

The complaint

Mr B complains that he has been incorrectly linked to debts by Lowell Financial Ltd. Mr B says the debts aren't his and Lowell's actions have impacted his credit file.

What happened

In July 2016 Lowell Portfolio I Ltd purchased a debt from a credit card company and appointed Lowell to collect it. Lowell searched for the borrower and found Mr B's details. Lowell wrote to Mr B on 16 May 2017 and asked for contact if he wasn't the owner of the debt.

On 30 August 2017, Mr B contacted Lowell and advised he wasn't the borrower and had never lived at the address where the debt was registered. Lowell agreed to stop contacting Mr B about the debt.

Last year, Mr B complained about links on his credit file in relation to debts held by Lowell. Lowell responded on 4 January 2020 and apologised for contacting Mr B. It agreed that his address should have been noted so that no further correspondence was sent to it after Mr B called in 2017. Lowell apologised and sent Mr B a cheque for £100. Lowell confirmed it wasn't responsible for any links between Mr B and the person of the same name on his credit file. Lowell said Mr B needed to contact the credit reference agencies to be disassociated.

Mr B referred his complaint to our service and it was passed to an investigator. He explained that we can only deal with complaints relating to the two credit card debts Mr B says he's linked to. The investigator said that Lowell had provided evidence to show it wasn't reporting a link between him and the defaulted accounts on Mr B's credit file. The investigator said that the link may have been caused by the actions of another business. The investigator thought the £100 Lowell had sent Mr B was fair.

Mr B asked to appeal. He said that due to the actions of Lowell, he was linked to someone else's debts and hasn't been able to obtain credit elsewhere for around three years. As Mr B asked to appeal, his complaint has been passed to me to make a decision.

What I've decided – and why

I've considered all the available evidence and arguments to decide what's fair and reasonable in the circumstances of this complaint.

I'll start by confirming the investigator's point that, as a service, we can only look at complaints about certain issues. In this case, we can only look at Mr B's complaints about the debts he says he's been linked to by Lowell in relation to the two credit card debts. We can't look at complaints about information reported in relation to utilities or mobile phones as they aren't covered by our rules. My decision will only relate to the two credit card debts Lowell acquired.

Lowell accepts it wrote to Mr B about the first credit card debt in 2017 and that it shouldn't have contacted him again about it. When Mr B complained last year Lowell agreed it had failed to update its records and add him to a "do not contact" list. Lowell apologised, made sure Mr B's details were updated so no further information was mailed and sent him a cheque for £100. I'm satisfied the £100 Lowell sent Mr B fairly reflects the impact of its errors on him.

Lowell has sent us evidence to show Mr B's address links on his credit file. And I can see there are links to the addresses where defaults have been reported in relation to the two credit card debts in question. Lowell says it isn't responsible for the way the addresses are linked on Mr B's credit file. I've looked at whether that's the case.

Lowell contacted all the main credit reference agencies and asked for confirmation of whether it is reporting information that has caused a link between Mr B and the person of the same name. All the credit reference agencies responded to confirm Lowell isn't responsible for the links on Mr B's credit file. I'm satisfied that, whilst there does still appear to be a link between Mr B and the debts he has complained about, they weren't caused by Lowell.

I'm sorry to disappoint Mr B but I haven't found that Lowell is responsible for linking him with the debts in question on his credit file.

As I haven't found that Lowell is responsible for the links on Mr B's credit file and I'm satisfied it has dealt with this complaint fairly, I'm not telling it to take any further action.

My final decision

My decision is that I don't uphold this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr B to accept or reject my decision before 9 September 2020.

Marco Manente
Ombudsman