

Centre City Tower, 7 Hill Street, Birmingham B5 4UA
21 Bloomsbury Street, London WC1B 3HF

By email

14 August 2017

Freedom of Information Act -Request For Information

Reference: FOI 20170870

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your email in which you request information concerning communications between the Information Commissioners Office, water companies and OFWAT in 2010, based on which the approval was given to sharing data between water companies and Credit Reference Agencies.

Ofwat confirms it does hold some information requested, but only in respect of a previous request for information in this matter and with specific reference to United Utilities Water Company.

For clarification purposes any such data sharing does not require the approval of the Water Services Regulation Authority (Ofwat). It is for water companies to ensure that they comply with all the relevant legal requirements (including the Data Protection Act 1998). Ofwat did not have any jurisdiction at that time and this remains the case, to prescribe, or approve how water company's data share with credit reference agencies.

Ofwat does have a formal role in relation to the content of water companies' codes of practice on debt recovery, which would need to be updated to reflect any changes in their procedure (including the introduction of date sharing). In 2015 Ofwat previously disclosed information about meetings and communications held with Experian in 2011 and 2012 that set out our views and concerns at the time. A copy of these redacted documents are attached and some of which have been published through "What do they Know" at the following link:

https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/information_related_to_united_ut#incomin-g-661551

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Ofwat's role is to publish guidelines to companies for dealing with household customers in debt. The guidelines are principle based and not prescriptive. The guidelines were last updated and published 30 July 2014 and can be found on Ofwat's archive website on this webpage

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20150603141239/https://www.ofwat.gov.uk/regulating/tools/consumerpolicy/protecting/debt/>

With exception to the previous disclosure of information (attached) we do not hold any additional information regarding this subject matter.

If you have any queries or concerns with regard to the content of this email please contact me at Foi@ofwat.gsi.gov.uk

Once an FOI request is answered, it is considered to be in the public domain. To promote transparency, Ofwat may publish the response and any material released on our website in the [FOI disclosure section](#). Any personal information in the letter will be removed before publishing. We will hold the information in accordance with Ofwat's [retention and disposal schedule](#) which can be found in our Publication Scheme on our website.

If you are unhappy with the service you have received in relation to your request and wish to make a complaint or request a review of the decision, please contact:

Programme and Project Management Office
Ofwat
Centre City Tower
7 Hill Street
Birmingham B5 4UA
Foi@ofwat.gsi.gov.uk

If you are not happy with the outcome of that review you can ask the Information Commissioner's Office to consider your complaint. Generally, the ICO will not make a decision unless you have exhausted Ofwat's complaints procedure. The ICO can be contacted at:

<https://ico.org.uk/>

or

Freedom of Information/EIR Provide the Information

Centre City Tower, 7 Hill Street, Birmingham B5 4UA
21 Bloomsbury Street, London WC1B 3HF
The Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow

Yours sincerely,

Christine Manise
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