



Illegal Money Lending Team

The Illegal Money Lending Team is a criminal investigation team based in Birmingham and covering England. We are a standalone Trading Standards unit who identify, investigate and prosecute illegal money lenders or loan sharks. The team includes seconded police, accredited financial investigators, victim support, an intelligence cell and phone forensic experts, and use local authority prosecutors rather than the CPS.

What is a loan shark?

Illegal lenders prey on some of the most vulnerable people in our communities, often charging exorbitant rates of interest. They often leave people trapped in a spiral of debt then resort to the most extreme methods to enforce repayments. Most illegal lenders start by being friendly and are often heard of by word of mouth, but change when payments are missed.

Loan sharks:

- Are running an unauthorised business under the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000
- Often refuse to tell the borrower how much they still owe, when they will finish repayments.
- Often increase the debt or add additional amounts.
- May take items as security- including passports, bank cards and driving licences.
- May resort to violence, threats and intimidation

What is being done to stop this?

The Illegal Money Lending Team investigates illegal money lending and any related offences- Loan sharks are often involved in other criminality including drugs, counterfeit and stolen goods, and occasionally organised crime. The team prosecute for all offences and have done so for rape, kidnap, firearms, drugs and assault. The longest sentence secured is ten years, so far.

We have secured over 342 prosecutions leading to over 208 years worth of prison sentences, written of £63 million worth of illegal debt and helped over 27,000 victims.

To crack down on illegal lenders, we seek the help of our partner organisations. Through awareness raising in communities, illegal lenders can

be brought to light. We feel it is important that frontline staff have an awareness of illegal lending in order to help their clients.

We can offer you FREE:

- Presentations to staff to raise awareness
- Articles for newsletters and publicity tools, including a shark suit, banners and more.
- Tailored training for staff (lasting 1.5 hours) to provide in depth discussion about intelligence, victim support and crime prevention
- One to one support for any client who is the victim of an illegal lender
- Materials such as questionnaires for door knocking exercise, a pop up banner for temporary display in a reception area, pdfs of posters and postcards for you to print
- Ways of targeting communities to help them stay away from illegal money lenders
- A resource in terms of staffing for awareness raising events for service users

To contact the England Illegal Money Lending Team, call the 24 hour hotline on 0300 555 2222 or email reportaloanshark@stoploansharks.gov.uk.

More information can be found at www.stoploansharks.co.uk