

## The complaint

Mr S is unhappy with how Clear Score Technology Limited are displaying information on his credit file.

## What happened

For context and as per Clear Score's website, Clear Score aren't a Credit Reference Agency (CRA). Instead, Clear Score gets a customer's credit score and report from one of the three CRA's in the UK, who I'll refer to as "E". The service Clear Score provides is to allow customers free access to the data that E holds.

Mr S says his Clear Score credit report shows one hard search had been carried out on his credit file. So, because of this, Mr S says he applied for multiple forms of credit. However, Mr S says this was different to what his credit report with a CRA I'll refer to as "B" was showing – this showed ten hard searches and not just one.

Mr S says Clear Score should make clear different companies use different CRA's so that customers can check with those CRA's before applying for credit, as Clear Score only shows information from E. Mr S says his credit score with Clear Score is poor and that he doesn't have the ability to apply for other credit due to the missing searches having a negative impact on his score.

Clear Score say not all lenders report information to all three CRA's, which is why information can vary across Mr S' credit reports. Clear Score said the service they provide gives Mr S free access to his credit report from E, not B. So, discrepancies between Mr S' Clear Score report and his report with B are to be expected. Clear Score also told Mr S that lenders refer to CRA's when completing credit checks during credit applications and not Clear Score.

Our Investigator looked into Mr S' concerns. In summary he said Clear Score have explained to Mr S that the service they provide is to display information reported to E by data providers. And that the searches which appeared on Mr S' credit report with B were not given to E by the data providers, which then resulted in them not all showing on Mr S' Clear Score credit report. Our Investigator also said that Mr S' Clear Score credit score is for his information only and that his credit score is an illustration of how Clear Score thinks a lender might consider Mr S' credit history. Our Investigator said as lenders wouldn't have access to Mr S' credit score, it can't directly affect his potential credit worthiness.

Mr S responded and said Clear Score's website says *"the higher the score, the better you look to lenders"* which he says implies lenders can see his credit score. Mr S provided us with a screenshot of Clear Score's website stating this phrase. So, Mr S questioned what our Investigator meant by saying that his credit score is an only an illustration.

Our Investigator reviewed the information provided by Mr S and said he thinks Clear Score are saying in their opinion, the better the score, the better Mr S would look to lenders. And that lenders make their own lending decisions based on information provided to the CRA's.

Mr S asked for an Ombudsman to review his concerns. So, the complaint has been passed to me to decide.

### **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 can appreciate Mr S' concern that what he sees on his credit report with Clear Score in relation to hard searches, is different to what he sees on his credit report with B. And I note Mr S' point that he wasn't aware other agencies provide different information and that Clear Score ought to make this clear. As Clear Score have explained to Mr S directly and also as set out on their website, not all lenders report and share their information with all of the CRA's. This is more likely than not the reason why Mr S may see a difference in what his credit report is showing across different CRA's. Having considered what Clear Score have said, I don't find this explanation to be unreasonable as Clear Score aren't in control of what lenders report directly to the CRA's.

I've read the sentence Mr S has referred to on Clear Score's website and can understand why he's come to the conclusion that this implies lenders can see his credit score. However, to clarify lenders see data provided in a credit file, but a customer's credit score isn't visible to them and is only visible to a customer. From my knowledge of credit scores, the number given is an indication of how a typical lender might view a customer, based on their credit history. And it's calculated using the relevant algorithms the CRA or company, such as Clear Score, use. This differs across the different companies.

Mr S is concerned his credit score is negatively impacted by missing searches. However, a credit score can be determined by many factors for example, opening or closing accounts, not just missing searches. As I've explained, the score is only seen by customers themselves. Additionally, as Clear Score's website explains, lenders use E or one of the other CRA's to make decisions about whether to lend to a customer, they don't use Clear Score. So even if Mr S' Clear Score credit score has been negatively impacted as Mr S has told us and even if lenders could see his Clear Score credit score, which I've already explained they can't, they take information directly from CRA's when deciding whether to lend. So, to reassure Mr S, his Clear Score report shouldn't directly affect his credit worthiness as it isn't looked at by lenders and I'm not persuaded Mr S has been declined credit as a result of his Clear Score credit score.

If Mr S has concerns about missing searches on his Clear Score credit report, he'd need to raise a dispute with E through Clear Score as set out on Clear Score's website. As previously explained, this is because the service Clear Score provide is to show Mr S his credit information provided by E. So, Clear Score can't change any of the information themselves.

I note Mr S has said Clear Score haven't been very transparent and open with their services. A lot of what Clear Score do and where they get data from is on their website, should Mr S wish to look at this.

### **My final decision**

For reasons explained above, I don't uphold this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr S to accept or reject my decision before 6 November 2024.

Leanne McEvoy  
**Ombudsman**