

Your credit report explained

A step-by-step guide to help you understand your Experian credit report



Introduction

This leaflet explains the information held on your Experian credit report and tells you how to change any details you think need updating. A list of useful addresses is included at the end of your credit report.

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If you would like to comment on this leaflet, please e-mail us at chs.feedback@uk.experian.com.

We will not respond to your e-mail but we will use the information you provide to help us improve future versions of the leaflet.

Read this first

What is credit scoring?

A lender may use the information on your credit report, along with the information you provide on an application form to give you a credit score. This is sometimes called a credit rating. The lender will use this credit score to assess the risk of offering you credit. The previous occupants of your address cannot affect your credit score. Also, credit scores must not take account of your gender, religion, race, political beliefs, sexuality or criminal record.

Can I find out my credit score?

You do not have a single credit score or rating. Different organisations take different information into account when working out your credit score and may have different scores for different products.

When you apply for credit, organisations do not have to tell you exactly how they work out their credit scores but should give you a basic explanation of how scoring works and tell you whether your application has been refused because of your credit score and whether this involves the information held on your credit report.

You can find out your Experian Credit Score. This is a score based only on your Experian credit report. It is available for a small fee to members of CreditExpert (Experian's online credit-monitoring and alert service). Although the scores lenders work out are likely to be also based on information we don't hold (such as details of your job and wages), your Experian Credit Score is a good guide to how your credit report will affect your chances of getting credit. For more information visit www.creditexpert.co.uk.

Why was I turned down for credit?

The lender you applied to made this decision. We are not told why you have been refused – only the lender you applied to can tell you this. The lender may have turned down your application for credit because of information on your credit report or as a result of other information they have (such as the information you provided on your application form).

Shops and lenders should give clear explanations about why they refuse credit and they should tell

you if their decision was based on:

- information on your credit report;
- other information you gave them;
- other information they hold on you as a customer; or
- their policies on providing credit.

Am I on a 'blacklist'?

No, there is no such thing as a credit blacklist. Experian's credit reference agency holds only facts about people. This is taken from public records, or is provided by lenders or the person themselves.

Lending organisations make their decisions based on the following.

- information held by credit reference agencies;
- information you provide during your application;
- information they might already hold about you if you are an existing or previous customer; and
- their own policies and procedures.

Our information shows that most people manage their credit arrangements well and make repayments on time.

If one organisation has turned me down for credit will others do the same?

Not necessarily. Different organisations take different things into account when deciding whether to provide credit. If a lender turns down your application, get a copy of your credit report before you make further applications. If you make several applications over a short period of time, lenders may think you are trying to get too much credit, or even that a fraudster is using your details. So find out why you have been refused before applying to another lender.

Does making several applications for credit reduce my chances of getting credit in the future?

Making several applications for credit over a short period of time can influence a lender's decision.

If you are shopping around for the best deal, you should ask for a quotation, rather than applying for credit. Asking for a quotation should not affect your chances of getting credit in the future. For most types of credit, lenders do not have to search your credit report to give you a quotation. If the cost of the credit deal depends on your credit score, the lender may need to search your credit report. In this case, the lender should make a quotation search that should not leave a record other lenders can see.

If an organisation gives you a quotation, this is not an agreement to offer you credit. If you need to know whether you will get the credit (for example, a loan), you will need to apply for it. The lender should tell you if they are going to search your credit report and what sort of search they will make. If one lender turns down your application, it is best to find out why you have been turned down before you contact other lenders.

Seeing your information and information security

Can anyone search my report?

No, in normal circumstances searches can only be made with your permission. You usually give this permission when you apply for credit. Read the application form carefully to see what you are giving permission for.

How do you keep my information safe?

One of our top priorities is to make sure the information we hold is secure. We process the information we hold in line with the Data Protection Act 1998. We screen our employees carefully and our premises are very secure. We constantly review how we can protect our information and our reputation for maintaining privacy. We are also monitored by the Information Commissioner's Office.

Can anyone see my credit information?

No, credit information is private. Only organisations who are members of our information-sharing scheme can see credit information. They can normally only look at your credit information if you have given them permission. They usually ask for this on the application form you fill in.

Our information-sharing scheme is strictly regulated. Lenders can see only information similar to that they provide to us and they must follow strict rules that clearly list what they can use the information for.

What about information that is available to the public, such as court judgments or the electoral roll?

Again, we only provide this information to legitimate organisations for certain limited purposes, usually with your permission.

How do I know who has seen information about me?

When an organisation checks or searches your information on our database, a record, or 'footprint', of this is kept. These records show who has seen your personal information, why and when. They are kept on record for one year.

We keep records of searches for your information and to help lenders process credit applications. They also help prevent fraud. Unrecorded enquiries show you that an organisation has looked at your report for a purpose not related to credit (such as checking your identity), but a record of these unrecorded enquiries are not revealed to other lenders.

Can I prevent you from holding information about me?

No, we have a legal right to hold information about people. Credit reference agencies (Experian, Equifax and Callcredit) help lenders process credit applications. If we did not hold information about you it would be much harder for you to get credit. A good credit record makes it easier for you to get credit.

Who regulates your work?

We are licensed by the Office of Fair Trading under the Consumer Credit Acts 1974 and 2006. We are also registered with the Information Commissioner's Office under the Data Protection Act 1998.

How do I complain?

If you would like a copy of our 'Complaint Handling Procedure', please go to www.experian.co.uk/consumer or phone us on **0844 481 8000**.

Application details

The first section of your credit report includes your name, address and date of birth. It will also include any other names you have told us you have been known by, any addresses you say you have lived at in the last six years, and other people you are linked to. If you want an updated copy of your credit report, the quickest way to apply is by visiting our website at www.experian.co.uk.

The electoral roll

Information on the electoral roll helps organisations confirm your name and address quickly. It means they can check that you live at the address you give on your application form and helps them prevent fraud and money laundering by checking your address is a valid one. The address shown on the electoral roll is the version used by your local authority.

The electoral roll shows when you have been registered to vote in elections. This will not always be the exact dates when you lived at an address. On your credit report, the information from the electoral roll will show the name of your local authority, the address the local authority holds for you, or held in the past, and the dates you were registered.

Here is an example of electoral roll information on a credit report.

E1

15, High Street, Anytown, Countyshire, FR3 8JU
SMITH, JOHN From 2000

What can I do if my credit report shows that I am not on the electoral roll?

Organisations will usually consider information on the electoral roll at current and previous addresses when making a decision. Any monthly updates your council makes to the electoral roll will be updated on our records. If you recently registered on the electoral roll we may still be updating our records.

How do I get on the electoral roll?

If you want to add your name to the electoral roll at your present address you should contact your local authority and ask for a registration form. To register you need to be a British, or other Commonwealth, Irish or European citizen and be 18 or over (although if you will be 18 soon you may be eligible to register). Each year, usually in the autumn, local authorities contact all the homes in their area to update the electoral roll. However, this doesn't happen in Northern Ireland, so if you live there you need to contact your local area electoral office whenever your details change.

Can I be added to the electoral roll if I have recently moved?

Yes. If you recently moved, ask your local authority to add your name to the electoral roll at your new address. During the course of the year they will tell us about changes they have made to the electoral roll.

What should I do if I don't agree with the electoral roll information on my report?

If you have registered recently, we are probably in the process of updating our records. If you think your report does not show what is on the electoral roll, please contact us. The details of how to do so are shown on page 19. If you think the electoral roll is wrong, contact your local authority. If you've already done this and the local authority has sent you a letter to confirm that they have altered the electoral roll, send a copy of this letter to all the credit reference agencies.

Could I be turned down for credit because my name isn't on the electoral roll?

Yes, but it is up to the lender. If there is other evidence on your credit report that helps them check your name and address, they may use that. But it is best to be registered at your current address, if you are entitled to vote.

Aliases

An alias is any other name you are, or have been, known by. Any financial information in these other names is shown on your report. We get the information we have about your other names from you, from the information lenders provide, or from public records. We keep a record of where the information came from. If you disagree with the information we hold, you should contact us.

Here is an example of alias information on a credit report.

S1

MR JOHN SMITH, 15, HIGH STREET, ANYTOWN, FR3 8JU

Date of birth 09/10/52

Also known as MR JOHN SMITH-JONES

Confirmed by **BIG BANK PLC** Date 20-05-03

Associations

A record of an association shows a financial link you have with someone. These links are created by joint judgments, joint accounts and joint credit applications, or from information you gave to us or lenders. Associations are not created between business partners.

The information you see will include the details of the person you are financially connected to (the associate), the name of the organisation which created the link, and the date the link was created. Lenders may also see the financial information relating to the associate. This allows lenders to view all the information that may be relevant to your credit application. Information about an association is held on record indefinitely. The financial information about any associates is not recorded on your credit report. If your associate needs to see their credit report, they will need to apply separately. Lenders can take account of your associate's financial information when deciding whether to give you credit.

Here is an example of an association on a credit report.

L1

MR JOHN SMITH, 15, HIGH STREET, ANYTOWN, FR3 8JU
Associated with MRS ANNE SMITH Date of birth 29/04/58
Association type JOINT ACCOUNT
Association created by **ABC BANK** date 23/05/02

I am no longer linked to the person my report says I am associated with – what should I do?

Contact us and explain the situation. We may ask you for further information but, if you are no longer associated, we will be able to break the link between you. See page 19 for details of how to get in touch.

I disagree with an association recorded – what should I do?

The quickest way to get information corrected is to contact the source of that information. If the information was provided by a lender, contact them first. A list of useful addresses is given at the back of your credit report.

Why doesn't my associate's financial information appear on my report?

We provide your credit report under Section 7 of the Data Protection Act 1998. Under this law, we must give you any information we hold about you and only you. However, it is worth asking your associate to get their report so you can check all the information a lender may have used to make a decision about giving you credit.

Court judgments, bankruptcies and voluntary arrangements

A court judgment on your report shows that you have been taken to court for not paying money you owe. We hold court judgments on our records for six years. We get the information from Registry Trust Ltd, an independent organisation set up under the control of the Department for Constitutional Affairs.

If you believe a court judgment recorded on your credit report is wrong, contact the court (quoting the case number included on your report). A list of useful addresses is given at the back of your report. If you pay the amount of the judgment within one month, we remove it from our records. If you pay the judgment after one month, it will stay on our records for six years but it will be shown as being settled ('satisfied'). If a judgment was recorded against two people, it will say so on your credit report.

Here is an example of a judgment on a credit report.

J1

MR JOHN SMITH, 15, HIGH STREET, ANYTOWN, FR3 8JU
Information type JUDGEMENT Date 03/03 Amount £365
Court name LIVERPOOL Case number LV564748
Source REGISTRY TRUST LTD

We get information on [bankruptcies \(or sequestrations in Scotland\)](#) from the Insolvency Service. If your bankruptcy order ends (is 'discharged'), the Insolvency Service should tell us. You can also send us a copy of your discharge certificate or letter from the Official Receiver and we will update our records. A bankruptcy order will appear on your report for at least six years even if it ends. However, if your bankruptcy order is cancelled ('annulled'), you should send us a copy of the annulment certificate and we will remove the bankruptcy order from your report.

The Insolvency Service also sends us details of [bankruptcy restrictions orders](#). If you are bankrupt, the court may make a bankruptcy restrictions order against you if it decides you have been dishonest or are in some way to blame for your bankruptcy. We hold these records for as long as the court order lasts, which can be up to 15 years.

A [voluntary arrangement](#) is a formal arrangement made through the court to pay an agreed amount off your debts. If you have any questions about a voluntary arrangement recorded on your credit report, contact the person who dealt with that arrangement, usually an insolvency practitioner. If the arrangement has ended (is 'completed'), send us the relevant documents to confirm this and we will update our records. We keep records of voluntary arrangements for at least six years. See page 25 for how to contact us.

Voluntary arrangements do not apply in Scotland, but we do hold details of Scottish Trust Deeds which are very similar. We also hold records of debt payment programmes arranged under the Scottish Debt Arrangement Scheme.

A debt relief order on your report shows that you have entered into a voluntary arrangement through an approved agent. This information comes from the Insolvency Service and will stay on your credit report for six years from the date of the debt relief order. Once the arrangement has ended, send us the relevant documents to confirm this and we will change our records.

I have a judgment on my credit report. Can I tell who took me to court?

The only information we have on judgments is that which is shown on your report. If you have further questions, contact the court concerned (quoting the case number shown on your report). The address of the court concerned is given at the end of your credit report.

I have paid this court judgment, why does it show as unpaid?

If you live in England or Wales, you should contact the court concerned. Once they know that the judgment has been paid, they should tell us and we will update our records. If you need proof of payment, you may need to ask the court for a certificate of satisfaction. This will cost £15. If you apply by post, make sure you include a cheque, made payable to Her Majesty's Court Service (HMCS).

If you live in Scotland, send RegistryTrust Ltd (RTL) a receipt or a letter from the person you paid, to confirm your payment. You should send RTL a cheque for £8 to cover their search fee. Send it to RegistryTrust Ltd, 153-157 Cleveland Street, London, W1T 6QW

Credit account information

The UK's major lenders have agreed to share with each other details of their customer's credit agreements. They do this by storing the details with one or more of the three credit reference agencies. When you apply for credit these lenders will ask for your permission to check how you have repaid other lenders in the past few years. This helps them to decide whether you can afford to take on the new credit and whether you are likely to keep up repayments.

The credit account information belongs to the lenders who store the information with the credit reference agencies. Credit reference agencies cannot change these details without the particular lender's permission. Each month, lenders update the credit account information they store with us.

Credit reports now include information about home-credit loans. Agents acting for the home-credit lender usually collect the repayments each week by calling at your home. However, because repayments under other credit agreements are usually made every month, your credit report will show monthly terms for any home-credit loans. This does not mean that your repayment terms have changed or will be affected in any way.

What do the status codes mean?


Every credit account includes a list of 'status codes'. These show whether you have made your credit repayments on time, over the past three years (36 months). The last 12 months' payments are shown in full (the most recent is shown first). Underneath the status codes is a summary of payments, unless the status code shown is 8 (which is a default). The summaries of 'number of status 1-2' and 'number of status 3+' show how many times payments have been late (by up to three months or more than three months) within the last 36 months (or since the account was opened).

The table below explains what the status codes shown in your status history mean. The code shown against settled accounts relates to the period before these accounts were settled.

0	Payments are up to date.
1	Payments are up to one month late.
2	Payments are up to two months late.
3	Payments are up to three months late.
4	Payments are up to four months late.
5	Payments are up to five months late.
6	Payments are six months or more late.
8	The account is in 'default'. You failed to keep to your credit agreement and have not responded satisfactorily to requests to bring your payments up to date, so the credit agreement has ended.
D	The account is not being used and nothing is owed.
?	The lender has not been able to provide information on the payment history for this month.
U	The lender cannot give the account a status code for this month. This may be at the start of the credit agreement when the lender is allowing time for the account to be set up, when you are waiting for goods to be delivered, when you have received the goods but payment is not due to start immediately, when there is a dispute over the payments due or the goods received, or when the account is not being used.

An **active account** is one that is still open. We keep a record of active accounts until they are settled, and then for six years afterwards.

Here is an example of an active credit account.



MR JOHN SMITH, 15, HIGH STREET, ANYTOWN, FR3 8JU
Date of birth 09/10/52
ABC BANK PLC CURRENT ACCOUNT
Started 20/01/00 Balance £1215
Status history 000000 000100
In last 36 months of account activity, number of status 1-2 is 1 number of status 3+ is 0
File update for the period to 24/06/04

A **settled account** is one which you have made all the necessary payments to and which has been closed. We keep a record of settled accounts for six years from the date they were settled. The status code shown on your credit report against a settled account refers to the period before you settled the account.

Here is an example of an account that has been settled.

C2

MR JOHN SMITH, 15, HIGH STREET, ANYTOWN, FR3 8JU

Date of birth 09/10/52

ABC BANK PLC CURRENT ACCOUNT

Started 20/01/00 Balance £0 Settled 12/10/03

Status history 000000 100100

In last 36 months of account activity, number of status 1-2 is 2 number of status 3+ is 0

File update for the period to 25/10/03

An account 'in default' is one where you have not been able to keep to the terms of a credit agreement. We keep a record of these accounts for six years from the date the lender decided you had broken the terms of the agreement (the 'defaulted' date). The lender will have told you that the account was to be classed as being in default.

Making repayments to a defaulted account after the defaulted date does not change the history of the account, even once you have made all the repayments. The status history of '8' shows that, at the defaulted date, you were not keeping to the agreed terms.

The details about that account will show how much money you owed when the agreement was broken and how much money you now owe. It will reflect any payments you have made to the organisation since the agreement was broken. When the account is paid in full, the information will be updated to read 'Balance Satisfied'.

Here is an example of an account in default.

C3

MR JOHN SMITH, 15, HIGH STREET, ANYTOWN, FR3 8JU

Date of birth 09/10/52

GENERAL BANK PLC CREDIT CARD

Started 03/11/01

Status history 8 defaulted 18/10/03 Default £358 Balance £255

File update for the period to 15/06/04

The following information may also be included with account details on your report.

Gone away	The lender has reported that you no longer live at the address you gave and have not given them a new address.
Debt assigned	The lender has reported that they sold the debt to an organisation which is not a member of our information-sharing scheme. We will keep the record in the original lender's name and show it as closed.
Deceased	We have been told that the account holder has died.
Recourse	The lender has reported that the account has been transferred to the dealer or retailer who introduced you to the credit agreement.
Voluntary termination	The lender has reported that the account has been closed under Section 99 of the Consumer Credit Acts 1974 and 2006. This relates to hire-purchase agreements (credit used to buy a car or other vehicle) and allows the borrower to return the car and owe nothing once they have repaid half of the total price.
Arrangement	The lender has agreed to vary your payments for a time.
Debt management programme	The lender has reported that the account has been included in a debt-management programme (for example, one organised by a citizens advice bureau, National Debtline or the Consumer Credit Counselling Service).
Account query	The lender has reported that you have questioned how accurate the information is.
Joint account	This shows that the account is or has been jointly held with another person. The name of the person you share an active joint account with will be shown in the 'Associations' section of your report. See page 8 for more information on financial associates.
Credit protection insurance claim	You have made a claim against your credit-protection insurance.
Partial settlement	The lender has reported that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the debt was included in a voluntary arrangement which has now ended successfully; the debt was included in a bankruptcy order which has now been discharged; the lender has accepted a smaller amount; or the lender has repossessed the asset and is no longer chasing the debt.
Debt sold to CAIS member	The lender has sold the debt to another member of our information-sharing scheme. The old account will have been closed and a new active account will show in the name of the lender who has bought the debt.
Phone live/ disconnected/ barred	May appear next to a mobile phone account and shows whether the phone is live, disconnected or barred.

Credit account information – current account information

How are status codes used on current accounts?

The status codes lenders use on current accounts can have a different meaning to those used on other accounts. This is because current accounts are more flexible than other types of credit. For example, you may not have to repay your overdraft at a set rate each month. The information on your credit report shows the status of your account when the lender last updated our records.

What is my 'overdraft limit'?

Your overdraft limit is the largest overdraft the lender has agreed you can have.

What is my 'overdraft balance'?

Your overdraft balance shows how much your account is overdrawn by. Your credit report does not show how much money you have in your current account, so if you are in credit and have no overdraft your report will show that your balance is zero. Some banks only show overdraft balances that are more than a certain amount. If your bank does this and your overdraft balance is below this amount, your credit report will show that your balance is zero. If your overdraft balance is higher than your overdraft limit, the lender might use status codes to show that you are outside the terms of your agreement.

The following table gives you some examples of when lenders may use each status code on current accounts. Before deciding which status codes to use, lenders will often use their own internal systems to estimate the risk associated with the accounts.

0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your account is not overdrawn. Your account is overdrawn but you are managing your account within the terms of your agreement.
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agreed repayments are one to two months behind. Your overdraft balance has been greater than your overdraft limit for one to two months. Cheques, direct debits and standing orders may have been bounced to keep the account in order.
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agreed repayments are two to three months behind. Your overdraft balance has been greater than your overdraft limit for two to three months. Cheques, direct debits and standing orders may have been bounced for a second month to keep the account in order.
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agreed repayments are three or more months behind. Your overdraft balance has been greater than your overdraft limit for two to three months. Cheques, direct debits and standing orders may have been bounced for a third month to keep the account in order.
4-6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agreed repayments are more than three months behind but you have agreed new repayments with the lender to bring the account in order.
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your overdraft balance has been greater than your overdraft limit for more than three months and you have not agreed new repayments to bring the account in order. The lender has decided that you have broken the terms of your agreement and has told you that your account is now in 'default'. The lender has closed your account.
U	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your account has just been opened. Your account is more than three months old, has a zero balance and has not been used in the last month.

The central section, shown as a table, shows how the account has been used and repaid each month. Each row shows the information the lender sent to us for a particular month, with the most recent information shown on the top row and the oldest information on the bottom row. Information for up to 12 months may be shown. The payment code and promotional rate indicator will only contain a value under certain circumstances (see the table below). If other rows or areas are blank, this indicates that the lender has not provided this information for that month.

Status code	The status codes are the same for all credit accounts (see page xx). You should read the status code history from top (most recent) to bottom (oldest).
Balance	This is the balance of the account at the time the lender last updated our records.
Payment amount	This is the total amount you paid off your last statement.
Previous statement balance	This is the total outstanding balance shown on your last statement.
Cash advances (Number)	This is the total number of cash withdrawals that you made using your card since the lender last updated the information.
Cash advances (Amount)	This is the total value of the cash withdrawals you made using your card since the lender last updated the information.
Payment code	An 'M' shows that the amount you paid in response to your last statement was equal to the minimum payment shown on that statement. If you paid more or less than the minimum payment, no letter will be shown.
Promotional rate indicator	A 'Y' shows that a promotional offer (such as a period of interest-free credit) applied to some or part of the balance on your account when the lender last updated the information,.

The final part of the record shows past changes to the credit limit of this account. Up to four changes may be displayed, with the current limit on the left and the oldest change on the right. Each credit limit change shows the date of the change and the previous credit limit.

How do lenders use credit account information?

The credit account information is used to check how you have repaid credit in the recent past and how you are managing your credit at the moment. It is also used to spot and prevent identity fraud. Most lenders provide information throughout the life of every account. Some lenders will only provide information on accounts where customers have failed to keep to the terms of their credit agreement – these accounts are known as being in 'default'.

Lenders provide credit account information to us each month. Many lenders can go online to see and amend the information we hold for them. If you think any of the information is wrong, the quickest way to have it altered or updated is to contact the lender concerned. See the useful addresses section at the back of your credit report.

Can anyone see information about my credit agreements?

No, credit information is private. Only organisations who are members of our information-sharing scheme can see the information we hold. Those organisations can normally only look at your credit account information if you have given your permission for the information to be shared. You usually give your permission on your application, over the phone or over the internet, if that is how you applied for credit. Our information-sharing scheme is carefully regulated by the lender's contract with us, by the law and by strict rules drawn up by the lenders who share information. These rules clearly list how they can use the information. For example, they are not allowed to use it for marketing.

I do not agree with a status code shown. What should I do?

Contact the lender. You can find their address at the back of your report. If you have any problems, contact us and we will contact the lender on your behalf. See page 19 for details of how to get in touch with us.

I am having problems keeping up with repayments. What should I do?

You should let the lender know immediately. If you explain the circumstances, most lenders will be happy to agree for you to make reduced payments until the situation improves. The lender may add a marker to your credit report to show your arrangement – see page 10 for details. The status history on the account will probably show that your payments have fallen behind. You can also ask us to add a statement to your report if you want to explain the circumstances surrounding arrears or late payments. If you would like independent advice on dealing with debt, there are a number of organisations who can help. See page 19 for more information.

I do not recognise the name of this organisation. What should I do?

Contact them at the address given at the back of your report. Some shops use large finance organisations to manage their store cards. Some credit cards may not be recorded on your report exactly as you might expect. To check, contact the organisation and find out what agreement it relates to. If, after you have contacted the lender, you are sure you do not own the account, tell them and contact us immediately.

Why don't some of my credit accounts appear on my credit report?

The organisations you have the accounts with have not provided us with information. Some organisations may only provide details of accounts where payments are behind. If you have not fallen behind with your payments, this may explain why we do not hold information on the account. Or, the organisation in question may not provide account details to us.

Repossessions

If your property has been repossessed, this will be shown on your credit report. The information may be recorded on your report at three addresses – the address you applied for the mortgage from, the address that was repossessed and your current address. Lenders will know that these three addresses relate to one repossession.

The date your property was repossessed will be recorded on your report. When you have paid the relevant lender all amounts you owe them relating to the repossessed property, this will be shown on your report and will stay there for six years from the date of the repossession.

Here is an example of a repossession on a credit report.

M1

MR JOHN SMITH, FLAT 2, 186 HIGH STREET, ANYTOWN, A12 4CD
MORTGAGE YOUR HOUSE PLC FORWARDING ADDRESS
POSSESSION ORDER 16/11/00
File update for the period to 24/12/00

What should I do if I think the repossession information recorded on my report is wrong?

You should contact the lender concerned at the address shown at the back of your report. Once the lender has investigated your comments, they will tell us about any changes we need to make to our information. We will then make the necessary amendments. If you have difficulty contacting the lender, we will do it for you. If you recently settled an account, remember that it can take up to a month for lenders to change their records and update your credit report.

Previous searches

A previous search is a record that an organisation has looked at your credit report. This may be to check your identity or to assess an application you have made for credit. We hold records of previous searches on your credit report for 12 months. A lender must always get your permission to look at your credit report.

Previous searches are also known as 'footprints' and can help lenders to spot any unusual credit activity, a high number of credit agreements or what could be fraudulent applications. We can only delete the record of a search with the permission of the organisation that made it. If you are concerned about the accuracy of a search record, please contact the organisation that carried out the search.

A lender must always get your permission before making a search of our records. If you asked the organisation for a quote rather than applying for credit, this should be shown on the search record. These records are called 'quotation searches' and lenders will know that they don't represent credit applications. (Quotes can be given for credit cards, insurance, personal loans, mortgages, store cards, or bills).

Here is an example of a previous search on a credit report.

P1

MR JOHN SMITH, 15, HIGH STREET, ANYTOWN, FR3 8JU

Date of birth 09/10/52 Time at address 04 years 00 months

Searched on 05/09/03

Searched by **LENDU MONEY LIMITED**

Application type **REVOLVING CREDIT**

What is an unrecorded enquiry?

An unrecorded enquiry is a search that was not made for lending purposes. This includes searches made to check your identity. It cannot affect your credit rating or score when you apply for credit. It is not seen by lenders other than the one that carried out the search. It is included on your credit report so you know the search was made. When a lender carries out a search to check your identity they do not get details of your personal credit history, they simply see a score.

Does shopping around for the best deal leave a lot of credit searches on my credit report?

It shouldn't. A credit search should only be carried out after you apply for credit. When you shop around, people usually get basic details of offers from a range of lenders, then apply to the lender they think is offering the best deal.

Lenders should always tell you if they are carrying out a credit reference check. They should also tell you if they are going to store credit account information with any credit reference agencies.

There is more advice about shopping around and credit searches on page 3 of this leaflet.

What do I do if there is a search on my report that I know nothing about?

Contact the lender who made the search. If the lender agrees to remove a search, they will tell us. It may be you don't recognise the search as it is in the name of a finance organisation used by an organisation you have applied to for credit.

Why have you done a search on me?

We will keep a record of you asking for your credit report. This will show the information you gave us on your application. This information is seen only by you and us. It allows you to see when you asked for your report. Lenders cannot see this information when searching your report.

Financial associate searches

A financial associate search will be shown on your report when someone you are financially linked to has made a credit application and your credit report has been seen by a lender as a result.

It does not mean that you have made a credit application, or that the application was for joint finances. The record will show that your information was used because you are financially linked to the person who applied.

Here is an example of a financial associate search on a credit report.

U1

MR JOHN SMITH, 15, HIGH STREET, ANYTOWN, FR3 8JU
Date of birth 09/10/52
Name of applicant MRS ANNE SMITH
Date of birth 29/04/58 Date of application 28/04/04
Time at address 04 years 01 months Amount : £300 over 24 months
Enquiry type store card
Searched by **PEARLY KING AND QUEEN STORES**

Why do the financial associate's details appear?

If you have a financial link with another person (an associate), when you apply for credit the relevant lender can use the associate's information to help make their decision. This is because their finances can often affect your ability to manage a credit agreement.

Why does my associate's financial information not appear on my report?

We can only give you the information we hold about you. This does not include information that relates to your associate.

I am no longer linked to this person – what should I do?

Contact us and explain the situation. We may ask you for more information. If you are no longer connected, we will be able to break the link between you. See page 19 for details of how to get in touch with us.

How can I see my associate's information?

You can't. Your associate is the only person who can get a copy of their credit report. It is up to your associate whether they want to show you their credit report, just as it is up to you who you show your report to. See page 19 for details of how to get in touch with us.

Linked addresses

Here is an example of a linked address on a credit report.

B1

MR JOHN SMITH, HIGH STREET, ANYTOWN, COUNTYSHIRE, A12 4CD
Linked to 186, HIGH STREET, ANYTOWN, MIDSHIRE
Source **HOPE BING AND LAMOUR LIMITED**
Date of information 15/09/02

Why are other addresses shown on my report?

Lenders may take account of information that is recorded at addresses you have lived at or been linked to in the recent past. It is possible that information relating to these addresses is relevant to an application.

How is a link to an address created?

A link is created when you tell a lender that you have changed address or when a lender receives a credit application that includes more than one address. Links can also be created as a result of information you give to us.

I have never lived at one of the linked addresses shown. Can it be removed?
An address may appear on your report because you have had a financial connection with that address, although you may never have lived there. If you have not had any connection with an address that is listed, contact us and we will contact the organisation who provided us with the information. We will then delete the address if appropriate.


Why have you created a link with another address?

We have used the information provided on your application for a credit report to link you to your previous addresses. This gives lenders a more complete picture of your credit history. You gave your permission for us to add this information when you made the application.

GAIN information

We are members of GAIN, a network through which lenders share information on customers with debts who have moved home without giving a new address. The information may include the address the customer moved from and any address the customer has since been recorded at.

Here is an example of GAIN information on a credit report.



MR JOHN SMITH
Date of birth 09/10/52
Last known at 1, CITY ROAD, SOUTHTOWN, MERSEYPORT
Located at 186, ANYTOWN, MIDSHIRE
by **MOBILE PHONE FIRM**
Reference 62623456 On 09/03/00

What should I do if I think GAIN information on my report is wrong?

Contact the organisation who provided the information and ask them to update our records if necessary. Or you can contact us direct and we will contact the lender for you. See page 19 for details of how to get in touch with us.

CIFAS information

CIFAS (the UK's Fraud Prevention Service) was developed in consultation with the Office of Fair Trading and the Office of the Information Commissioner. It aims to detect and prevent fraud and to protect innocent people whose names, addresses or other details are used fraudulently by others to get goods and services such as credit and insurance.

A CIFAS warning on your report does not mean that you are being accused of fraud, but it does mean a lender will take extra care and may contact you to make sure that any new application is genuine. Organisations who are members of CIFAS examine applications very carefully and may contact you to make sure that it was you who made the application.

Members of CIFAS include the UK's major financial organisations. A CIFAS warning on your report cannot affect your credit score, but it will mean that lenders will check any application you make very carefully.

Here is an example of CIFAS information on a credit report.

F1

Name Used **MRS MARY JONES**
Date of birth **12/09/1967**
Address used **15, HIGH STREET, ANYTOWN, FR3 8JU**
Date recorded **08/04/04**
Member name **WATCHIT TV RENTAL**
Members address **Watchit House, Television Road, Tellytown, Z98 1VY**
Case reference **14AY2400**
ProductType **PERSONAL CREDIT CARD**
Type of case **FALSE IDENTITY FRAUD - USE OF FALSE NAMEWITHAN ADDRESS**
Reason for referral **DATE OF BIRTH**

What should I do if I think CIFAS information is incorrectly recorded?

You should contact the organisation who registered the information. The address is given at the back of your credit report, underneath the CIFAS entry.

Notices of Correction

What is a Notice of Correction?

A Notice of Correction is a short explanatory note (up to 200 words) you can add to an entry on your credit report to explain any circumstances about that information. Anyone searching your report in the future, or who has seen it in the last six months, will see and take account of the Notice of Correction.

How can I add a Notice of Correction to my report?

You can visit Your Credit Report Help Centre at www.experian.co.uk or write to us and provide the text you want to use (under 200 words). Quote the entry you want us to add the statement to and send it to the address shown on page 19. We cannot add a statement that is longer than 200 words or one we think is unjustified, could damage a person's or organisation's reputation, or is unsuitable for some other reason.

Identity fraud

Unfortunately, identity fraud is on the increase. There are certain precautions you can take to reduce the risk of your details being used fraudulently.

- Always destroy any rubbish that contains personal information (including cheque stubs, receipts and bank statements). A personal shredder can be a wise investment. Never throw anything with your name and address on, even an envelope, without shredding it first.
- Never respond to e-mails asking for personal information.
- Never give personal information to people who say they are calling from organisations you have not dealt with before. If you know the organisation, insist on calling them back.

- If your mail suddenly stops arriving, contact your local post office to make sure that it is not being re-directed.
- Be careful when giving out personal information over the internet – see www.cardwatch.org.uk for some useful advice.
- Regularly check your credit report.
- For more help and advice, visit the CIFAS website at www.identityfraud.org.uk, the Home Office website at www.identity-theft.org.uk or www.experian.co.uk.

If you believe you have been a victim of fraud, contact the police as quickly as possible to report the crime. You should then get a copy of your credit report and get free help and advice from our Victims of Fraud team by phoning **0844 481 8000** or e-mailing us at identityfraud@uk.experian.com. Make sure you tell us clearly that you are a victim of identity fraud so that we can give you special help.

You may be interested in CreditExpert, our credit monitoring and fraud protection service, which offers unlimited online access to your credit report and will tell you about significant changes. There is a month's free trial and, after this time, there is a monthly charge. For more information, visit our website at www.experian.co.uk.

Improving your credit report

There are a number of things that you can do to improve your chances of getting credit.

- Make sure you are on the electoral roll.
- Make your payments on time. If you cannot do this, contact the lender as soon as possible to discuss what options are available to you.
- If you have paid a court judgment, make sure it is shown as being settled on your credit report. If it is not, contact the court.
- If a bankruptcy order has ended or been withdrawn and this is not shown on your credit report, send a copy of your certificate of discharge or annulment to all credit reference agencies and ask for your report to be updated.
- If you have paid off a credit account but your report doesn't show this, contact the organisation concerned and ask them to make the necessary changes or contact us and we will contact the relevant organisation for you.
- Close any accounts you no longer use.
- Avoid credit repair companies! If information on your credit report can be removed or altered, we will do it for free. The Office of Fair Trading has issued a warning that the advice and information given by credit repair companies may be wrong and unhelpful and can even make the situation worse, not better.
- Always check your credit report. It always makes sense to get a copy of your credit report before you apply for credit or if you are refused credit as a result of information held by a credit reference agency.

Contacting us, other agencies and independent advice services

Our website at www.experian.co.uk provides useful information that may answer any questions you still have. You can also use the website to ask us any questions you have. You can also write to us at:

Consumer Help Service
Experian Ltd
PO Box 9000
NG80 7WP.

If you have been a victim of identity fraud you can talk to one of our advisors by phoning **0844 481 8000**. Also use this phone number if you need us to send you information in large print, in Braille, or on audio tape or CD. The lines are open between 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday. We welcome calls by Typetalk (a phone service for people with hearing or speech difficulties).

If you are a sole trader or a partnership and want to get a copy of your credit report, please write to us, on your business letterhead (if any), quoting your report reference number. You must give us your business name and your business addresses for the past six years, and confirm how long you have owned the business. If you have stopped trading, include the date your business closed down. Or, you can download a 'Non-Limited' application form from our website at www.experian.co.uk and send it to us at the address above.

We produce a series of guides which help you understand how credit reports are produced and used, and when they affect your life. To order free copies of all these guides, call **0800 013 0161** or visit www.experian.co.uk/learningzone.

If you are a sole trader or a partnership and you want to get a copy of your credit report, please apply to us in writing. You must give us full details of the name and addresses of your business and enclose a cheque or postal order for £2, made out to Experian.

Other credit reference agencies may not hold the same information as us. If you want a copy of your credit report from the other agencies, please contact each of them, enclosing the £2 fee, at the following addresses:

Equifax plc
Credit File Advice Centre
PO Box 1140
Bradford
BD1 5US
T 0870 010 0583

Callcredit
Consumer Services Team
PO Box 491
Leeds
LS3 1WZ
T 0870 060 1414

If you find you are struggling with repayments, you should always talk to the lender first. Contact details are given in the 'useful addresses' section of your report. They may be able to agree a different arrangement. You may also find it helpful to talk to the following agencies for free, confidential advice.

- A citizens advice bureau or money advice centre.
Visit www.adviceguide.org.uk or see your local phone book for contact details.
- The Consumer Credit Counselling Service
Phone: **0800 138 1111**
Website: www.cccs.co.uk
- National Debtline
Phone: **0808 808 4000**
Website: www.nationaldebtline.co.uk

Visit the Office of Fair Trading's website for information on your rights about shopping, money and credit. Website: www.consumerdirect.gov.uk

Get help with financial planning, credit and debt from the Financial Services Authority. Website: www.moneymadeclear.org.uk

Plain English Campaign's Crystal Mark does not apply to the following text.
Schedule 1 Regulation 4 (1)

Credit reference agency files individuals (including sole traders). Your rights under Section 159 of the Consumer Credit Acts 1974 and 2006 and under the Data Protection Act 1998, if you think any entry on your report is wrong. This statement of your rights is provided by Experian Ltd together with all the information we hold about you on our files. Your rights are as follows:

If you think that any of the information we have sent you is wrong and that you are likely to suffer because it is wrong, you can ask us to correct it or remove it from our file.

You need to write to us telling us what you want us to do. You should explain why you think the information is wrong.

If you write to us, we have to reply in writing within 28 days.

Our reply will tell you whether we have corrected the information, removed it from our file or done nothing. If we tell you that we have corrected the information, you will get a copy of the entry. If our reply states that we have done nothing, or if we fail to reply within 28 days, or if we correct the information but you are not happy with the correction, you can write your own note of correction and ask for it to be included on our file. To do this, you will need to write to us within 28 days of receiving our reply. If you did not get a reply from us and you want the information we sent you to be corrected, you will need to write to us within 8 weeks of the letter you wrote to us in which you asked us to correct the information or remove it from our file. Your letter will need to:

- include the note of correction you have written. It must not be more than 200 words long and should give a clear and accurate explanation of why you think the information is wrong. If the information is factually correct but you think it creates a misleading impression, your note of correction can explain why.
- Ask us to add your note of correction to our file and to include a copy of it whenever we give anyone any of the information you think is wrong or any information based on it.

If we accept your note of correction we will have to tell you in writing within 28 days that we are going to add it to our file. If we think it would be wrong to add your note of correction to our file, we have to apply for a ruling from the Information Commissioner's Office. We will apply for a ruling if we do not want to include your note of correction because we think it is wrong or because we think it is defamatory, frivolous or scandalous or unsuitable for publication for some other reason. We can only refuse to include your note of correction if the Commissioner agrees with us.

If we have not written to you within 28 days of receiving your note of correction or if we have written telling you that we are not going to add your note of correction to our file, you can appeal to the Information Commissioner. If you want to do this, you will have to write to the following address: Information Commissioner, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF.

Phone: 01625 545704 Fax: 01625 524510 E-mail: mail@ico.gsi.gov.uk

When you write, you must give the following details:

- your full name and address
- details of the information you think is wrong, including why you think it is wrong, why you think you are likely to suffer because it is wrong and an indication of when you sent us your note of correction.
- It would be helpful to the Commissioner if you could include a copy of your note of correction.

Before deciding what to do, the Commissioner may ask us for our side of the story and send us a copy of your letter. In return, you will be sent any comments we make. The Commissioner can make any order he thinks fit when he has considered your appeal. For example, he can order us to accept your note of correction and add it to our file. If at any stage we fail to correct or remove wrong information, you can ask the Information Commissioner to check whether we are meeting the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998. The Data Protection Act 1998 requires us to take reasonable steps to check the accuracy of personal information. If you think we have failed to correct or remove wrong information about you, you have the right to ask the Information Commissioner at the above address, to check whether our dealing with your information has met this requirement. Important note: The various time limits referred to in this statement (mostly 28 days) start with the date following receipt and end with the day of delivery.

Consumer Help Service
Experian
PO Box 8000
Nottingham
NG80 7WF
www.experian.co.uk



Plain English Campaign's Crystal Mark shows that the document has reached a high standard of clarity in its language and layout.

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