

## **The complaint**

Mr L complains that Equifax Limited can't record his full surname on his credit file.

## **What happened**

The background to this complaint and my initial conclusions were set out in my provisional decision. I said:

*Last year, Mr L contacted Equifax after he moved home. Mr L set up an account with a third party business that obtains credit file information from Equifax. But Mr L found that his financial history wasn't correct and that there were issues with the format of his surname. Mr L also found he wasn't showing as being recorded on the electoral register despite being registered to vote.*

*Equifax looked into the problems Mr L raised and explained that his surname is too long for its systems to record correctly. As a result, Mr L wasn't showing on the electoral register. Equifax said it could report a shortened version of Mr L's surname and manually update the electoral register information so it appeared on his credit file. Equifax gave Mr L three options for the shortened format it could use.*

*Mr L advised Equifax he was declined for a mortgage and credit card applications as a result of the problems it has recording the format of his name correctly and not showing as being on the electoral register. Equifax spoke with Mr L and raised a complaint. A shortened version of Mr L's name was used and manually updated so it appeared on the electoral register. Equifax offered Mr L £100 to apologise for the inconvenience caused.*

*An investigator at this service looked at Mr L's complaint. They explained that the Financial Ombudsman Service can't tell a business to change its systems. The investigator thought Equifax had agreed a reasonable workaround by using an amended version of Mr L's name and that it had dealt with his complaint fairly.*

*Mr L asked to appeal so his complaint was passed to me to make a decision. I asked our investigator to contact Mr L for some additional information. We asked Mr L to supply evidence that showed his mortgage and other credit applications were declined as a direct result of the way Equifax records his name. Mr L responded to say there was a lack of transparency in the way Equifax works. Mr L advised that the lenders involved wouldn't disclose the reason why his applications were turned down.*

## **What I've provisionally 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'm aware I've summarised the events surrounding this complaint in less detail than the parties involved. No discourtesy is intended by my approach which reflects the informal nature of this service. I want to assure all parties I've read and considered everything on file. I'm satisfied I don't need to comment on every point raised to fairly reach my decision. And if*

*I don't comment on something, it's not because I haven't considered it. It's because I've focused on what I think are the key issues. My approach is in line with the rules we operate under.*

*I'm going to start by talking about the main issue which is that Equifax's system is unable to accommodate all the letters in Mr L's surname. I want to assure Mr L that I agree the ideal result would be for Equifax to be able to record the correct format of his surname. But, as our investigator said, we don't have the powers to tell a business to change the way its systems operate. I understand that Mr L will most likely find that answer unsatisfactory, but I can't tell Equifax to change how its systems work.*

*Equifax has put a workaround in place that means a shortened version of Mr L's surname is used and he's manually added to the electoral register. I appreciate why Mr L finds the solution unreasonable and why he wants the full version of his name to be recorded. But, I'm satisfied that systems limitations mean Equifax can't record Mr L's full name. And the workaround option Equifax has offered means Mr L will show as being recorded on the electoral register. Without resolving the systems issue, I'm satisfied the option Equifax has given is a reasonable way forward.*

*Mr L's told us he's been declined for a mortgage and other credit and is of the view that his electoral roll information and the format of his surname were responsible. We asked Mr L to provide supporting evidence that showed why his applications were declined. But Mr L's responded and confirmed he's unable to provide that information as the businesses didn't share the specific reasons behind their decisions. I'm sorry to disappoint Mr L but there are a range of reasons businesses can decline applications. Without seeing evidence that specifically notes the issues raised here as the key reason for his applications being declined, I'm unable to safely conclude it was Equifax's systems issue that was responsible.*

*Whilst I'm unable to tell Equifax to change its systems, I can consider the wider impact of the issues raised on Mr L. I agree that the issues raised have caused Mr L a reasonable level of inconvenience. And, as noted above, the only way for Mr L to appear on the electoral register appears to be via a workaround that doesn't show his name correctly. I also agree with Mr L that Equifax's responses could've been clearer at times and that the service provided should've been better. Even though I haven't seen direct evidence that Mr L's applications were declined as a result of the way his surname is displayed, I accept that the systems issue is likely to have caused additional inconvenience above that other customers experience.*

*Equifax offered Mr L £100 to apologise for the issues raised, but I'm not persuaded that's a fair recognition of the level of distress and inconvenience caused. Whilst I can't tell Equifax to change its systems, I intend to increase the level of compensation for the distress and inconvenience caused. In my view, a total of £250 more fairly reflects the issues raised and their impact on Mr L. So unless I see any new evidence that changes my mind, I intend to uphold Mr L's complaint and direct Equifax to pay him a total of £250.*

*I should add that if Mr L experiences problems in the future that can be directly linked to how Equifax's system records his name and electoral roll information, he'll be able to raise them as new issues with the business as new complaints.*

*I invited both parties to respond with any additional comments or information they wanted me to consider before I made my final decision. Equifax responded and confirmed it was willing to accept. We didn't hear back from Mr L.*

### **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.

As neither party has provided new information for me to consider I see no reason to change the conclusions I reached in my provisional decision. I still think Mr L's complaint should be upheld, for the same reasons.

### **My final decision**

My decision is that I uphold Mr L's complaint and direct Equifax Limited to pay him a total of £250 (less any compensation already paid).

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr L to accept or reject my decision before 1 May 2023.

Marco Manente  
**Ombudsman**