

FAQs

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What is a Credit Union?

A credit union is a financial co-operative which provides savings, loans and a range of other financial services to its members.

Credit unions are owned and controlled solely by their members i.e. the people who use their services and not by external shareholders or investors. This means the emphasis is always on providing the best service to members with all profits returned to members via dividends or investment in member services.

Volunteer directors oversee the running of the credit union and are elected from the membership, by the membership at the Annual General Meeting.

Are there many Credit Unions?

There are around 305 credit unions across England, Scotland and Wales with a total of 1,290,545 members employing more than 1,700 staff.

They form part of a much larger international movement of 60,500 credit unions active in 109 countries worldwide enabling more than 223 million members to access affordable financial services.

More information about the history and ethos of credit unions is available on the credit union trade association [ABCUL website](#).

How do I join a Credit Union?

Everyone is eligible to join a credit union. Eligibility is usually based on one of the following factors:

- **Employer** – many employers sponsor their own credit unions;
- **Geographic Location** – many credit unions serve anyone that lives, works, worships, or attends school in a particular geographic area; or
- **Family** – most credit unions allow members' families to join.

To find out which credit union you are eligible to join [click here](#)

Applying for membership of Harlowsave is easy and is open to anyone who lives or works in Essex or East Hertfordshire or who lives with a relative who is already a member. [Click here](#) for our membership eligibility criteria.

- **Call into our office** anytime during opening times and complete a [membership application form](#);

You will need to provide at least [two forms of ID](#) which must include a proof of address and a valid photo ID (Passport, Birth Certificate, Driving Licence)*.

We ask you to pay £6.00 on joining, which includes a £5 non-refundable annual membership fee and a £1 deposit in your new account.

When you join you will receive a welcome pack and letter. You will also receive information regarding our full range of products and services.

If you would like to become a member but have further questions please contact us by phone (01279 451234) or complete our [contact form](#) and we will arrange a time for you to talk to one of our dedicated staff.

Why save with a Credit Union?

There are several good reasons why:

- ✓ Credit unions want to help people become financially secure by promoting saving; even a small amount saved each week will soon mount up. As well as a basic savings account, they offer a range of other options including Christmas savings accounts and Junior Savers' accounts.
- ✓ Credit unions provide free life insurance on savings at no extra cost. See our [FAQ 10](#).
- ✓ Credit unions make it easy to save. Members can pay into their accounts via payroll deduction, through retail payment networks such as PayPoint and [Payacreditunion](#) or by standing order.
- ✓ Credit unions serve the communities they operate in so when you invest your money in your local credit union you know it's your neighbours or colleagues who are benefiting, not outside shareholders.
- ✓ A successful year for the credit union will see members receive

a dividend on their savings. Harlowsave has been able to pay members a 0.5% dividend on their savings for the past 2 years.

Why borrow from a Credit Union?

There are many good reasons why:

✓ Credit unions are focussed on serving their members rather than maximising profits. They can offer smaller and affordable short term loans that many banks do not – and for which other specialist lenders charge very high interest rates.

✓ You can borrow as little as £100 from a credit union or up to £10,000 depending on your financial circumstances and repayment terms are always flexible.

✓ Credit union loans have no hidden charges and no penalties for repaying the loan early which usually makes them cheaper than loans from other lenders.

✓ The maximum any credit union will ever charge for a smaller loan is 3% per month on the reducing balance, which works out at 42.6% APR. This means the most expensive credit union loan in Britain is still eight times cheaper than a payday loan charged at their capped rate.

✓ Credit unions are able to be more flexible than other lenders in helping you through periods of financial difficulty and can often offer free [money management advice and budgeting](#) if needed.

✓ A Government-commissioned study in 2013 found that credit unions consistently offer the best value to consumers on loans up to £2,000

When you borrow from Harlowsave you can make your repayments in

several ways:

- straight from your wages by payroll deduction;
- from your bank account by standing order;
- through retail payment networks such as PayPoint and [Payacreditunion](#); or
- by cash at the local credit union office

Credit union loans have no hidden charges and no penalties for repaying the loan early which usually makes them cheaper than loans from other lenders.

How safe is your money?

Harlowsave is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority and the Prudential Regulation Authority, just like a bank or building society.

There's no need to worry about the money you save in a credit union, as all deposits are protected by the Financial Services Compensation Scheme up to the value of £75,000 per person – exactly the same level of protection as savings in a bank or building society.

How do you apply for a loan?

To apply for a loan you will need to become a member. As a general rule we encourage new members to save for a minimum of 8 weeks (starting from as little as £2.50 a week) before applying for a loan, but this is not a hard and fast rule.

Existing members can download the [loan application form](#) from this site or pick up a copy of the Loan Application form from the

office.

View our [loans page](#) for more information on available options.

What if you have a bad credit history?

We always carry out credit checks on our loan applications, but even if you have a bad credit history, you may still be eligible for one of our loans. Please contact the office for more information on 01279 451234 or using the [contact form](#) on our website.

How much dividend can you earn on your savings?

Credit unions aim to pay a dividend on savings once a year to all members, based on the amount of profit made each year. Harlowsave has paid a dividend of 0.5% to all adult members and 1.0% to junior savers for the last 2 years.

Does Harlowsave offer other financial services?

SMARTAdvice

Available free to people who live in Harlow, SMARTAdvice is a friendly expert money advice service for when your finances get a little bit complicated. [Click here](#) to find out more.

Change Account Card

Harlowsave is now offering members the option of applying for a Change Account card, a new form of transactional account.

As well as being a prepaid debit card, the Change Account card

provides full current account services including current account number, banking sort code, direct debits, standing orders, faster payments and a MasterCard debit card. It also pays you retailer cashback rewards of up to 15% from participating high street stores.

To help you budget and make sure all your bills are paid on time without you having to think about it, we can help you set up all your direct debit payments on the card.

[Click here](#) to find out more

Coop Electrical

We can offer great deals to members looking to purchase white or electrical goods through our relationship with Co-op Electrical. Just tell us exactly what you need and we will get you a better deal than Coop's online prices and set up the finance through Harlowsave for you (Terms and conditions apply).

[Click here](#) to find out more

CU Loans Local and Member Discounts

We have links with a number of local independent retailers who want to offer the best possible deal to our members.

Every Harlowsave member is eligible for one of our Member Discount cards which gives you a 10% discount on purchases with [participating local retailers](#).

We have also teamed up with a number of local retailers to offer loan finance on purchases. [Click here](#) to find out more.

Free Life Insurance on Savings

All adult members automatically qualify for free life insurance on their savings balances.

Savings deposits accumulated between the ages of 16 and 64 qualify for payment of an additional 100% of the savings balance on death. Any additional savings accumulated between the ages 65 and 79 will qualify for payment of 25% of that savings balance on death (subject to terms and conditions).

Where are we located?

Our office is located right in the centre of Harlow Town Centre

First floor (lift available)
The Central Library,
Cross St
Harlow
CM20 1HA

[Find us on google maps](#)

Our opening hours for you to pop into the office:

Monday 12am – 2pm

Tuesday 10am – 2pm

Wednesday Closed

Thursday 10am – 2pm

Friday 10am – 2pm

To contact us outside of office hours:

[Online enquiry form](#)

Phone: 01279 451234.

Your enquiry will be dealt with within 24 hours except at weekends.