

complaint

Mr M complains that Equifax Limited has recorded incorrect information on his credit file.

background

Mr M complained to Equifax that it has recorded incorrect information on his credit file about a mobile phone account and that it was linking him to an associate with whom he has no financial association. He also complains that Equifax had been the victim of a cyber-attack. He wasn't satisfied with its response so complained to this service and he says that he should receive compensation from Equifax.

The investigator didn't recommend that this complaint should be upheld. She said that the mobile phone company had advised Equifax that the late payment marker had been removed from Mr M's account. And she said that it had issued a notice of disassociation between Mr M and the third party and it had removed the associate from his credit report. Equifax had been the victim of a cyber-attack and it had sent a letter to affected customers notifying them of the attack and offering a free comprehensive identity protection service which would allow customers to monitor their personal data, including credit information, and to be alerted of any potential signs of fraudulent activity.

Equifax then agreed that it would also offer £100 compensation in relation to the cyber-attack. But Mr M has asked for his complaint to be considered by an ombudsman. He says that Equifax has recorded inaccurate information for eleven years and provided a credit score that indicated he was a poor credit risk which has affected his cost of living – and that he's going to take further action about it. And he says that he considers the offer of £100 compensation to be inadequate – but £250 would be acceptable.

my findings

I've considered all the available evidence and arguments to decide what's fair and reasonable in the circumstances of this complaint.

Credit reference agencies store information that's provided to them by lenders and other account providers. So Equifax isn't responsible for the information that's been provided to it relating to Mr M. If he wants to complain about that information, he would need to complain to the providers of that information.

Equifax has provided evidence to show that Mr M first contacted it in relation to incorrect information about his mobile phone account being recorded on his credit file in November 2017. It investigated the account details with the mobile phone company which said that it would remove the query icons from his report. And Equifax says that it raised a dispute with the mobile phone company in January 2018 about the arrears showing on the account – but the mobile phone company said that the arrears information had already been removed.

Mr M also contacted Equifax about a link on his credit report to an associate with whom he isn't financially associated. Equifax says that it investigated the issue and loaded a notice of disassociation which removed the associate from his credit report. And it says that it advised Mr M of this in November 2017.

Equifax was the victim of a cyber-attack in May 2017. It says that it sent a letter when it had completed its investigation to affected customers – including Mr M - informing them that

some of their personal data held by Equifax was accessed. And it says that it offered a free comprehensive identity protection service which will allow them to monitor their personal data, including their credit information and be alerted to any potential signs of fraudulent activity. And it has also offered £100 compensation to Mr M.

I'm not persuaded that there's enough evidence to show that Equifax has acted incorrectly in its dealings with Mr M. When it was contacted by Mr M about his concerns about the information from the mobile phone company and the associate it investigated those concerns. And action was taken to ensure that correct information was recorded on his credit file. And I consider that its response to the cyber-attack has been appropriate in the circumstances. Mr M hasn't provided any information to show that he's suffered a direct financial loss as a result of the issues about which he's complained and I consider that the offer of £100 compensation and the free identity protection service is fair and reasonable in the circumstances. And I'm not persuaded that it would be fair or reasonable for me to require Equifax to pay a higher amount of compensation to Mr M – or to take any other action in response to his complaint.

If Mr M now wishes to accept Equifax's offer, I suggest that he contacts it.

my final decision

For these reasons, my decision is that I don't uphold Mr M's complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr M to accept or reject my decision before 7 January 2019.

Jarrold Hastings
ombudsman