

The Information Commissioner regularly receives queries from people who have had problems obtaining credit.

Such problems may arise when attempting to borrow money from a bank, a finance company or a building society, when trying to obtain a credit card, store card, or a loyalty card, or when trying to obtain a mail order catalogue, etc.

No-one has a right to credit and a lender can always refuse to give credit. For example, the lender may take the view that you may not be able to meet the repayments for the size of loan requested and therefore decide that you are an unacceptable risk.

Many lenders use credit-scoring systems and make checks with **credit reference agencies** to obtain details about you and your credit history.

What information does a credit reference agency hold?

Credit reference agencies in the UK are bound by the Consumer Credit Act 1974, which has been updated and amended by the Consumer Credit Act 2006, to provide accurate information about you to lenders. They do not keep "blacklists", nor do they give an opinion regarding your credit worthiness. An agency will not know why a particular lender has refused to give you credit.

A credit reference agency usually holds the following information:

- **Public Record Information**, including:

Electoral Register

This provides proof of where you live and how long you have lived there.

Court Judgments

If you have had a money judgment made against you in court, the court will have passed details of the judgment to an organisation called [Registry Trust Ltd](#), who provides this information to credit reference agencies. Registry Trust Ltd holds details of all money judgments in the British Isles with the exception of the Bailiwick of Guernsey. A judgment will normally remain on file for 6 years.

If a judgment has been made against you, there are particular rules, which differ depending upon the jurisdiction of the court, on how to have the judgment marked as "satisfied" once the debt has been paid.

***If a judgment was made against you in the Isle of Man you should contact:
The General Registry, Isle of Man Courts of Justice, Deemsters Walk, Bucks Road, Douglas IM1 3AR.***

For judgments in other jurisdictions, please contact the relevant court.

Bankruptcies or Administration Orders

If you have been made bankrupt or had an administration order made this information will be on your file. This information is normally retained on file for 6 years.

- **Details of your current and previous credit accounts**

Many lenders provide information to credit reference agencies regarding your credit history. This information may include whether you have kept your payments up-to-date or whether you have been or are in arrears. It should be remembered that a good credit history is likely to help you obtain credit.

- **Other Information** including:

Record of Searches

Your credit reference file may contain a record of the searches made by lenders.

Council of Mortgage Lenders' Repossession Register

Only members of the Council of Mortgage Lenders can see this information. If you have had property repossessed this will show on the register.

Credit Industry Fraud Avoidance System (CIFAS) Reports

This scheme is intended not only to warn lenders of a potential fraud but also to protect people from fraud. CIFAS members record information when a fraud or an attempted fraud has been detected. The information may not directly relate to you but may, for example, indicate that someone has tried to impersonate you. Lenders will not refuse credit due to a CIFAS report but may need to take extra steps, such as proving the identity of the person who has applied for credit.

Gone Away Marker

Members of the Gone Away Information Network (GAIN) provide reports when they cannot trace a person whose credit repayments are not up-to-date and who has moved house without providing a forwarding address. This information is only provided to GAIN members.

How long is information kept on credit reference files?

Public record information:

Administration order	<i>Six years from the date of the order, even if paid in full</i>
County court judgment/high court judgment/deed	<i>Six years from the date of the judgment, even if paid in full (but may be removed if paid in full within one month of the date of judgment)</i>
Electoral register	Indefinitely
Bankruptcy	<i>Normally six years from the date the bankruptcy begins, even if discharged (unless the bankruptcy lasts longer than this)</i>

Account information

Type of information	Kept for:
Live account	<i>Information is collected until the account is closed, then kept for six years</i>
Closed account	<i>Six years from the date the account is closed</i>
Default Arrangement	<i>Six years from the date of the default to pay Depends on the terms of the arrangement agreed with the lender</i>

Other information

Type of information	Kept for:
Searches	<i>Experian and Equifax one year, (or two years for debt collection searches). TransUnion two years.</i>
Alias information	<i>Depends on your circumstances</i>
Association information	<i>Until the financial link ends, you ask for a disassociation and the credit reference agency changes your records</i>
Linked addresses	<i>As long as is relevant for credit referencing</i>
Council of Mortgage Lenders	<i>Six years</i>
CIFAS	<i>Ongoing if there is evidence of fraud</i>
GAIN	<i>Six years</i>

What problems can arise?

Problems can arise for a number of reasons, including:

- Someone who *in the past* lived at your address had a bad credit record;
- Someone living at the *same address*, either in a separate apartment or as a lodger in your household, has a bad credit record;
- Another member of your *family* has a bad credit record;
- Someone with a *similar address* has a bad credit record;
- Someone with a *similar name* has a bad credit record;
- Someone living at a *previous address of yours* has a bad credit record;
- There is an error in the information given to the credit reference agencies by the lender;
- You have paid off the debt, but that information has failed to reach the credit reference agencies' files;
- You are not on the Electoral Register.

I have been refused credit, what can I do?

Firstly, you should ask the lender why you were refused credit, whether the lender used a credit reference agency and, if so, the name of the agency. The lender may ask that you put your request in writing.

If the lender indicates that there was a problem with your credit reference check, you can write to the credit reference agency to find out what credit record information they hold about you. You do not have to have been refused credit to exercise this right.

You have the right to obtain a Statutory Credit Report and, in certain circumstances, to make corrections to and/or add comments to your personal data held.

The main credit reference agencies are:

Equifax Plc

Customer Service Centre
PO Box 10036
Leicester
LE3 4FS

0800 014 2955

www.equifax.co.uk

Experian Limited

Customer Support Centre
Experian Ltd
PO Box 9000
Nottingham
NG80 7WF

0800 013 8888

www.experian.co.uk

TransUnion International UK Limited

One Park Lane
Leeds
West Yorkshire
LS3 1EP

0330 024 7574

www.transunion.co.uk

You must provide the credit reference agency with the following information:

- Your full name
- Date of Birth
- Current address (including postcode)
- Any previous addresses you have held in the past six years, and the length of time at these addresses
- Any previous names you have been known by
- Your signed authority
- A Statutory Credit Report is free of charge.

The agency may ask you to provide evidence to confirm your identity if they have reasonable doubts about who you are – this is to ensure that any actions they take are on behalf of the right person. The agency may ask for more details to help them find all the information they hold about you.

The agency must respond to you without undue delay but within one month from the receipt of your letter. If they hold no information about you, they must respond to you informing you of this.

Further guidance on how to request a Statutory Credit Report is available on each of the credit reference agencies' websites.

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