

## **The complaint**

Mr M has complained that Equifax Limited wouldn't report his repayment arrangement on his credit file.

## **What happened**

From 2018 to 2019, Mr M was in a reduced payment arrangement with his credit card company, S, made through a debt management plan. The account later defaulted.

In 2022, Mr M found out that Equifax was not reporting this arrangement, and was instead reporting that he'd simply missed his payments for those months. He raised a dispute with Equifax.

Equifax in turn raised a generic account dispute with S, who replied saying they didn't agree to remove the account data. Mr M explained that Equifax hadn't dealt with the actual issue at hand, but Equifax declined to help further.

Mr M came to our service. We looked into things with S, and found that they were reporting to Equifax that Mr M had been in an arrangement through a debt management plan.

Equifax confirmed that S most likely did flag the arrangement with it, but claimed that it simply wasn't possible to report the historic arrangement, as once the account defaulted the historic data disappeared. Mr M pointed out that other accounts showed historic arrangements that were followed by a default.

Our investigator upheld the complaint, recommending that Equifax should accurately report the historic arrangement from S, and pay Mr M £150 compensation.

Equifax didn't agree. It insisted it wasn't possible for it to report the arrangement when it was followed by a default. When we pointed out that it was reporting exactly that on other accounts, Equifax confirmed that it was now reporting the arrangement with S, but claimed that it hadn't previously because S hadn't told it about the arrangement.

The complaint's been passed to me to decide.

I sent Mr M and Equifax a provisional decision on 4 July 2023, to explain why I thought the complaint should be upheld. In that decision, I said:

*Based on what I've seen so far, I currently think the complaint should be upheld.*

*From what both sides have sent me, it looks like Equifax is now correctly reporting that Mr M had a historic repayment arrangement with S before the account defaulted. So I'm glad to see that the core issue has now been sorted out.*

*However, I think that it took much too long to get to this point, and I think that's primarily because of the way Equifax handled things.*

*We already investigated things with S, and found that they told Equifax about Mr M's debt management plan payment arrangement. I won't re-hash those points here. Equifax also previously accepted that S had reported this. It looks like the issue was caused by a mismatch between the way that S and Equifax's systems reported things.*

*This could have been relatively straightforward to resolve. However, when Mr M raised the issue with Equifax, Equifax doesn't appear to have properly explained to S what Mr M was actually trying to change. So it seems S were under the impression that Equifax was asking them to outright remove the payment data, which is understandable given how little Equifax seems to have told them. And understandably, S said they didn't agree to remove the data.*

*Mr M then reiterated to Equifax what the actual problem was. He showed it how our service had investigated things with S, and confirmed that S had reported the arrangement to Equifax and it should be reflected on his file. But Equifax repeatedly refused to help any further, even when presented with clear evidence that they were reporting inaccurate information on Mr M's file.*

*Even when the case came to our service, Equifax has not been very helpful or co-operative, but has instead provided contradictory excuses for its reporting of inaccurate information. I don't accept Equifax's prior claim that it was unable to report the historic arrangement, both because that would be contrary to its duty to report accurate data, and because it was able to report similar historic arrangements for other accounts. I also don't find Equifax's new claim – that S never previously reported the debt management plan – to be credible. Equifax previously accepted that S had reported the arrangement, and we already looked into things with S and found that they were indeed reporting it.*

*But even if I were to accept that S had some responsibility for the initial issue, I still find that Equifax did not take the proper steps or do its proper part to help resolve the matter, and instead dragged its heels while continuing to report information it had good reason to know was inaccurate. Even if Mr M's file has now been corrected, and even if we've not found that he suffered any particular financial losses, we still need to put right his non-financial loss.*

*I understand that Equifax has caused Mr M some real stress and disappointment, as well as substantially delaying the resolution of the issue and causing him some significant trouble in trying to sort things out. Taking into account our guidelines for compensation and the impact this has had on Mr M, I propose that Equifax should pay him £250 compensation. I think that amount better acknowledges the effect Equifax's handling of the matter had on Mr M.*

*I said I'd consider anything else anyone wanted to give me – so long as I received it by 18 July 2023. Mr M accepted the provisional decision and confirmed he had no further submissions to make. Equifax didn't add anything further.*

**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.

Neither side have sent me any new evidence or arguments. So having reconsidered the case, I've come to the same conclusion as before, and for the same reasons as set out in my provisional decision above.

**My final decision**

I uphold Mr M's complaint, and direct Equifax Limited to pay him £250 compensation in total.

If Mr M accepts the final decision, Equifax Limited must pay him within 28 days of the date our service notifies it of the acceptance.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr M to accept or reject my decision before 16 August 2023.

Adam Charles  
**Ombudsman**