

Important Data Protection

A guide to the use of your personal data by
The Co-operative Bank and credit reference agencies

Q: What is a credit reference agency?

A: Credit reference agencies (CRAs) collect and maintain information on consumers' and businesses' credit behaviour, on behalf of lenders in the UK.

Q: Why do you use them when I have applied to your organisation?

A: Although you have applied to The Co-operative Bank, and we will check our own records, we will also contact CRAs to get information on your lending and repayment history with other organisations. This will help us make the best possible assessment of your overall situation before we make a decision.

Q: Where do CRAs get their information from?

- A:
- **The electoral voters roll.** This helps to show whether or not you live at the address you have given.
 - **County Court judgments.** The CRA collects the public records of all people taken to court for not paying their debts. The judgments (called decrees in Scotland) are normally kept for six years. A court can remove judgment information from the records if the debt is fully repaid within one month of judgment. A court can also register the debt as satisfied when the debt has been fully repaid.
 - **Bankruptcies.** Again, the CRAs collect public records of bankruptcies. These may be kept for more than six years but you can ask the CRA to record that they have been discharged.
 - **Previous and existing credit accounts.** This information is supplied by lenders such as banks, other financial institutions, telecommunications providers, utility companies, retail account providers and mail order companies. Much of the information CRAs hold is positive and shows that most people manage their credit commitments well. A history of paying on time is likely to help you get further credit. Lenders may also provide information on arrears (missed payments) and defaults (when the terms of a credit agreement have not been met and the account is several months in arrears).

Q: How will I know if my information is to be sent to a CRA or fraud prevention agency?

A: Organisations are only allowed to send information to CRAs and/or fraud prevention agencies with your agreement and knowledge. You will be told when you apply for an account if your data will be supplied. The next section of this leaflet will tell you how, when and why we will search at CRAs and what we will do with the information we obtain from them. We will also tell you if we plan to send information about you or your business, if you have one, to CRAs.

Q: Why is my data used in this way?

A: We, and other organisations, want to make the best possible decisions we can, in order to make sure that you, or your business, will be able to repay us. Some organisations may also use the information to check your identity. In this way, we can ensure that we all make responsible decisions. At the same time, we also want to make decisions quickly and easily and, by using up-to-date information provided electronically, we are able to make the most reliable and fair decisions possible.

Q: Who controls what credit reference agencies are allowed to do with my data?

A: All organisations that collect and process personal data must comply with the General Data Protection Regulation, overseen by the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). All credit reference agencies are in regular dialogue with the ICO. Use of the Electoral Register is controlled under the Representation of the People Act 2000.

Q: Can anyone look at my data held at credit reference agencies?

A: No, access to your information is strictly controlled and only those that are entitled to do so may see it. Usually that will only be with your agreement or (very occasionally) if there is a legal requirement.

What The Co-operative Bank does

1. When you apply to open an account, we will:

- a) Check our own records for information on:
 - i) your personal accounts
 - ii) if applicable, your spouse/personal partner's¹ personal accounts
 - iii) if you are a director or partner in a small business² we may also check on your business accounts.
- b) Search at credit reference agencies for information on:
 - i) your personal accounts
 - ii) if you have ever done the following we will also check your financial associate's personal accounts:
 - currently made a joint application
 - previously made joint applications
 - have joint account(s)
 - are financially linked³
 - if there is insufficient information to enable us to assist you
 - if you are a director or partner in a small business we may also check on your business accounts
 - search at fraud prevention agencies for information on you and other members of your household and your business (if you have one).

¹ A personal partner will be someone with whom you have a relationship that creates a joint financial unit in a similar way to a married couple. You will normally, but not necessarily, be living at the same address. It is not intended to include temporary arrangements such as students or flat sharers.

² A small business is defined as an organisation which might be a sole trader, partnership or a limited company that has three or less partners or directors.

³ Credit reference agencies may link together the records of people that are part of a financial unit. They may do this when people are known to be linked, such as being married or have jointly applied for credit or have joint accounts. They may also link people together if they, themselves, state that they are financially linked.

2. What we do with the information you supply to us as part of the application

- a) Information that is supplied to us will be sent to the credit reference agencies.
- b) If you tell us that you have a spouse or personal partner, we will:
 - i) Search, link and/or record information at credit reference agencies about you both.
 - ii) Link joint applicants and/or any individual identified as your spouse or partner, in our own records.
 - iii) Take both your and their information into account in future applications by either or both of you.
 - iv) Continue this linking until the account closes, or is changed to a sole account and one of you notifies us that you are no longer linked.

So you must be sure that you have their agreement to disclose information about them.

- c) If you give us false or inaccurate information and we suspect fraud, we will record this and may also pass this information to financial and other organisations involved in fraud prevention to protect us, them and our respective customers from theft and fraud.
- d) Your data may also be used by us to offer you other products, but only if you have given your permission.

3. With the information that we obtain we will:

- a) Assess this application for credit.
- b) Verify your identity and the identity of your spouse, partner or other directors/partners.
- c) Undertake checks for the prevention and detection of fraud and/or money laundering.
- d) Possibly use scoring methods to assess this application and to verify your identity.
- e) Manage your personal and/or business account (if you have one) with ourselves.
- f) Undertake periodic statistical analysis or testing to ensure the accuracy of existing and future products and services.

Any or all of these processes may be automated.

4. What we do when you have an account:

- a) Where you borrow or may borrow from us, we will give details of your personal and/or business account (if you have one), including how you manage it/them and additional names or parties to the account, to credit reference agencies.
- b) If you borrow **from us** and do not repay in full and on time, we will tell credit reference agencies.
- c) We may make periodic searches **of records held by us**, credit reference and fraud agencies to manage your account with us, to take decisions regarding your identity and credit, including whether to make credit available or to continue or extend existing credit.
- d) If you have borrowed from us and do not make payments that you owe us, we will trace your whereabouts and recover payment.

What credit reference agencies do

5. When credit reference agencies receive a search from us they will:

- a) Place a search 'footprint' on your credit file whether or not this application proceeds. If the search was for a credit application, the record of that search (but not the name of the organisation that carried it out) may be seen by other organisations when you apply for credit in the future.
- b) Link together the records of you and anyone with whom you have financial association, including previous and subsequent names of parties to the account. Links between financial associations will remain on your and their files until such time as you or your partner successfully files for a disassociation with the credit reference agencies.

6. Supply us with:

- a) Credit information such as previous applications and the conduct of the accounts in your name and of your associate(s) (if there is a link between you – see 1b above) and/or your business accounts (if you have one).
- b) Public information such as County Court Judgments (CCJs) and bankruptcies.
- c) Electoral register information.
- d) Fraud prevention information.

7. When information is supplied by us, to them, on your account(s):

- a) Credit reference agencies will record the details that are supplied on your personal and/or business account (if you have one) including previous and subsequent names of parties to the account and how you manage it/them.
- b) If you borrow and do not repay in full and on time, credit reference agencies will record the outstanding debt.
- c) Records shared with credit reference agencies remain on file for six years after they are closed whether settled by you or defaulted.

8. How your data will NOT be used by credit reference agencies:

- a) It will **not** be used to create a blacklist.
- b) It will **not** be used by the credit reference agency to make a decision.

9. How your data WILL be used by credit reference agencies:

- a) The information which we, other organisations and fraud prevention agencies provide to the credit reference agencies about you, your financial associates and your business (if you have one) may be supplied by credit reference agencies to other organisations and used by them to:
- i) Verify your identity if you or your financial associate applies for other facilities including all types of insurance applications and claims.
 - ii) Assist other organisations to make decisions on credit, credit-related services and on motor, household, life and other insurance proposals and insurance claims, about you, your partner, other members of your household or your business.
 - iii) Trace your whereabouts and recover payment if you do not make payments that you owe.
 - iv) Conduct checks for the prevention and detection of crime including fraud and/or money laundering.
 - v) Manage your personal, your partner's and/or business account (if you have one).
 - vi) Manage your personal, your partner's and/or business insurance policies (if you have one/any).
 - vii) Undertake statistical analysis and system testing.
- b) Your data may also be used for other purposes for which you give your specific permission or, in very limited circumstances, when required by law or where permitted under the terms of the Data Protection Legislation.

How to find out more

You can contact the three agencies currently operating in the UK; the information they hold may not be the same so it is worth contacting them all.

TransUnion

Consumer Services, TransUnion
P.O. Box 491, Leeds LS3 1WZ
Call **0330 024 7574**
Visit **www.transunion.co.uk**

Equifax PLC

Credit File Advice Centre,
P.O. Box 10036, Leicester LE3 4FS
Call **0333 321 4043**
Visit **www.equifax.co.uk**

Experian

Consumer Help Service,
P.O. Box 8000, Nottingham NG80 7WF
Call **0344 481 8000**
Visit **www.experian.co.uk**

If you want to receive details of those fraud prevention agencies from whom we obtain and with whom we record information about you, contact/write to us at:

The Co-operative Bank
Fraud Operations
P.O. Box 300
Delf House
Skelmersdale
WN8 6NY

You have a legal right to these details.

Please call 03457 212 212* (8am to 8pm, 7 days a week) if you would like to receive this information in an alternative format such as large print, audio or Braille.

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*Calls to 03 numbers cost the same as calls to numbers starting with 01 and 02. Calls may be monitored or recorded for security and training purposes.
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