

The complaint

Mr H is unhappy Transunion International UK Limited are reporting incorrect information on his credit file, are unfairly holding data about him and that they haven't added notices of correction (NoC's) to his credit file.

What happened

Mr H complained to Transunion about three issues. I've summarised them below:

1. Incorrect data on his credit file – Mr H set out to Transunion the multiple pieces of information that was incorrect on his credit file. This included his name appearing incorrectly, different versions of his name with added initials, a previous address showing incorrectly and also in the incorrect format. Mr H said third party searches were carried out on his credit file, which Transunion should have stopped.
2. Unfairly holding data about him - Mr H told Transunion he objects to them holding data about him as he says they've failed to collect the correct data and have circulated potentially damaging information about him.
3. NoC's which should have been added to his credit file - Mr H said as Transunion hadn't corrected data on his file, he believes it's appropriate to add NoC's to his file. Mr H provided Transunion with specific wording that he wanted them to add to his credit file.

In their final response letter, Transunion said they don't own the data that appears on Mr H's credit file. And if Mr H is disputing incorrect data, as he is doing so here, that he'd need to ask the company supplying the information to Transunion to correct this data. Transunion clarified that they are unable to remove data from Mr H's credit report without the permission of the data supplier.

Our Investigator looked into Mr H's concerns. In summary, she said it's Transunion's role to store information given to them by lenders and businesses and that they aren't responsible for any incorrect information on Mr H's credit file. But that Transunion would be expected to raise disputes with the relevant lender or business who has added information to Mr H's credit file if it's incorrect. Our Investigator said she hadn't seen Transunion had done that here, so she asked them to do this and asked Transunion to pay Mr H £150 compensation for the distress and inconvenience caused.

Transunion accepted this, but Mr H disagreed. In his response, Mr H provided us with a copy of the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) findings to his complaint about Transunion. Their response set out what they'd asked Transunion to do to put things right.

- In relation to the incorrect information on Mr H's credit file, the ICO said Mr H's local authority provided Transunion with the incorrect name from October 2007 to December 2018. Transunion told the ICO they were able to get the electoral register data amended and added a disalias which would prevent the appearance of the incorrect name on Mr H's credit file.
- Additionally, Transunion confirmed that due to an error relating to the electoral register data, this caused another name to be added to Mr H's credit file and caused a financial association link with a family member.

- The ICO also said Transunion removed the relevant search footprints from third parties on Mr H's credit file.
- In relation to Mr H's request for Transunion to stop holding data about him, the ICO said as long as Transunion have a lawful basis for doing so, they don't require Mr H's consent to use his personal data.
- Lastly, the ICO asked Transunion to provide Mr H with a response to his request for NoC's to be added within 14 calendar days.

In Mr H's email to our service on 25 October 2024, he said this matter had moved on a lot – with the ICO's involvement, this led to his data being changed and corrected. Mr H says he accepts he doesn't think I should look into the issue of stopping Transunion holding data about him.

Instead, Mr H said what's left for me to consider is the level of compensation that our Investigator recommended Transunion pay him for the inconvenience caused. Mr H said that while no amount of compensation will restore his faith in Transunion, nor in the systems we have as a country for protection of individuals and their data, that his distress won't be eased until Transunion ceases to collect and hold data about him. However, he feels more compensation may better compensate him for the inconvenience caused and the time he has spent on trying to resolve these issues. Mr H set out that:

- He has spent a lot of time raising the matter with our Service and also with the ICO.
- Transunion lied about having corrected his data and also lied about the cause of the errors, suggesting third parties had provided incorrect information. Mr H said the ICO established the real reason for the errors in his data was down to Transunion.
- Presumably because of the incorrect information on his credit file, Transunion allowed his data to be searched by inappropriate parties. Mr H said this was and still could be potentially damaging.
- Given Transunion's failings, they could have decided not to hold a file on him and not to collect further data about him.
- Had Transunion corrected the data when initially requested by Mr H, it would have saved many months of trouble, effort and time for him, our Service and the ICO.

I issued a provisional decision on the matter, which I've set out below:

I purposely haven't gone into detail of the background of this complaint as Mr H has confirmed that what he wants me to consider is the level of compensation owed to him for Transunion's failings in this case.

I can understand the frustration caused to Mr H and I appreciate Mr H has said no amount of compensation will restore his faith in Transunion. It's important for me to set out that even though there are things that have gone wrong here, I can't order Transunion to stop holding a credit file or data relating to Mr H. Nor can I comment on whether they could have decided to no longer collect his data as it's not within my remit to do so.

Mr H said not only did he have to raise this matter with our Service, but also the ICO which required a lot more of his time. I have considered Mr H's point and can appreciate his frustration in time being spent going through things more than once. As a Service, we don't compensate consumers for bringing their complaint to us nor escalating their complaint in any other way. However, I have considered the inconvenience caused to Mr H when thinking about fair compensation.

I can see from Transunion's notes that Mr H first raised issues with the incorrect name being on his credit file in November 2023 – a lender was reporting his first name twice on his credit

file. Transunion responded and directed him to the lender for Mr H to raise a dispute with. However, Transunion's website outlines that when incorrect information is raised about a consumers credit file, that Transunion will help consumers in contacting that lender to raise a dispute. And I can't see they did this here, which I don't think was helpful.

Mr H says Transunion lied about having corrected his data and also lied about the cause of the errors, suggesting third parties had provided incorrect information. I can see from Transunion's notes that they raised disputes in December 2023 about two pieces of incorrect information on Mr H's credit file – one being the incorrect address format and the other being the incorrect name which has a name beginning with R before Mr H's. The notes say the incorrect information was amended, and I see no reason why Transunion shouldn't have relied on this. I also haven't seen any evidence of Transunion saying information was corrected when it wasn't.

In any case, Mr H wrote to Transunion in February 2024 setting out further issues on his credit file. Mr H pointed to an entry on his file showing his name, with different initials that Mr H said wasn't anything to do with him. In the same correspondence, Mr H asked for Transunion to stop reporting his information, he explained his address was showing incorrectly and searches had incorrectly been carried out by third parties on his credit file. But it's not until the ICO's report in June 2024 that Transunion provided a response to what Mr H had previously raised with them. Overall, I think Transunion could have done more to help Mr H about the issues he raised and I think they could have been more efficient in their dealings with the matter. It's disappointing to see Mr H could only get the issues resolved by raising matters with the ICO.

Mr H said the ICO established the real reason for the errors in his data were down to Transunion. However, having read the ICO's findings, that's not my understanding. The ICO don't explicitly say the incorrect information was as a result of Transunion's actions. Instead, it seems to suggest the root cause of the incorrect information was down to the electoral register data. Then it seems that there was a system error, although it's not clear who's system error, that caused an issue with Mr H's name appearing with an initial that isn't his. I note Mr H's presumption that due to the incorrect name being on his credit file, this led to his data being searched by other third parties. Mr H says Transunion ought to have rejected these and has asked if any of his data had been shared with the third parties.

I can appreciate Mr H's concern, especially as he's previously said that he was a victim of identity theft. So I can understand Mr H was worried to see searches on his file from other third parties. However, as per the ICO's report, the root cause of the incorrect name on Mr H's credit file was a result of the electoral register data being incorrect. The ICO's report notes that Transunion have removed the relevant search footprints and have added a disalias to Mr H's credit file – which is designed to prevent any further reappearance of the incorrect name on Mr H's credit file. So, this should prevent any further searches on Mr H's credit file if the incorrect name is no longer on it.

I currently haven't seen any evidence to suggest the incorrect information Mr H has complained about remains on his credit file. I note Mr H said in an email to us in July 2024, that he has no evidence to suggest any of the changes have been made to his credit file. With this in mind, I'd ask that Transunion send Mr H a paper copy of his file so he can check if there are any issues outstanding. If there is, I'd expect Transunion to take the necessary steps to support Mr H with any disputed information.

Overall, I currently think while there are some issues here that are not necessarily down to Transunion, I do think Mr H's concerns weren't handled as I'd expect - Transunion have a duty to help Mr H resolve and investigate disputed information on his credit file. I think Transunion ought to have engaged more with Mr H about the issues he described and could

have dealt with matters more efficiently, resulting in a better service for Mr H. But by not doing this, Mr H was caused inconvenience and upset in trying to resolve the issues. So for these reasons, I currently think Transunion should pay Mr H £250 compensation for the distress caused.

Responses to my provisional decision

Transunion responded and agreed to my provisional decision. So did Mr H, but he also said he remains concerned Transunion continue to maintain a file on him, may still be recording incorrect data on his file and may also be providing third parties access to his data. That said, Mr H said he felt he'd gone as far as he can with this matter and needed to bring it to a close.

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 appreciate Mr H's comments and the concerns he raised in response to my provisional decision. But I see no reason to come to a different outcome or different findings as those set out in my provisional decision.

As explained, I'm unable to direct Transunion to stop holding data on Mr H. My direction remains that Transunion should provide Mr H with a paper copy of his credit file so he's able to see the information on it. With any information Mr H feels is incorrect, I'd expect Transunion to engage with Mr H on this. Lastly, while I can understand Mr H's concerns about Transunion providing third parties access to his data, I haven't seen any evidence to persuade me this is currently what's happening.

Overall, I remain of the opinion Transunion should pay Mr H £250 compensation for their failings in supporting him with the incorrect information on his credit file. And as mentioned, Transunion should also provide Mr H with a paper copy of his credit file.

My final decision

For reasons explained above, I uphold this complaint and I require Transunion International UK Limited to pay Mr H £250 compensation.

I also require Transunion International UK Limited to provide Mr H with a paper copy of his credit file so he can review it and see if the information is correct.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr H to accept or reject my decision before 10 December 2024.

Leanne McEvoy
Ombudsman