

Happy New Year!

Winter 2022/23

It's time to break the silence on illegal lending

Partner organisations across the country have shared their support for the England Illegal Money Lending Team's latest campaign, **#LetsTalkLoanSharks**, which aims to shed light on loan sharks and how they operate, as well as offer support to those affected by their unscrupulous activities.

The campaign included positive messaging about getting help with a loan shark situation and offers support to those who have been affected by illegal money lending.

The tactics utilised by illegal lenders are very manipulative and they exert their influence over victims by playing on their emotions.

Loan sharks may appear as friendly or helpful people in an informal setting such as at the school gate or local pub. They may offer to lend a very small sum of money only to demand much more back later. It can often be difficult for victims to report the crime because they fear they will be accused of committing a crime themselves or are worried about reprisals from the perpetrator.

A **report** published by the Centre for Social Justice estimates that more than a million people could already be in debt to an illegal lender in England. This figure has more than trebled since 2010.

For many victims, the stigma associated with this crime prevents them from speaking out about what has happened, resulting in many people being unaware of the dangers or where to turn for help.

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**WHAT HAPPENS
IF YOU DON'T
PAY THE LENDER
ON TIME?**

#LetsTalkLoanSharks



Loan sharks utilise unlawful and unethical tactics to coerce people into borrowing money at extortionate interest rates. Many harass, threaten and even physically assault their victims into paying back far more than they could ever have imagined.

Growing numbers of people could turn to predatory loan sharks out of desperation as the cost of living crisis deepens. Now is the time to fight back against these ruthless criminals who are destroying the lives of millions of people.

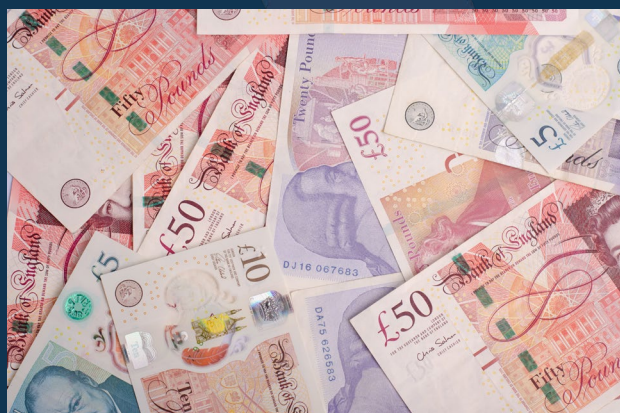
Help us end the misery caused by loan sharks by spreading the word and supporting our **campaign**.

Barnet woman ordered to repay ill-gotten gains

A Barnet woman who raked in thousands of pounds from running an illegal money lending operation has been ordered to repay her ill-gotten gains.

Irene Murunge, 52, from Hendon, was sentenced to 18 months in prison, suspended for two years at Harrow Crown Court in November 2021, and ordered to carry out 200 hours of unpaid work.

Murunge recently appeared back before the court for a Proceeds of Crime Act hearing where she was ordered to pay back £22,540.00



Cheshire mum speaks out after she was driven to brink of suicide by a ruthless loan shark

A Cheshire mum has opened up about her horrific ordeal after falling into thousands of pounds worth of debt with a merciless loan shark.

Fearing for the lives of her and her family, she ended up paying the illegal lender back £26,000 - despite having borrowed just £2,500 over multiple loans.

She is still terrified of the criminals who threatened her family, so her identity has been protected.

"Kelly" has decided to share her story to raise awareness of the dangers of loan sharks and help others avoid the heartache and misery she endured.

Kelly felt isolated from her friends and feared repercussions on her family if she did not pay back the loan shark. She frequently thought about taking her own life as a way to escape from the debt.

She said: "I was quite withdrawn. No one knew what I was going through. The only way I could see myself getting out of that mess was to ring social services and get my kids put into care and then take my own life."

Kelly's world was turned upside down when she was introduced to the loan shark through a friend. The loan shark offered to lend Kelly £100. She was desperate for help and needed money to feed and clothe her growing children.

When the £100 loan arrived instantly in Kelly's bank account, she thought it was too good to be true. The loan was not formalised in any way, and she had no paperwork outlining the terms of the agreement.

When the woman named "Shirley" offered to help with a loan, it seemed like the answer to all of Kelly's problems – but she soon realised it came at a high cost. The lender became abusive, controlling and demanded huge sums of money from Kelly.

Kelly was shocked when Shirley demanded a £325 repayment on the loan which she couldn't afford to repay. But when interest began to mount, it all went wrong. With unmanageable repayments, the debt quickly spiralled out of control.



When Kelly accepted the loan of £100 from Shirley, she didn't imagine what it could end up costing her or that it would plunge her family into unmanageable debt. She was trapped, afraid, full of regret, and was forced to take out more loans to repay the existing debt.

Kelly was struggling to make ends meet and had no other option but to rely on free school meal vouchers to feed her four children. The loan shark demanded more and more money, making their lives a misery.

About £900 of Kelly's monthly salary of £1,048 was going straight to the loan shark, but the debt continued to grow and the financial pressure took its toll on Kelly's health and mental wellbeing.

Her best friend knew something was wrong when she realised Kelly was acting differently and trying to hide money problems from her. Kelly had been forced to pay every penny of her wages to the loan shark, meaning she had no money left over to cover rent or bills.

Her friend knew that something had to be done, so she helped Kelly tell her housing officer about the loan shark and got her the support she needed. Kelly had fallen victim to a crime and was referred to [Stop Loan Sharks](#) for specialist support.

The team stepped in to stop the harassment and helped Kelly and her family get their lives back.

Watch Kelly's Story on [YouTube](#)

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Cracking down on loan sharks in Stockport

A crackdown on illegal money lending has been ramping up in Greater Manchester.

The joint operation was led by the IMLT with assistance from Greater Manchester Police. It aimed to identify and protect victims of this exploitation and to target and prosecute offenders.

A man and woman were arrested on suspicion of illegal money lending and money laundering offences after the team executed an early morning warrant at an address in Stockport.

Specialist officers from the IMLT recovered a large quantity of documentation and electronic devices during a search of the property.

The number of people in debt to loan sharks is on the rise, with tough economic conditions and rising living costs putting more financial strain on families.

Recent statistics from the IMLT reveal that over half of victims (52%) who had borrowed from loan sharks in 2022 had done so to pay for everyday basics such as food and fuel. This crime can cause significant social and economic problems for individuals and communities.

Neighbourhood policing teams play a vital role in helping us identify and disrupt illegal money lending activity in local communities.



Pictured: IMLT Head Tony Quigley

The only way we can put an end to illegal money lending is with your help. Your support means we can reach more people who are at risk, put loan sharks out of business and help victims rebuild their lives. **Contact us** about free awareness training.

1.2 mil turn to loan sharks in last 12 months

Soaring energy, food and fuel prices have forced 1.2 million UK adults (2%) to turn to unscrupulous loan sharks in the last 12 months, new research from the **Vulnerability Registration Service** has revealed.

The research also revealed that this picture is twice as bad for the most vulnerable in society, with 630,000 vulnerable people (4%) having used loan sharks in the last year.

Loan sharks are exploitive and dangerous. They lure victims in with false promises and a seemingly safe place to turn for help, but quickly trap people into a cycle of debt and poverty.



You can help us fight back against this predatory crime and keep communities safe.

Want to work with us? Get in touch: Email us  0300 555 2222 

**Arrests
August – December 2022**



Households urged to seek out vital tools to combat cost of living crisis

UK residents are being advised to make the most of three key sources of support which are available - Credit Unions, other community lenders such as community banks and CDFIs, and free benefits calculators.

As many as 1.08 million people may already be in the hands of illegal lenders, and a fifth of UK adults had less than £100 in savings even before the current financial crisis, with recent data from **Fair4All Finance** having shown that over 16 million people in the UK are particularly vulnerable to these practices, or are in financially vulnerable circumstances.

Credit Unions and other community finance providers currently help thousands of people in the UK to get credit to cover essential or unexpected expenses. They also support members to put what money they can aside as savings, even whilst borrowing.

An alternative to high street banks, for many years local **Credit Unions** have assisted households in a range of financial circumstances to afford essential items or cover unexpected expenses, as well as helping them to build their financial resilience.



Fair4All is also urging the public to make sure they are claiming the correct benefits to help with the cost-of-living crisis by using online benefits calculators such as those **recommended by the Government**.

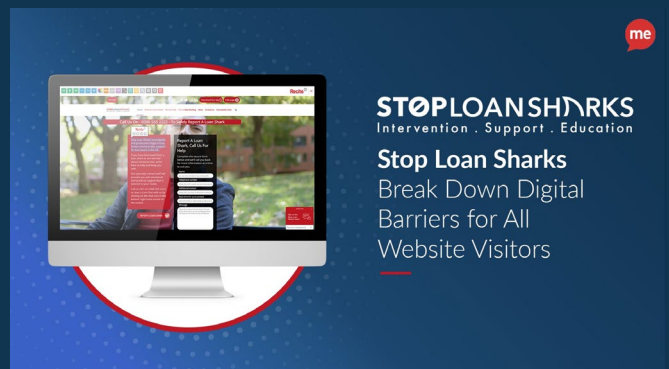
Credit unions and community finance providers have decades of experience in supporting households to save and borrow. They are experts in lending responsibly, whether that's to people who are well off or to those in vulnerable circumstances. They are a key sector as we go through a distressing cost-of-living crisis. Lenders such as these, and the benefits calculators available online, could be vital resources as local people try to navigate this difficult time.

Improving accessibility for website visitors

The IMLT has launched an innovative suite of accessibility on-demand tools to make the Stop Loan Sharks website more inclusive for a diverse range of people online.

The Recite Me assistive toolbar on the **website** includes screen reading functionality, multiple reading aids, customisable styling options and an on-demand live translation feature that boasts over 100 languages including 65 texts to speech and styling options.

The new software will support those with disabilities, learning difficulties, visual impairments, and people who speak other languages.



You can try out the Recite Me accessibility toolbar by clicking on the 'Accessibility Tools' button on the main menu of the Stop Loan Sharks **website**.

Working together to support vulnerable clients

The IMLT has teamed up with free debt advice provider **PayPlan** to deliver a bespoke new training package for debt advisers.

The training programme is the first of its kind and aims to deepen understanding of the risk factors, symptoms and signs that can indicate if someone is being exploited by a loan shark.

Illegal money lending can be a highly emotive and sensitive area of work. The ability to ask the right questions and respond sensitively and effectively is vital in unearthing such cases. Debt advisers are well placed to identify, support and protect victims of loan sharking.

Our specialist training is designed to help you gain an understanding of illegal lending, enabling you to better support vulnerable clients who are at risk of or having problems with these types of lenders. The new training is tailored to debt advice providers, and is recommended even if you have had IMLT training before.



Loan sharks present a significant threat to the safety, security and well-being of many individuals in your community. They use deceptive tactics that can isolate people from friends, family and support services. You can put an end to the suffering these criminals inflict on borrowers. We'll teach you about their tactics and techniques, so you'll know how to spot and stop them. **Contact us** today arrange bespoke training for your organisation.

Protecting Deaf community from loan sharks

A theatre group in Merseyside are fighting back against loan sharks who are targeting the Deaf community.

An illegal lender who confiscates a borrower's guide dog to demand repayment on a loan is the focus of a new film that aims to highlight the misery caused by exploitative lenders.

Merseyside Society for Deaf People (MSDP) teamed up with Merseysign Theatre Group to release a **powerful new film** in British Sign Language (BSL), aimed at tackling the issue of loan sharks and driving out crime from the Deaf community.

The film is designed to spread awareness about the dangers of illegal money lending and provides information about loan sharks, including their unscrupulous practices and how Deaf people can access support if they are affected.

The film, entitled 'In the Hands of a Shark' shows the terrifying reality of dealing with loan sharks, and what can happen when involved with these criminals.



MSDP were awarded proceeds of crime funding from the IMLT to deliver a series of information sessions to help Deaf people understand what a loan shark is and how they operate, as well as advising on how to avoid falling into a predatory debt trap with unregulated lenders.

The IMLT can provide a British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter for deaf people who are affected by illegal money lending.

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Students put their finance knowledge to the test

Students from five secondary schools in York took part in the final of a competitive Inter-Schools Finance Challenge Quiz at The Mansion House.

All Saints Roman Catholic, Archbishop Holgate's, Fulford, Huntington and Joseph Rowntree schools were among the five teams that made it through to the final of the interactive quiz.

The IMLT teamed up with **Community First Community Bank** to deliver this informative event for young people in the city.

Year 10 and 11 students were put through their paces in a variety of complex finance related questions to complete for Community First's Inter-Schools Challenge Cup 2022.

The quiz included four rounds and a total of 35 questions. The topics covered included budgeting, saving, debt, loan sharks, the meaning of terms like APR and online safety.



The quiz was intended to help students understand the dangers associated with using loan sharks, improve their financial knowledge, and increase awareness on how to protect themselves against scams and illegal lenders online.

The Lord Mayor of York, Councillor David Carr (pictured above) presented the prestigious Community First Inter-Schools Challenge Cup to the winning team from Huntington School as he commended all students and their teachers for getting involved. Read the full story [here](#).

Just Credit Union first to scoop national award

Just Credit Union in Shropshire is the first Credit Union in the country to win a prestigious award for its work raising awareness of the dangers of loan sharks.

The Shropshire based credit union has been awarded **Partner Plus** status as a recognition for its continued commitment to tackling loan sharks in the county and delivering safe, responsible and sustainable financial products for its members.

The **Stop Loan Sharks Partner Recognition scheme** celebrates the outstanding work of organisations that are helping to combat illegal money lending and make their communities safer.

The upgrade to Partner Plus level will allow the credit union to continue its fight against loan sharks through awareness campaigns and financial education programmes in schools.

The credit union has been running sessions in schools across Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin to educate children on the dangers of loan sharks, how to borrow money safely and how to protect themselves and their families against unscrupulous lenders.

The IMLT is pleased to announce that another sixteen organisations have been awarded Stop Loan Sharks Partner Recognition. These organisations have been working tirelessly in their communities to help protect vulnerable people from loan sharks and spread the word about the dangers these criminals pose. You can view the list of recognised partners [here](#).

Below: Sid the Shark presents Partner Plus award to Mark Perez, Chair of Just Credit Union, at Wrockwardine Wood Junior School in Telford.



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Supporting people with learning disabilities

The IMLT has teamed up with Citizens Advice Plymouth to produce an easy-read booklet containing accessible information and pictures about the dangers of loan sharks.

This booklet is aimed at people with a learning disability and their families and carers, as well as professionals who work with vulnerable people.

It is designed to help people with a learning disability identify a loan shark, understand the warning signs, and know what to do if they think they have been approached by an unscrupulous lender. The booklet also provides information about other sources of help and support, such as Citizens Advice.

The booklet has been distributed to libraries, health and social care providers, community organisations and other local partners, and links have been shared across social media channels enabling it to reach a wider audience.



The booklet has been well-received by the local community, with Citizens Advice Plymouth receiving positive feedback from people including the Lord Mayor of Plymouth, Councillor Sue Dann (pictured above) who had read the booklet and found it helpful. You can request a free copy of the easy-read booklet by emailing us at partner@stoploansharks.gov.uk.

Communities urged to #SleighNoToLoanSharks

Figures released by the England Illegal Money Lending Team (IMLT) show that nearly one in ten people had borrowed money from loan sharks to cover the cost of Christmas in recent years.

In response to this worrying trend, the IMLT launched its latest campaign #SleighNoToLoanSharks which warned the public about the dangers of borrowing from illegal money lenders and provided advice on where to get help.

More than half of the victims (52%) supported by the IMLT in the first half of 2022 had borrowed from a loan shark to pay for essentials such as food and fuel.

Borrowers can find themselves in a worse situation than they were before they borrowed, and even turn to crime to repay the loan.

This crime can have a devastating impact on communities and lead to people feeling unsafe in their own homes, neighbourhoods, and workplaces.



#SleighNoToLoanSharks

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We are incredibly grateful to all our partners that have supported Stop Loan Sharks campaigns. By working together we can end the harm caused by loan sharks and help more people in need.

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Shark mascots doing the rounds



Sid the Shark visits Bidston Village C.E Primary School in Wirral



Sid the Shark spotted in Milton Keynes for Money Saving Masterclass



Glenda the Lenda joins SOFEA for a community event in Oxfordshire



Sid the Shark joins Disability Action Haringey for Carers First event in Woodgreen



Sid the Shark joins partners for a week of action in Sunderland



Sid the Shark spotted with The Jolly Fisherman and Skegness Mayor Councillor Tony Tye

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Latest News Coverage

'I was suicidal': Loan sharks pose as friends to trap victims in cost of living crisis



Suspected loan sharks arrested in Middlesbrough
21st November 2022

Doncaster
Free Press

Suspected loan shark is held after
Doncaster money lending sting

Suspected loan shark arrested in Doncaster
2nd December 2022

Express & Star

Man, 74, arrested on suspicion of illegal
money lending and money laundering in
Stafford

Suspected loan shark arrested in Stafford
24th November 2022

BBC
NEWS

'A £100 loan turned into nearly
£1,000 a month'

BBC News: Kelly's Story
24th November 2022

Manchester
Evening News

'This is embarrassing' - Suspected loan shark dragged
away in police raid as stunned neighbours watch on



Suspected loan sharks arrested in Stockport
28th September 2022

4 News

Loan sharks exploiting cost of living crisis to
target struggling families, investigators say

Channel 4 News Exclusive: Loan Sharks
11th October 2022

MailOnline

Man, 59, and woman, 42, found with
wads of cash and mobile phones as
police crackdown on 'loan sharks'
preying on victims of cost-of-living
crisis



Suspected loan sharks arrested in Essex
14th July 2022

Wales team launch new website and rebrand

The Wales Illegal Money Lending Unit (WIMLU) has unveiled a new brand identity and logo, having undergone a complete brand refresh to become Stop Loan Sharks Wales.

The team has commissioned in-depth research to uncover the extent of illegal money lending in Wales. This is the first time Wales-specific research on illegal money lending has been undertaken and will provide vital information to help Stop Loan Sharks Wales tackle the issue in communities. The results of the research will be published in early 2023.

The research is part of their new campaign 'Sound familiar?' (pictured right).

The media campaign has involved targeted adverts and messages right at the heart of communities highlighting the dangers associated with illegal money lending. The adverts help people recognise if they are in a dangerous situation with a loan shark and encourages calls to the 24/7 helpline.

A social media digital toolkit has also been designed to give stakeholders the tools and resources to engage with and support the campaign.

**JUST TWENTY
FOR THE
ELECTRIC...**

**SOUND
FAMILIAR?**



The toolkit includes a series of video content, infographics, online banners and social media templates.

If you are worried about a loan shark, or you are concerned about someone you know in Wales, please contact Stop Loan Sharks Wales for safe, confidential advice and support. Call 0300 123 3311 or visit the new website at stoploansharkswales.co.uk.

Scotland Update

Suspected illegal money lenders arrested as part of crackdown in Midlothian

Officers from the Scottish Illegal Money Lending Unit (SIMLU), with the assistance of partner agencies, searched the premises of suspected illegal money lenders in Gorebridge, Midlothian.

The operation resulted in a 56-year-old male and a 55-year-old female being arrested in relation to illegal money lending. A report will be submitted to the Procurator Fiscal in relation to this matter.

Fiona Richardson, Chief Officer of Trading Standards Scotland, said: "Illegal money lenders exploit the most vulnerable in our communities.

"Working with our partners throughout Scotland we are committed to taking action against anyone who operates such practices.

"With the cost of living increasing for people across the country, it is more important than ever that we take action against individuals involved in illegal money lending in our communities across Scotland

If you or someone you know has been affected by illegal money lending in Scotland, please contact the 24/7 helpline on 0800 074 0878 or visit www.stopillegallending.co.uk.