

THIS TRANSCRIPT IS ISSUED ON THE UNDERSTANDING THAT IT IS TAKEN FROM A LIVE PROGRAMME AS IT WAS BROADCAST. THE NATURE OF LIVE BROADCASTING MEANS THAT NEITHER THE BBC NOR THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE PROGRAMME CAN GUARANTEE THE ACCURACY OF THE INFORMATION HERE.

MONEY BOX LIVE

Presenter: PAUL LEWIS

TRANSMISSION: 11th JULY 2012 3.00-3.30 RADIO 4

LEWIS: This is Money Box Live taking your calls on credit records. Every time you make a monthly payment on a loan or a mortgage or a credit card or a mobile phone bill, computers in three companies record whether that payment was on time or late or indeed if you missed it altogether. That is your credit record, along with lots of other data about current currents, where you live, date of birth, and of course any court judgements against you for debt. A bad credit record can leave you a financial outlaw - unable to borrow, open a bank account or even change your phone contract - and the recent computer problems at RBS and NatWest and still going on at Ulster Bank have left many of their 17 million customers who've missed payments, through no fault of their own, worrying how that might affect their credit record. So just how much data is in these records? Who keeps them? How do you check them? And if your record is wrong, how easy is it to put it right? Whatever your question, you can call Money Box Live now - 08700 100 444. With me today to answer your questions, two of the credit reference agencies themselves. Owen Roberts is Head of Callcredit Check and Neil Munroe is External Affairs Director at Equifax. Also here is Laura Wale, a money adviser from National Debtline, because of course bad credit is to do with debt. Our first question is from Nigel in Manchester. Nigel, your question?

NIGEL: It might be slightly unrelated. My son opened an account when he was 18, a current account. Do I mention the bank or do I not mention it?

LEWIS: Please do, yes.

NIGEL: He opened an account with Barclays. Some months into having the account, he went to a till and his card was swallowed up, and he went to the bank and they said that he was under a fraud investigation. He didn't know what for or what had happened. He hasn't got any statements or any information. And after going back to them I think it was about 4 months later, they said that he couldn't have his account reopened. They couldn't tell him what was going to happen pertaining to it, and they couldn't help him any further. We told him to go and open an account with Lloyds TSB, which he went and did, and he's had that account, but we are worried that there's some kind of marker against him in the credit system pertaining to this thing that happened with the fraud beforehand.

LEWIS: Well that's very interesting, Nigel. We have done stories about fraud and how it can affect your ability to open bank accounts or get credit. Let's start first with Laura Wale from National Debtline. Laura?

WALE: Hi Nigel. With this incident what I would be suggesting to you is first and foremost to be looking at making a formal complaint to Barclays that your son hasn't been given any information about the fraud investigation.

NIGEL: Okay.

WALE: That should be supplied to him, so that obviously he understands the ins and outs of it. And if he has any dispute against it and it's inaccurate, he can look to raise that with the credit reference agencies, and then ultimately if it's inaccurate information apply to have that removed because this could be affecting his overall ability of getting credit.

LEWIS: Can I just ask you, Nigel, did he lose money in this?

NIGEL: He lost a small amount of money. I think it was about £20.

LEWIS: And the bank hasn't refunded that?

NIGEL: No, the bank didn't refund it. He was more concerned that ... Well as most young people are, they don't really care. He just said well that's happened. I'll go elsewhere and do whatever I've got to do.

LEWIS: Yeah, okay, I understand that. Neil Munroe, tell us about these markers people can have because they're not on their credit record technically now, are they? They're held by another organisation.

MUNROE: Indeed. Up until recently we used to show what they called fraud records on the file. These would be loaded by a particular organisation that shares data amongst its members about fraud. It would have been a marker on there, so you could have queried that.

LEWIS: This is CIFAS - C.I.F.A.S.?

MUNROE: Correct. Through discussions with the regulators and whatever, that information was actually removed about a year or so ago, but you can contact organisations like CIFAS and do what we call a subject access request. I would say Nigel though that if your son did manage to get an account opened with Lloyds TSB, then it would indicate that there's nothing actually on his credit file. Has he actually applied for a copy of his credit file at all?

NIGEL: He hasn't applied for his credit file yet.

MUNROE: Okay.

NIGEL: He opened the account with Lloyds TSB when issues started with Barclays. But he recently tried to open an account, a card cash account with Halifax ...

MUNROE: Right.

NIGEL: ... for savings purposes, and he's not heard anything about that. And we're

basically, me and his mum are saying to him well that's because you didn't do anything about your Barclays account, but ...

LEWIS: Well he might have this fraud flagged against his name, mightn't he?

MUNROE: He may do. I think it's worthwhile - and I'm sure Paul will put it up on the website for you afterwards - but I'm sure it'd be worthwhile making an inquiry to see whether there is some fraud information that's being shared amongst the banks.

NIGEL: Okay.

MUNROE: But certainly get him to get a copy of his credit file just to make sure as well. It won't be on there, but obviously if there's anything else on there. I mean maybe, for example, there's been some fraudulent applications made in his name. They would be shown, so you know that might be worthwhile checking out as well.

NIGEL: Which credit agency do we apply to? Do we have to go to all three?

MUNROE: No, you can go to one of the three. We all tend to have the same level of information. The general advice if you go independently, somewhere like Which's?, they'd say probably get two out of the three just to be on the safe side.

NIGEL: Right.

LEWIS: Yes and the three are Experian, Equifax and Callcredit. And the fraud organisation, which now calls itself the UK's Fraud Prevention Service - (*pron. CEEFAS*) or (*pron. CYFAS*) is CIFAS.org.uk, and it's worth contacting them. But I have to say under what we're told is European law, if you are suspected of fraud there is a kind of Kafkaesque situation where your accounts can be closed and you won't be told because they think there may be fraud involved. So you can get rather stuck and we have looked at that on Money Box in the last few weeks a couple of times, so it may be worth looking at our website for more information: bbc.co.uk/moneybox. And

hope your son sorts that out, Nigel. Thanks for your call. We'll probably going into getting hold of your credit record a bit later because it will probably come up. If it doesn't, I'll make sure we do because there are different ways of doing that. Rachel's next in Truro. Rachel?

RACHEL: Oh hello. Yes, I've had a mortgage for 10 years that I've been paying regularly, and I just missed a payment last month, which was my fault because I hadn't made sure there was enough in the account. So I was in arrears for two days. But now I'm told that I've got a bad credit score and it's going to affect me for 6 years, so I'm just wondering what I can do, if there's anything I can do to improve my credit score.

LEWIS: And when you say you missed the payment, did you miss it or was it just very late?

RACHEL: No, I missed it. I should have paid it in.

LEWIS: So you're one short in fact?

RACHEL: Oh no, I'm paid up to date now.

LEWIS: Oh right, okay.

RACHEL: It was in arrears for two days.

LEWIS: Okay, well Owen Roberts is from Callcredit. How long do these marks last?

ROBERTS: These marks stay on your file for 6 years after the date of settlement of the accounts. In the case of a mortgage, it'll be there for the life of the mortgage plus 6 years.

LEWIS: That could be 31 years. That's a long time to have a mark for missing a

payment in 2012. It could go on to 2043.

ROBERTS: It could. The important thing to remember is time's a healer and payments when you miss them, as they age become less and less relevant to prospective lenders. A prospective lender's always going to be interested in how recently did you miss a payment.

LEWIS: And of course this is true - Rachel did miss the payment or at least it was very late, as she's admitted, so she can't get it corrected because it's true. So is there anything she can do about it, Neil Munroe?

MUNROE: Well I'd like to query the fact if it's only a couple of days late, Rachel. Have you actually seen a copy of your credit report to see it being marked as being late or are you just ...

RACHEL: Yeah, I have.

MUNROE: You have? So it is actually reported as late?

RACHEL: Yes.

MUNROE: Okay. Well I mean obviously you do have the right to put a statement on your file. It's an old-fashioned term called a 'notice of correction', but it's a statement up to 200 words to put your say across about what's happened. And lenders who look at your file subsequently are obliged to read that statement, so that would be a piece of advice to put on there just in case you know you are going to be credit active in the near future.

LEWIS: So Rachel could say something like I've only ever missed one. It was an oversight, etcetera, explain the reasons, and that would have to be looked at by anyone who was offering her credit?

MONROE: Correct, indeed.

LEWIS: Laura?

WALE: Also important to remember, Rachel, that a lot of things do affect your credit reference file. So yes this will be a factor, but also your age, whether or not you're a homeowner, whether or not you're on the electoral roll. How you conduct yourself financially with your other credit will all contribute to your overall credit score. So if you're up to date with everything else, this was one individual oversight, it may not be quite as damaging as it's been implied.

RACHEL: Oh right, okay.

LEWIS: Okay. Alright, well thanks very much for that call, Rachel. And Monica is now calling us from France, Monica.

MONICA: Hello.

LEWIS: Your question.

MONICA: I applied for another credit card having had one for twenty something years and, to my horror, my application was turned down. And I got my credit rating from one of the agencies and found that they had no record of me really at all apart from being on an electoral roll. And this was because I'd had only one credit card for 25 years and a mortgage for 25 years, and both of those started before Experian and all those other agencies actually existed.

LEWIS: Do you live in France?

MONICA: No, I live in the UK.

LEWIS: Oh right, so you're on holiday?

MONICA: I am.

LEWIS: Okay. So you've got what I think is called a thin file, Neil?

MONICA: Indeed.

LEWIS: Neil Munroe?

MUNROE: Yes you have. And you know the fact that you had a credit card and a mortgage wouldn't have been supplied to credit bureaus. We're only allowed to record information where there's been some notification to you in the past. And it is quite common with the older generation - my mother and father are the same - where 25 years ago, you know that's where they were, and unfortunately that information hasn't made it to the credit report. So it is difficult and it does mean that yes you are identified, but there is no sort of payment history that is used. I mean obviously I think it would be wise to go to that organisation that's just turned you down and ask why. You do have a right for an explanation for that and to put forward your case and to ask for it to be manually reviewed. So if you're not too upset, I would suggest you go back to them and try and see if you can work that through with them.

MONICA: Yes. And what I actually did too was, having found that out, I discovered that if you write to the credit cards that you do have, you can actually start the process of them giving the credit record agencies the information that they have for the modern generation and so I hope that I've started to build up a record that I do borrow on a credit card and I do pay it back.

LEWIS: I think you've worked out the answers yourself here, Monica. (*Monica laughs*)

MUNROE: Sounds like you should be on the programme, Monica, I think with that advice.

LEWIS: It's worth pointing out, Owen, that all this data that you collect, you collect with our permission, though we don't always know that. But somewhere in the small print when we nowadays take out a credit card, open a bank account, etcetera, it will say that we give them the right to pass the data onto you; whereas Monica took out those cards so long ago that that wasn't the case and so there's no data there.

ROBERTS: That's absolutely right. When you take out any new credit agreement, as part of the paperwork that you sign at the beginning of the process there'll be a clause that describes they'll use a credit reference agency and also submit data to. And, as you said, submitting data's a relatively recent thing and we can't work with non-consented data.

LEWIS: And of course although you could say no to that, you wouldn't then get the credit card or loan, so it's not really voluntary. Monica, thank you very much for your call. I'm just going to read an email now because it's relevant to that. I thought Monica might live in France, but she lives in the UK. But we've had a message from Valentine who is American. Lives in the UK. She's not on the electoral roll. And that's pretty crucial - not being on the electoral roll - because that's how they establish where you live. Is there any other way of proving she lives at her property without being on the electoral roll? She does say, 'I don't want to become British, but I can't get any credit.' A difficult tradeoff really, isn't it, for an American lady? Neil, what is this about the electoral register? Why is it so crucial?

MUNROE: Well it's a very strong ... The full electoral register is only allowed to be used by a number of organisations, and credit reference agencies have the ability to use that because it's a very strong indicator of who you are and that you live at an address and it's very useful in helping preventing fraud. So it is quite critical. But in Valentine's case, I do understand the problem. There's more and more people moving around now and finding difficult - the system works on taking data from organisations like ourselves. My advice would be really - and it does work more and more this way these days - to bring your credit report with you when you come in from another country and find an organisation, financial organisation that will be prepared to look at it. More and more they are prepared to do that. More and more certain banks are

offering ex-pat type facilities as well, so try and pick up those. So if you're with an American bank that's got an operation in the UK, use that. They will then probably actually be able to interpret your credit report and get you on your way.

LEWIS: Because a lot of foreign companies do have head offices and big offices in the UK ...

MUNROE: Indeed.

LEWIS: ... and certainly I talked to a group of people working for a big computer company in London, and they are from all over Europe and they were saying this was exactly their problem - they couldn't get any credit - and yet they were well paid people who were good credit risks. Is there any answer to this, Laura?

WALE: If you take out a very small piece of credit, something that requires quite a relatively low score like a mobile phone or a storecard and use that responsibly - make the payments every month, maybe spend just £10, £20 on the storecard, pay it off in full - you'll start to build your score up and then eventually you'll be able to get higher and higher credit.

LEWIS: So maybe Valentine was trying to get too big a credit limit ...

WALE: Maybe to start with.

LEWIS: ... a credit card with thousands of pounds. And if you start with a storecard or, as you say, a mobile phone, that might be the way to start building up a UK record.

WALE: Absolutely, start with something with a lower score and build your way up.

LEWIS: Alright, that's a very useful tip for those people working in the UK who are from other countries. Thank you for that email, Valentine. And Lesley's calling now

from Brighton in Sussex. Lesley?

LESLEY: Hi Paul, everyone. This is a question about how to proactively build a good credit rating when you're just starting out in life. I'm thinking of my 19 year old son who's recently taken the big steps of leaving home and getting his first job. He's renting a room as a lodger. He's got a current account with a debit card, some savings in a building society. I just made a note of what you were saying about starting to build a score. He pays a monthly mobile bill. But there he is with no debts, but he's not a homeowner, no utility bills, no car, no credit card, so presumably he's not building up much of a good credit rating for now?

LEWIS: That is always a problem. How do you go about building up an early credit record, someone who's relatively young? Laura?

WALE: It's going to be a very similar idea. I mean if your son is being a lodger, get him on the electoral roll as quick as you can because that's going to be a big factor.

LESLEY: Yeah, I just took him off our local one because they were updating it and I ...

LEWIS: He's got to get on the new one, hasn't he? You've got to keep ...

LESLEY: Yeah, he lives in a different location, yeah.

LEWIS: And that is a problem for students. Often they move around like that.

WALE: That's it. And I suppose the other thing maybe to warn him of, especially if he's just living on his own for the first time and you say he's got an overdraft facility and that sort of thing, is to use it and pay it straight back, so it shows he's responsible with the credit. Don't let him build up thousands of pounds worth of overdraft and charges and then he has to use his savings to offset it. That doesn't show someone being responsible with credit.

LEWIS: Yes, so I mean strangely the key is to borrow money and pay it back at once or within a month or two ...

WALE: That's right.

LEWIS: ... because that shows as something positive. Owen?

ROBERTS: It's very much about demonstrating to lenders that you know how to borrow responsibly, that you pay back on time. And once you get that first credit agreement rolling, it moves very quickly and it starts to build up that great history that allows you to start to become more and more credit active, as long as you maintain that responsibility.

LESLEY: So do you think he should actually go out and look for a credit card in order to build up a credit rating?

LEWIS: Well there are sort of starter credit cards. The problem with that is he's got to operate it correctly and credit cards can be very tempting to someone of 19 who's on a low income.

LESLEY: Yeah.

WALE: That's right. I mean if he's already got an overdraft, that might be enough to just start him off. That and the electoral registering, you say he's got a mobile. This should start to rebuild a file for him and then it's going to be a case of checking his file, which he can do ...

LESLEY: He hasn't got an overdraft anymore. He actually did have one when he was at university. He paid it all off in full with a legacy, so that might not ... Although he did pay it all off, it was using savings, so that might not ...

LEWIS: I think it's just taking out something like a mobile phone contract, maybe a

starter credit card ...

LESLEY: A start credit card.

LEWIS: ... if he can be trusted to be responsible with it. I mean only he knows that. And doing it responsibly, so you pay it off in full every month or at least the minimum every month, preferably in full, and then he will begin to build up his record and that will ... And of course we're saying all this. You don't actually need a credit record unless you're going to borrow money for something else, so this is I suppose to help him ...

LESLEY: But presumably one day he ...

LEWIS: One day he will when he wants to maybe buy a house or borrow money to buy a car or whatever. Anyway that's a sort of tip for people. Now I'm going at this point to go round talking about how we get hold of our credit record because obviously this has been fairly crucial. And I'm going to ask Laura first as you're not from one of the credit agencies, Laura. *(Laura laughs)* How do you get hold of your credit record and how much does it cost?

WALE: We would advise people to get their statutory credit report. Now that's just £2 over the internet per report.

LEWIS: And it's called statutory because you're allowed to have that by law, aren't you?

WALE: That's right, absolutely. So there's no need to sign up for monthly fees if you don't want to. You can just do it as a one-off, check your score and be done with it.

LEWIS: Okay. Now I was looking at all three web pages for Experian, Equifax and Callcredit before the programme, and I have to say every one of them now has a link to the statutory credit report on their front page somewhere. Not always at the top or

the middle, but you will find that phrase ‘statutory credit report’ and you can go through then to order it or indeed in some cases see it online. But Neil Munroe, you do also tempt people to spend money on their credit reports more than that, don’t you? Why?

MUNROE: I take issue with the word ‘tempt’, Paul, but I knew you were going to say that. *(Paul laughs)* We offer a range of ...

LEWIS: Offer them.

MUNROE: ... we offer a range of so...

LEWIS: Offer a solution you’re going to say now, aren’t you?

MUNROE: Thank you. Thank you very much for that. We offer a range of solutions from the basic £2 report and also through to subscription services. It’s safe to say that since we’ve introduced subscription services, there’s been no cannibalisation of people accessing the £2 report. People are making their choices. A £2 report is fine if you want to have a one-off look at your file. Some people now more and more are looking at subscription services, especially when they’re credit active, because these services do tell you pretty instantly if something’s changed and that might be important for you if you’re just applying for a mortgage or a you know new car.

LEWIS: And how much does it cost?

MUNROE: The subscription service we offer is £6.99 a month. The first 30 days are free, so if you wish to avail yourself of a free credit report, then make sure you cancel the subscription at the end of 30 days and that’s what happens as well.

LEWIS: Yes. And of course all you have to do is just tell your bank, isn’t it, because they’ll stop the payments and that will sort that out? That’s the new rule about continuous payment authority, or relatively new. Callcredit has something slightly

different. I know you want to talk about that, Owen, so please tell us how you can get a free one from Callcredit.

ROBERTS: We decided to take a look at how people were using their credit files and how they were accessing them and what was going on afterwards, and we realised that when we talked to individuals the credit report was part of the journey that they were on. It was always check my credit file, use that information to go and then apply for credit. And we looked at that and said is there a model we can use that says we give the credit report to the consumer completely free, so there's no strings attached, there's no hooks, there's no commitment to ...

LEWIS: (*over*) You take a lot of information from them, don't you though?

ROBERTS: We capture information predominantly to make sure that we're dealing with the right individual. We're very cautious about letting credit reports out to the wrong people. Once you've got your credit report, we can make relevant offers of suitable financial products or other offers that you might be interested in, but you're not under any obligation to take that.

LEWIS: So it's free because you make money out of those offers that they may then use a report to get?

ROBERTS: Yeah, that's how we cover the cost of giving away the free credit report.

LEWIS: Okay, alright. And Experian, who isn't here, has a system similar to Equifax's where you take out a monthly report, get it free for 30 days. So all those things are available. I have to say if you go on the internet you do get offered some very high cost credit reports, including some at £29.95 a month, and I must say I don't see any reason to pay £29.95 a month when you can get one for £2 or even cheaper. Okay, I also should say at this point because we're coming towards the end of the programme, I'm just going to mention people with RBS, NatWest and Ulster Bank who may be worried about their credit rating. The banks are working with the credit agencies. Neil, you just want to say a quick word about that.

MUNROE: Yes, RBS has been talking to all the credit bureaus, but the general advice is there is grace period between you know when you're due to make a payment and before it's even considered to be reported. The general advice is you know check with the organisation that payment was due to be made to if they've received it. If they haven't, talk to them, make sure they don't report it. But obviously if you are worried about it, also you need to check you credit report probably in about a month to 2 months time because it takes that long to get onto your file.

LEWIS: And RBS is offering, all three banks are offering free credit checks for up to 3 months for their own customers. Of course that doesn't help you if you're a customer of another bank but your wages didn't go in and you've missed payments, but it is important to check and if you incur any costs the banks should refund them to you. We're going to Tricia now who's in Cambridgeshire. Tricia, your question?

TRICIA: Yes my son is 21 and he lives at home. He has a mobile phone account and a storecard. If he misses any payments, does that affect our credit rating being parents? You know is it at the home address or is it personal?

LEWIS: Owen?

ROBERTS: His liability to pay that account rests solely with him, so your credit report belongs to you, his credit report belongs to him. So as long as you're not in any way linked to that account as a guarantor, then he's in charge of maintaining that. If he misses payments, then it'll count against him. Going back to the calls we were talking about earlier, it's actually a good beginning that he's going along if it's in his name and he's paying on time.

LEWIS: Neil, there was a time when people with the same name at the same address were linked, wasn't there?

MUNROE: Yes, data up till probably 2004 was looked at. You were able to, lenders were able to look at data at the same surname level, so I can understand obviously, Tricia, your query about it. But that changed, quite rightly so, to look at data in your

own right as an individual from 2004, so you should have no worries whatsoever.

TRICIA: It's not the house, not the address?

MUNROE: It's not the house address. I mean some people believe there's sort of like a blacklisting goes on of addresses. Paul's smiling when I said that, but that doesn't exist anymore and never existed probably in the first place. I think you'll be fine. Just encourage him to keep making his payments for his own sake really.

LEWIS: Yes and I suppose the only exception is if it's a couple or married couple who've got the same name and they have joint credit. Then it does apply Laura, doesn't it?

WALE: That's right, yes. If you're jointly linked with somebody financially, you create what's called a financial association with them and then your credit files do affect each other. When people split up and obviously they no longer want to be linked, they have to contact the credit reference agencies to file a financial disassociation for the credit reference files to stop impacting on each other. So, Tricia, assuming you've not jointly signed any of these contracts with your son and not acted as guarantor, it won't affect you.

TRICIA: No, I just thought it went against the property and not me.

WALE: No, no at all.

LEWIS: So just make sure he keeps on the right track for his sake, Tricia, I think is the answer. Thanks very much for your call. Ann from Whitchurch now is calling.
Ann?

ANN: Hello.

LEWIS: Your question?

ANN: Yes, I wanted to know ... I had a mistaken identity really. In 2009 my bank overdraft was stopped and it took me a while to find out it was because there was a bad credit report about me. Because I was about to go on holiday, I applied for you know £2 to get my credit rating and then I was away for a month, came back, and it took me another month really to get it sorted out. The person who's ... I only found out after I got the credit report that it was the same name as me, almost the same birth date, but an entirely different address although in the same city.

LEWIS: So that was just a mistake?

ANN: Yeah, I mean ...

LEWIS: Did you get it corrected?

ANN: Well I did. It took me 3 months to get it corrected. But just in May 2012 I had a letter from a debt collection agency saying that they were trying to collect the same debt from me now.

LEWIS: Okay because we're coming towards the end of the programme, let me ask Laura about that.

WALE: Okay. Did you get a letter of confirmation from the bank, Ann, to say that they had made an error and that you were the incorrect person they were chasing?

ANN: No, I mean I got ... The bank just in the end ... Because I mean I had money in my savings account, I had everything ...

WALE: Right, okay.

ANN: ... they just restored my overdraft in the end.

WALE: Okay, two ...

LEWIS: Laura, just ...

ANN: The two - Equifax and Experian - never gave it to me in writing that they'd taken ... although they told me that my account was clear.

WALE: Right. The quick answer to that, Ann, is obviously either to send proof of your date of birth to the debt collection agency to prove you're the incorrect person or get a letter of confirmation from the bank to prove you're the incorrect person and forward it on.

LEWIS: Yes, I think it's almost the correct birth date but not quite. And in ten seconds, Neil, do you normally tell people if they've had a correction put on?

MUNROE: Yes, if you raise a dispute with us, we should write back to you and tell you that that dispute has been changed, so I'm surprised you mentioned that, Ann, and happy to look into that. But any dispute that's raised, we have 28 days to work with the lender to get it corrected.

LEWIS: Okay, thanks very much for your call, Ann. Sorry to rush you. I'm going to rush Ann from Horbury Ossett even more. Ann, you really have ten seconds to tell us your problem.

ANN: Yes, I applied to my bank to increase my overdraft and was turned down and I was curious because it was only £100 originally and I think I wanted £200. So I tried to get two free one month trials with two of the companies.

LEWIS: And what did you find on those?

ANN: Well one of them didn't recognise my address at all. The house is 8 years old

LEWIS: Okay, so it was a problem with ...

ANN: So I thought their database must be out of date. And the other one, because the number is 12a, said it was an invalid number.

LEWIS: Okay, Ann, I'm going to have to stop you there and Neil's going to give a very quick answer to that.

MUNROE: Well we do take address information from many different sources and sometimes that comes in in different ways. It can sometimes be that you just need to contact the reference agencies and we will do our best to make sure that data appears.

LEWIS: Neil, thanks very much for that. I've got to stop you there. Neil Munroe from Equifax; Owen Roberts of Callcredit; and Laura Wale of National Debtline. And thanks to Ann as well. More on our website, bbc.co.uk/moneybox. In a couple of days you can read a transcript of the programme. I'm back at noon on Saturday with Money Box and here to take more of your calls next Wednesday afternoon.