

MEMBER HANDBOOK



WEST CHESHIRE
CREDIT UNION

Introduction

What is West Cheshire Credit Union?

West Cheshire Credit Union is a savings and loan organisation, based on co-operative working. It is owned, controlled and run by members, for the benefit of members. West Cheshire Credit Union works by members saving together to create a pool of money from which affordable loans may be granted to fellow members.

Membership Fee

Why is there a charge for membership of the West Cheshire Credit Union?

As a co-operative based, not for profit organisation we ask for a membership fee to be paid in order to cover the costs of administering your account. This fee is worked out on the stationery, postage and other items to assist you with your account. At present this is set at a one off fee (non refundable) of £5.00

Savings

What is the minimum amount I have to save?

To keep your account active you must maintain a minimum balance of £2.

What is the maximum amount I can hold in my saving account?

The maximum amount that can be held by an individual member is £15,000.

Do I have to save regularly?

The West Cheshire Credit Union encourages everyone to save regularly. You may want to decide a set amount to save on a weekly or monthly basis. However you are in control, so you can save as much as you want, when you want, up to the maximum limit noted above.

How do I save?

By cash or cheque at a collection point, by standing order, by bank transfer (via online banking) or through payroll deduction (participating companies only)

Should you wish to make a payment by bank transfer please ensure that you quote your unique reference number to ensure that monies are credited to your account. All reference numbers start WCCU followed by your initials and then your credit union membership number as detailed on the top of your welcome letter.

Eg: WCCU AB 1234

Our bank details for transfers are as follows;

Account Name	West Cheshire Credit Union
Sort Code	60 – 83 - 01
Account Number	20143235

Where can I save?

Membership Centres are located across Chester, Ellesmere Port and Winsford. We will keep you updated as we expand this network.

What interest will I gain on my savings?

Members do not get interest on their savings; they get a dividend. Savings are used to make loans to members. Interest is then charged on these loans and contributes toward:

- Covering the credit union's running costs
- Build up reserves to secure members interests

*Any surplus left over may be returned to members by way of a dividend. The level of the dividend depends on the amount of surplus the West Cheshire Credit Union has made.

* Dividends are not guaranteed and depend on performance of the credit union.

Making withdrawals

How do I withdraw money?

Contained within this pack is a 'Share Withdrawal Form'. Complete in full and either return to our membership office or at your local Membership Centre. These forms can be downloaded from our website at;

www.wccu.co.uk

Should you wish to authorise withdrawals via the telephone a nominated bank account must be set up. Please call our office should you wish to utilise this service and the relevant form will be sent to you for completion.

If you have a bank account, the simplest and easiest way to access your money is via a Direct to Bank transfer. If a completed share withdrawal form is received at our Head Office in Chester before 12 noon, we endeavour to transfer the funds to your bank account by close of business that day however, as this is dependant on your own banks processing, unfortunately it can not be guaranteed by ourselves. If you have already completed the documentation for a nominated bank account, we can arrange transfers via telephone (subject to satisfactory security checks).

Telephone withdrawals

We can only process requests for withdrawals via telephone if you have completed the necessary Nominated Bank account mandate, giving details of security passwords.

Please note that it is your responsibility to ensure that the bank details given are correct. Unfortunately we can not reimburse funds if incorrect details have been given.

How much can I withdraw?

How much you may withdraw, depends on how much you have saved and if you have any outstanding loans. You must leave at least £2 in your account at all times, or your account will automatically be closed.

If you take out a loan for more than £500, you must leave in your savings account at least the equivalent to one quarter of the outstanding loan balance.

For example if your outstanding loan balance is £1000, you must leave at least £250 in your saving account.

How will I receive my money?

You can have your money via:

- Direct Bank Transfer
- Cheque payable to yourself
- Cheque payable to a third party
- Credit Union pre-paid debit card (Engage) **

** For those who like a more instant access to a cash facility, the pre-paid debit card is the ideal option. Money (from your savings or a new loan) can be directly transferred to this card and will be accessible the same day. You don't even have to visit our office as requests can be taken over the telephone (security questions and passwords will apply). Please contact our office should you require any further information.

Please note we do not pay out withdrawals in cash.

WEST GUYANA
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Loans

Can I apply for a loan?

Yes, if you are 18 years of age or over you can apply for a loan with your credit union.

Types of loans available

Saver Loan of up to £2000*

These are our standard loans designed for members who have started saving with us.

- Must save for 8 weeks prior to application
- Application must be equivalent to no more than 4 times your savings balance.
- *If your household is reliant on benefits as the only form of income, then there is a maximum loan application amount of £500.
- 3% per month interest = 42.6 % Representative APR for loans up to £1000,
- 2% per month interest = 26.8% Representative APR for loans between £1001 - £2000.

Child Benefit Loans

These loans are for members who are in receipt of Child Benefit and who are not in a position to save for 8 weeks prior to application. Applicants can apply for a loan of up to £500 straightaway.

Child Benefit will need to be transferred directly into your credit union savings account

The loan repayment will be deducted from the child benefit when it is received and the balance automatically placed into your savings.

Although we would encourage members to save this balance can be withdrawn as and when required.

Example;

If you receive Child Benefit of £20.70 per week and pay it into your credit union account you could:

- Apply for a *loan of £500* repayable at £12 a week over 1 year.
- Leave the remainder in your savings account and at the end of that year you will have repaid your loan in full and saved **£460.56**
- Total Repayable **£615.84 APR 42.6%**

All loans are reviewed on the **applicant's ability to afford and repay** the loan applied for.

If you are unemployed, or are reliant solely on benefits as an income the maximum loan you may apply for is £500.

How do I apply for a loan?

You will need to complete a loan application form available from the Membership Centres or our membership office. You can also download a loan application form from our website or call us on Chester 01244 399006 and we can post one out to you. This must be returned together with supporting documentation such as bank statements and evidence of income. Failure to present all the relevant information will result in delays processing your application.

How long before I know the outcome of my application?

For amounts under £1000, where no extra information is required, a decision should be available within three to five working days. Loans for over £1000 may take up to seven working days to decide.

How will I receive my money?

If the decision on your application is positive, you will be required to sign a loan agreement form. This is a legal document and outlines the details of your loan, such as the amount borrowed, repayment amount, period of loan and total amount repayable.

Once you have read this document (it is advisable to take advice from an independent source if you are unsure of the contents) and signed to confirm your authority to the agreed sum, then we will be in a position to provide you with your loan. You will receive your money in the manner you indicated on your original application. This could be by:

- Direct payment into your bank (easiest form of transfer)
- Cheque payable to yourself or a third party
- Placed on your prepaid debit card (Engage) maximum £3000

For security reasons loans will not be paid directly via cash

Difficulty with loan repayments

Please be aware that as a co-operative organisation we have an obligation to chase, and then recoup any non-payments, as we are securing the interests of all our members. We therefore advise that you contact our office as soon as you realise there is any repayment problems, we can then discuss practical ways of managing your repayments.

We must point out that if persistent non-payment of a loan occurs then we will follow the normal debt collection procedures, which will ultimately result in court action being taken.

Your peace of mind

How safe is the West Cheshire Credit Union?

All Credit Unions are regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA). These are the same people who regulate high street banks and building societies. This means that the maximum £15,000 savings you can have with the credit union are covered by the scheme. Credit Unions are required to report their performance to the FCA every three months. This is one of the ways in which the FCA monitors the Credit Unions financial activity. The FCA can also visit and inspect Credit Unions to see how they are operating.

Your individual savings are secured under the FSCS compensation scheme up to a maximum of £85,000. As the limit of savings held with West Cheshire Credit Union is set at £15,000 ample cover is provided.

For more information, including the auditing arrangements and governance structure, please visit our website www.wccu.co.uk.

Complaints Procedure

Complaints can be made in writing to the West Cheshire Credit Union, or verbally to an officer or volunteer of the West Cheshire Credit Union. Complaint forms are available at Membership Centres. Details of the complaints procedure can be found on our website www.wccu.co.uk.

Your Involvement is Important.

As a member you have a right to a say in how your West Cheshire Credit Union is run. The best way to exercise this right is to attend the Annual General Meeting where every member will have one vote.

As one of the owners of the West Cheshire Credit Union you have a right to know how it is being run. With this right comes the responsibility to contribute to the effective and fair running of the West Cheshire Credit Union. Members should where possible:

- Attend the Annual General Meeting (notice of this meeting will be distributed)
- Ask questions about the running of the West Cheshire Credit Union
- Question the accounts and dividend
- Elect to office people of trust to run West Cheshire Credit Union
- Get involved
- Provide feedback

Members are also encouraged to become involved in the day to day running of the West Cheshire Credit Union as volunteers. Please contact our membership office for more details.

Contact us

You can contact the West Cheshire Credit Union in the following ways:

By post to our office address:

West Cheshire Credit Union Ltd
Parade Enterprise Centre
The Parade
Blacon
Chester
CH1 5HW

By telephone:

01244 399006

Ellesmere Port Branch

13 Whitby Road
Ellesmere Port
Cheshire
CH65 8AA
Tel: 0151 352 0391



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Please note before we can discuss your account details over the phone a number of security questions will be asked.

By email:

info@wccu.co.uk

In Person

You can speak to us at our Head Office or one of our membership centres, please call for opening times. You can find out more information and download forms from our website – www.wccu.co.uk