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As a specialist niche services provider, Premier Technical Services Group PLC (PTSG) often forms an invaluable, specialist component of a larger facilities management contract undertaken by its client. In the case of this contract, PTSG worked with CBRE to provide electrical services for the Co-operative Group on a number of its sites, forming successful partnerships with both parties in the process.

The Co-operative Group is one of the world's largest consumer co-operatives, owned by more than eight million members. It is the UK's fifth biggest food retailer operating across the country, with almost 2,800 local, convenience and medium-sized stores. Amongst its other wholly-owned businesses are the UK's number one funeral services provider, a major general insurer and a developing legal services business.

PTSG was contracted by CBRE, the Co-operative Group's M&E services provider, to begin working with the Co-operative in 2014, performing PAT and fixed wire testing at eight distribution centres. In April 2015, after a successful delivery of this initial contract, PTSG was commissioned to provide PAT and fixed wire testing to over 600 large food stores, local stores and funeral service providers across the UK.

The safety issues and potential disruption to day-to-day operations that come with malfunctioning electrical equipment often mean that electrical tests like these must be carried out as quickly and efficiently as possible. As such, the tests were performed on live sites during store opening hours, meaning engineers had to ensure they worked without disrupting retail operations. The Co-operative Group was aware of the pressing need for testing works to be completed, and was therefore very accommodating of PTSG's engineers.

Project Manager Martin Beattie explained: "We ensured the client was notified well in advance of testing works as we wanted to minimise the interruption to the retail environment for customers and staff. The Co-operative Group was very flexible with its availability and helped accommodate our workforce to carry out works in a safe and efficient manner."

As a result of the previous work carried out, PTSG was also awarded multiple contracts to carry out lightning protection upgrades at various sites, including the Co-operative Bank's head offices in Manchester. The new work packages involved some of the Co-operative's major buildings including the CIS tower and One Angel Square, both based in Manchester.

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PTSG's capability to offer multiple specialist services to its clients, preventing them from having to shop around to fill contracts, is key in setting it apart from the competition. As a result of the strong relationship built over the existing contract, PTSG's specialist access and safety team was also commissioned to test all fall arrest testing equipment at One Angel Square.

PTSG's objective is always to become an integrated part of its customers' teams, not simply an extension of them. A key part of success in any working relationship is collaboration, with a single approach to sharing and disseminating information.

The foundations of the success of this contract lie with PTSG's ability to work in a way that is sympathetic to all involved companies' business aims, whether that be a retail giant with huge corporate responsibility, or a facilities manager with a commitment to working efficiently and cost-effectively.

To aid the smooth running of the contract, PTSG dedicated a specific key account manager to act as a single point of contact for The Co-operative Group. As a supplier with experience of working in a wide range of different industries, PTSG understands how working very closely together with in-house teams consistently yields the best results. Providing a key contact at PTSG sustained a successful partnership, and reflected the Group's efforts in creating strong and considerate professional relationships that permeate every level of each company.

As a result of the services PTSG has delivered and the nature of its business make-up, the Co-operative Group has considerably reduced maintenance costs and ensured the operational performance of a large number of its sites across the UK.

Andy Barnes, Support Manager for The Co-operative Group, said: "PTSG and CBRE have provided an exceptional level of service to the Co-operative Group. Their attention to detail and collaborative effort has been pivotal in the successful relationship between all parties. PTSG's engineers are flexible and professional in their delivery and demonstrate an understanding of the needs of working in a retail-based environment."

