finished with Halifax Community Bank introducing changes which have had lead to significant numbers of members contacting Accord Headquarters for guidance and advice.

2012 Incentive Scheme:

This is the hottest topic at present with particular concerns coming from Customer Advisers (CAs). The banks decision to communicate just before colleagues broke up for the holiday left many feeling confused about some of the scheme detail. Thankfully, there is now much greater clarity and a growing understanding of the impact of the changes that have been implemented.

There are aspects of the scheme that Accord welcomes, especially breaking the link between service and sales. Our hope is that the bank will continue to rebalance the importance of service and increase the proportion of the incentive linked to the service element as the scheme develops.

Accord has made representations to the Halifax management team on what you have told us are either unfair or unworkable about the scheme.

CAs in support roles and CA sellers are feeling hardest done by on the issue of a standard threshold for all CAs of 55 successful referrals per quarter. Counter CAs can also see that the best opportunity to achieve threshold rests with the Help & Advice CAs and this is evidenced by the experience of January 2012.

It appears that the scheme design does not take full account of the variety and complexity of branch operations at CA level. The differing CA roles in the Halifax are the product of many years of colleague/management activity designed to get the right people into jobs which play to their strengths. The concern now is that management will be forced to change the job content of, or rotate, CA roles to deliver equality of

opportunity to achieve the sales bonus. Accord believes this is an unintended consequence of the 2012 Incentive Scheme and has called for the bank to review this aspect as soon as possible. If something works in Lloyds TSB, there is no guarantee that it can be successfully transferred into the Halifax where there is a different customer base and different operational and employee cultures.

Customer and Counter Managers (CMs) have complained about the level of fixed payment they receive for service. Given that CMs are accountable for over 95% of the Net Promoter Score, it is not surprising that a payment to them of £175 and £150 respectively (middle quintile) produced such a response when the payment to a Business Manager in the same branch is £330. We have asked the bank to review the payment model for CMs and the NPS league tables approach and await a response.

Business Managers (BsMs) have expressed concern about how the payment of their team element will be reduced by a factoring process determined by the BsMs grade and the size of branch. The experience of the first quarter will help this group understand if the approach being adopted provides the correct opportunity to be rewarded fairly. We will revisit this issue in Q2 2012.

Branch managers in smaller units feel their job content is not being adequately rewarded through the scheme and believe that this further erodes their value to the company compared to managers in larger branches.

The bank has listened to our representations and has already acted to remove the target for referrals from the Customer Managers, Counter Managers and Counter Support workforces for Q1 only and to review its appropriateness for inclusion in the scheme from Q2 2012 onwards.

If you have any comments on the subject of incentives in the Halifax Community Bank please email jim.fielding@accordhq.org

Q4 2011 Bonus Participation

We reported in our last newsletter that although branch colleagues had been given a target adjustment to take into account the post integration experience, their view was that the reduction was not enough.

The bank is currently collating the results for Q4 2011 to examine the participation rates for Branch colleagues. We will report the outcome of our discussions in our next newsletter.

Banking Advisers' Qualifications

The bank has indicated its desire for all Halifax Banking Advisors (BAs) to have a professional qualification in the next 12 months.

Accord believes the FSI Qualification is good for members and good for the banks customers. We believe that not only does it provide a path to career advancement for LBG retail employees, but that it will help to restore customer trust and confidence in the professionalism of retail bank staff. In addition, we also believe that it will provide a strong marketing differentiation for LBG compared to other retail banks, based upon the "trust and professionalism" message.

Accord has been involved in discussions with the Institute for Financial Studies, the body that will supervise and award the FSI qualifications, for the last 18 months. Indeed we believe that bank deserves credit for heeding our call for more career advancement opportunities for our retail bank members and the need to take distinctive and decisive steps to restore customer confidence.

New to role BAs will be expected to obtain the qualification within 12 months of being appointed. The bank will support BAs with payment for the exams and a revision day but will expect the study to be completed by the BA in their own time.

Existing BAs will also be asked to obtain the qualification with the same support. The bank confirmed that 89% of the pilot group passed the exam at the first attempt and feedback from this group indicates that 90% of the course content was already part of the BA role.

Some members have expressed concern about having no choice in the matter and potentially being asked to leave the role if they do not pass the exam. The bank has confirmed that it will support every BA in obtaining the qualification and will work with any individual who has concerns about their capacity or ability to obtain the qualification.

Accord believes the FSI Qualification is good for members and good for the bank's customers. However, we would want the bank to go further with

Its support for colleagues by building the tuition and testing into a new BA's induction programme and to develop a programme of 2 day workshops for existing BAs after which they immediately sit the exam. Additionally, we have asked that Business Managers are sensitive and supportive of individual BAs who historically find exams difficult or who may not have been in an exam situation for a considerable time. We await the bank's response. If you have any comments about the proposals please email jim.fielding@accordhq.org

ICS Counter Authorisation Levels

We have had several approaches from members, particularly those in smaller branches at grade B who cover managerial absence, about their inability to perform the full services requested by customers when an authorised signatory is not available.

We took this matter up with LBG and they have confirmed that

"With authorised signatories, there is a minimum grade attached to each category. Colleagues who do not qualify automatically as an authorised signatory through their grade may be authorised to sign within a category if they are at the minimum grade linked to that category. Within the LTSB network, a Local Director may therefore authorise grade A/B colleagues to have an appropriate authorised signatory category:

	Automatic Grades	Minimum Grades	Minimum Grade required to authorise category signatories and signing restrictions
Category A	Grade H-E	Grade D	Grade H-E
Category B	Grade C Bank Managers	Sales colleagues	Grade D who is authorised as a category A signatory
Category C	Grade C - not Bank Managers	Grade A-B Sales colleagues	Grade H-D or Grade B-C who is authorised as a category B signatory

In terms of overrides, the non lending colleagues can be allocated override status if it is essential to enable them to carry out their day to day tasks, e.g. if they need to approve non-lending transactions that require an override status. If an override status is required in order to override system restrictions, an override status and signing authority form (11184) must be completed and signed off by a colleague at Grade D or above (which again could be the LD).

This is outlined in Retail Procedures:

http://lbg.intranet.group/retail_procs/procflows/flows5001_6000/P5858.shtm

and

http://lbg.intranet.group/retail_procs/procflows/flows5001_6000/P5865.shtm

In this way, authorised signatories/overrides can be allocated to lower graded colleagues and support (typical) operational needs of smaller LBG branches. However, should this still be insufficient to meet customers' needs then this would lead to referral to another (larger) branch.

If you are experiencing this issue we recommend that you contact your Local Director and obtain the override/signatory authority which will help you in your role.

Halifax Bancassurance

Sales Force Restructure

1st January saw the introduction of the new split sales force with Financial Advisors (FA) continuing to sell investment products and the new Financial Consultants (FC) selling protection products. The changes to terms and conditions for FC colleagues were communicated in December and were generally well received. Accord would be interested to hear of the experiences of FA/FCs in the new structure and the issues that working under a different model is presenting.

Please send your comments to John Dickinson at john.dickinson@accordhq.org.

Bonus Participation Q4 2011

In Q4 2011, Accord asked the Halifax Bancassurance business to review its targeting for Q4 against the backcloth of the impact of banking & savings migration in September and a national performance which was significantly behind plan. The bank declined to make any target adjustment at that time but gave an undertaking to review bonus participation for Q4 2011 early in 2012. Accord will be participating in this review in the weeks ahead and will report on our discussions with the bank in our next newsletter.

Any comments or questions on Halifax Bancassurance matters should be sent to john.dickinson@accordhq.org.

Halifax Mortgage Sales Force

Removal of the Mortgage Consultant Role

The bank has briefed Accord on their plans to remove the Mortgage Consultant (MC) role from its sales force by 30th June 2012. No jobs are at risk and all MCs have been offered promotion to Mortgage Advisor (MA) status at Grade C as part of the proposed change. A pre-requisite of accepting the MA role is the requirement to be CeMap qualified by 30th June 2012. Those MCs who do not wish to accept the MA offer are being promised 'suitable alternative roles' within the bank.

Although the change is being driven by expected regulatory demands, the Halifax sees this move as positive in helping it to deliver the most professionally qualified sales force in the mortgage industry.

This promotional move for MCs to a Grade C MA role will mean that these colleagues will not qualify for paid overtime from the date of promotion. Additionally, the bank has indicated that the pay rise associated with the promotion will be the higher of the Grade C minimum pay level or a 5% increase in the MC's existing salary. Whilst this will advantage most of our MC members, Accord is reluctant to accept a move to the salary minimum as the correct way of recognising the existing experience of these colleagues. We have made representations to the bank and await a response.

Protection 4 Life (P4L) Sales Platform

Thank you to all of members of the Mortgage Sales Force who kept Accord updated on the issues with the computer system running P4L quotes during December 2011. Following representations from Accord, the bank has agreed to a two week adjustment to the Q4 2011 target.

MSF National Advisory Committee (NAC)

A meeting of the Mortgage Sales Force NAC has been arranged for 1st March 2012, at 11.30am. The meeting venue is 2nd floor, Westminster House, Portland Street, Manchester. The NAC is responsible for considering issues of particular concern to union members in the MSF. Any MSF members that may be interested in joining the NAC and attending the meeting should contact martin.pyke@accordhq.org. Martin will also respond to any comments or questions on MSF issues.

Appraisal Season

It's that time of the year again and members will be reflecting on their appraisal ratings for 2011. The general rules are that there should be no surprises with your rating and you should be assessed against your **balanced** scorecard taking all aspects of your performance into account.

If you disagree with your rating, you should ask the assessor to review their decision based on the factors you present. If you are still unhappy with the rating, you have the right to appeal the decision using the formal grievance policy. Support is at hand and members should contact their workplace rep for advice, guidance and representation.

If you have been in a Deputation role for part of 2011, there are special rules that apply to your appraisal assessment. If you are receiving a Deputation Payment (1-6 months), your performance will be evaluated relative to your current grade and not the grade to which you are deputising. This means that your performance rating should take into consideration the additional stretch that is being provided by the activities associated with the deputation.

Colleagues who performed a "Secondment Role" during 2011 should be evaluated relative to the role they were performing.

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