

The complaint

Mrs K complains about information recorded on her credit file by Equifax Limited.

What happened

Mrs K has told us that in February 2023 she applied for car finance but was declined. The merchant advised that information on Mrs K's credit file had led to her application being turned down.

Mrs K contacted the credit reference agencies, including Equifax, and obtained copies of her credit file and score. Mrs K says her Equifax credit file contained incorrect information in terms of her electoral roll registration, that the balance of accounts shown didn't reflect the amounts outstanding and that her credit score wasn't as high as it should've been. Mrs K complained to Equifax.

Equifax issued a final response to Mrs K and provided information about the factors that could impact her credit score with it. Equifax also highlighted missed payments on a credit commitment and hard credit searches recorded in February 2023 and said they could've impacted her application. Equifax didn't uphold Mrs K's complaint.

Mrs K referred her complaint to this service and explained she was concerned that her electoral roll information was incorrect. Mrs K also said Equifax's actions had led to her car finance application being declined. Our investigator reviewed Mrs K's case but didn't find any evidence that the information reported by Equifax on her credit file was wrong and didn't uphold her complaint. Mrs K asked to appeal, so her 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'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.

Mrs K has explained she's lived in three properties over the last 35 years and that she doesn't agree that's being correctly recorded on her credit file. I've looked at Mrs K's credit file and the address history recorded, along with the dates she's noted as being on the electoral roll.

Equifax's records go back to 2010 and show Mrs K was registered at an address in her maiden name from that time until 2012. The electoral roll information updated in 2012 to

reflect Mrs K's married name and shows she remained at that address until June 2019. The electoral roll information shows Mrs K registered to vote at another property (her most recent previous address) in June 2019. Mrs K was on the electoral roll at that address between June 2019 and December 2021. In December 2021, Mrs K's electoral roll information was updated to reflect she moved to her current address. The electoral roll information shows Mrs K has been registered from December 2021 to date at her current address.

I haven't identified any gaps in Mrs K's electoral roll registration from 2010 onwards. And whilst the months Mrs K says she moved are slightly different to those being recorded on her credit file, the address history appears to be broadly in line with the one she has supplied. Electoral roll information is reported by the local authority. If Mrs K is concerned that the specific dates being reported by the local authority are wrong, she has the option of asking it to make the relevant changes. Equifax can't amend Mrs K's electoral roll information without instruction from the reporting organisation.

I can see Mrs K raised concerns about the balances showing on her credit file. But Equifax responded and explained there's a lag between live information and that recorded on its credit file that can take up to 90 days to update. I can confirm that information, like account balances, aren't updated in real time. The timescales Equifax provided in its responses to Mrs K are in line with what we'd expect to see. So I haven't seen anything that shows Equifax was recording incorrect or misleading information about Mrs K on her credit file.

Equifax's final response noted that Mrs K had a closed hire purchase agreement that was subject to four months of arrears between April and July 2020, whilst it was still active. I also note that a utility supplier recorded a default on Mrs K's credit file in November 2020. Mrs K has explained why these accounts show as they do. But I think it's reasonable to note that this is the sort of information businesses may consider when deciding whether to lend.

I understand Mrs K feels the credit score Equifax gave her was too low and negatively impacted her application in February 2023. But the credit score Equifax generates isn't shared externally with lenders or businesses and is a tool for its customers to get an idea of how organisations may view their credit. So whilst I understand Mrs K's concerns, I'm satisfied the underlying information recorded is correct. And I'm satisfied Equifax's credit score wasn't shared when Mrs K applied for car finance in February 2023, only the information and accounts reported on her credit file.

I can't say why Mrs K was declined for credit in February 2023. But I haven't seen anything on Mrs K's Equifax credit file that appears to be incorrect. As I'm satisfied Equifax is accurately reporting Mrs K's accounts and information on her credit file, I'm unable to agree it's made a mistake or treated her unfairly. I'm sorry to disappoint Mrs K but I haven't been persuaded there are grounds to uphold her complaint.

My final decision

My decision is that I don't uphold Mrs K's complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mrs K to accept or reject my decision before 17 April 2024.

Marco Manente
Ombudsman