

Interactive film launched to raise awareness of loan shark dangers on social media

An interactive online film which highlights the dangers of loan sharks on social media has been launched by the England Illegal Money Lending Team (IMLT).

The new film called 'SHARK' is being rolled out to secondary schools, colleges and universities in England as part of a drive to educate young people about the risks associated with borrowing from loan sharks on social media.

The film has been funded from cash recovered from loan sharks under the Proceeds of Crime Act (POCA).

SHARK follows Liam's story as he desperately tries to find money to pay back his friend who has taken out a phone contract for him.

After confiding in a separate friend about his financial problems, Liam is introduced to a loan shark on Snapchat who is well-known for lending money to students.

The film puts viewers in the shoes of the main character, allowing them to make choices on his behalf and decide what happens next.



The scenarios presented in the film are designed to highlight the risks faced by young people on social media and the consequences that can occur when borrowing from illegal money lenders. The situations are based on real-life experiences of victims of loan sharks.

Take part in 'SHARK' and find out more at www.perceptiontheatre.com/shark

Officers execute warrant on loan shark operation

Officers from the IMLT and Nottinghamshire Police conducted a warrant at a residential property in the Top Valley area of Nottingham on Tuesday 20 April, following intelligence that illegal money lending was taking place.

A storage device and paperwork were seized from the property during the warrant.

The suspect remains under investigation and enquiries are ongoing.



**Catch up with the latest news from IMLT
www.stoploansharks.co.uk**

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Crewe loan shark ordered to pay back £70,000

A Crewe loan shark has been ordered to pay back thousands of his ill-gotten gains or face more jail time.

Vincent Hamilton, 57, of Badger Avenue, Crewe, was sentenced to 30 months in prison in August 2019 after pleading guilty to illegal money lending, money laundering and selling illegal tobacco products.

At a confiscation hearing on Friday, April 30 at Chester Crown Court, Hamilton was ordered to repay £70,163 under the Proceeds of Crime Act (POCA).

The IMLT and Cheshire East Council trading standards brought the case against Hamilton after officers executed a warrant at his home address in November 2018. During the search, they found illicit cigarettes and tobacco with a retail value of £8,116 and cash totalling £7,580.



A financial investigation into Hamilton's criminal activities revealed that he had been lending money illegally since 2012. During this period, he had built up a network of 31 clients, with debts totalling £38,000 for which he charged 30 per cent interest. He was also trading in illicit tobacco products which he had purchased abroad and which did not carry obligatory government health warnings.

Loan sharks turn to dating sites to target victims

The IMLT has received reports of illegal money lenders preying on people looking for love online.

The criminals are setting up online dating profiles to lure victims into fake romantic relationships and trap them in a dangerous cycle of debt.

One victim was tricked into taking out a loan after telling her new love interest about her financial problems. She initially borrowed £3,000 but her debt soon spiralled out of control. She contacted the IMLT for help when the loan shark demanded £10,000 and sexual favours to pay off her debt.

In other cases, victims have told IMLT they have been blackmailed on social sites used by the LGBTQ community, by loan sharks threatening to download and share private photographs if they fail to pay their debts.

The IMLT has launched a social media campaign to raise awareness of the dangers of illegal lenders on dating sites and help prevent people from becoming victims of illegal money lending.

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SWIPE LEFT ON LOAN SHARKS!

REMEMBER - NEVER GIVE YOUR BANK DETAILS, SEND MONEY TO, OR RECEIVE CASH FROM SOMEONE YOU'VE ONLY MET ONLINE.

CALL OUR
24/7
CONFIDENTIAL
HELPLINE:
0300 555 2222

Scan the QR code to download the Stop Loan Sharks App.

#SharkFree Surfing

Join the campaign and use the hashtag **#SharkFreeSurfing** on social media.

Follow Stop Loan Sharks on social media
Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn.

Need to access specialist support around illegal lenders?

Call 0300 555 2222 or email us

Brent man sentenced for £128,000 loan shark business targeting Burmese community

A Brent man who ran an illegal £128,000 money lending business has been given a suspended sentence.

Kyaw Min, aged 51, of Ainsworth Close was sentenced for running an illegal money lending scheme for seven years, in which he dealt interest-only loans without permission from the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA).

He appeared at Harrow Crown Court on Wednesday, May 5, where he was sentenced to 17 months in prison, suspended for 18 months and ordered to do 200 hours of unpaid work.

He pleaded guilty to illegal money lending and money laundering offences at a previous court hearing.

Simon Mortimer, prosecuting, told the court that K Min had been running the illegal business since April 2011. During this period, he issued 124 loans amounting to £128,935.00 and the total interest repaid was £53,607.

Loans were given at 10% interest on the outstanding capital each month. Victims were forced to pay off the interest on the loan every month until the full amount could be repaid.

The court heard one victim borrowed £12,000 over multiple loans and was forced to pay 10% interest of £1,200 every month on the amount borrowed. This was not reducing the amount he owed which remained at £12,000. He fell behind on interest payments when his balance increased to £19,000. In October 2017, he paid £8,000 assuming his balance would reduce to £11,000 but was told by the illegal lender he still owed £15,500.

The case was prosecuted by the England Illegal Money Lending Team (IMLT) in partnership with Brent and Harrow Trading Standards and the Metropolitan Police.

IMLT officers executed a warrant at K Min's home address in May 2018 and seized documents containing evidence of his crimes.

New video released for Sign Language Week

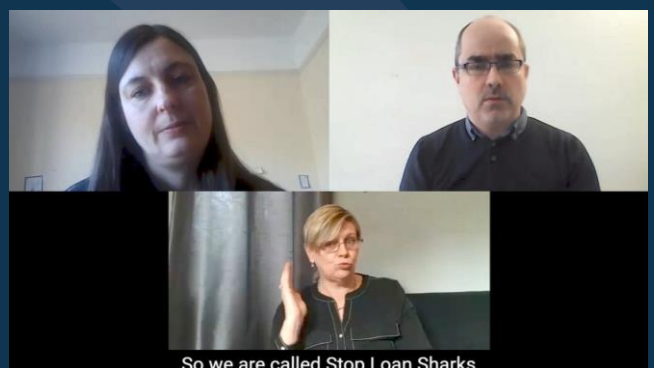
The IMLT has released a new British Sign Language (BSL) video to support the Deaf community in recognising and reporting illegal money lenders.

The video was released in March to mark Sign Language Week – a national campaign run by the British Deaf Association (BDA).

Sign Language Week is celebrated each year in March to coincide with the anniversary of the recognition of Sign Language by the British Government in 2003.

Working with the BDA, the Q&A video explains what a loan shark is, how to recognise the warning signs and includes advice for BSL users on how to report the crime.

The BDA was awarded proceeds of crime funding to deliver a series of zoom sessions about the dangers of loan sharks to various Deaf groups and BSL users.



Members of the Deaf community can contact the IMLT by email or text a report to **078600 22116**. Live Chat is also available on the website between 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday at www.stoploansharks.co.uk.

The IMLT can provide a British Sign Language interpreter for Deaf BSL users who have fallen victim to loan sharks.

Watch the Q&A video with BSL on [YouTube](#)

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Bid for share of loan sharks' confiscated cash

Cash seized from loan sharks is once again up for grabs, in the latest round of funding from the [Stop Loan Sharks Community Fund](#).

Community organisations, charities and groups are being encouraged to apply for grants of up to £5,000 from the England Illegal Money Lending Team (IMLT). Collaborative bids between multiple agencies are also welcome.

In order to qualify, projects must raise awareness of the dangers of loan sharks, reduce crime and disorder and have a positive impact on communities.

Projects previously funded have included graffiti murals, art therapy sessions for vulnerable adults and drama performances in schools highlighting the dangers of dealing with loan sharks.

The IMLT has spent over three-quarters of a million pounds (£774,000) of proceeds of crime money on crime-fighting initiatives over the last three years.



Stop Loan Sharks mural by [Mako Create](#)

The funding comes from money seized from convicted loan sharks under the Proceeds of Crime Act (POCA).

People can find out more about the grants and apply online [here](#). The closing date for applications is Wednesday 30th June 2021.

If you need help completing your application, you can email us at partner@stoploansharks.gov.uk

Graffiti art project raises awareness of loan sharks

A skate park in St Helens has been given a striking makeover to ramp up efforts to tackle loan sharks.

[UC Crew](#) and [Kingsize Graffiti](#) successfully applied for Proceeds of Crime Act (POCA) money from the IMLT to transform the park into a canvas of new graffiti art to highlight the dangers of illegal lenders on social media.

Loan sharks are turning to social media to hook people into a dangerous cycle of debt and charge extortionate interest rates on loans.

The murals installed in Victoria Park include messages about how to avoid and report loan sharks online.

The project, which has been funded from cash recovered from loan sharks, will see more awareness murals installed in St James Haydock and Mesnes Park in Newton-le-Willows over the coming weeks.



Mural warning of loan sharks on social media

Tom Glynn from St Helens based Hip Hop organisation UC Crew, worked with young people from St Helens primary and secondary schools to bring their ideas to life.

Work with us to stop loan sharks operating in communities
Email us  or find out more at www.stoploansharks.co.uk

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PRESS COVERAGE

Loan sharks target new victims via WhatsApp and Facebook

Criminals have been using social media - from dating sites to local community groups - to find, threaten and control people in debt



The Guardian
9 May 2021



BBC East Midlands Today
[Watch the coverage on LinkedIn](#)

WirralGlobe

Suspected loan shark, 52, arrested in Birkenhead

Wirral Globe
29th April 2021

NottinghamshireLive

Police climb through bathroom window in hunt for suspected loan shark in Top Valley

Nottinghamshire Live
20 April 2021

Manchester Evening News

Loan sharks are targeting people on dating sites - one crook demanded £10,000 and sexual favours to clear debt

Manchester Evening News
20th February 2021

HullLive

Arrest made as loan shark suspect's Howden home raided

Hull Live
6 May 2021

CheshireLive

Crewe loan shark was charging desperate clients 30 per cent interest

Cheshire Live
8th May 2021

BirminghamLive

Two held in Castle Vale loan shark raid

Birmingham Live
6 May 2021

St Helens the reporter

Graffiti art project raises awareness of loan sharks in St Helens

St Helens Reporter
9th March 2021

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Loan shark crackdown leads to more arrests

More suspected loan sharks have been arrested across England as part of a major crackdown on illegal money lending.

Arrests have been made in Birmingham, Goole and the Wirral over recent months and the investigations remain ongoing.

The IMLT continues to clamp down on illegal money lenders who prey on the vulnerable and profit from other people's misery.

Keep up with the latest news and find out what is being done to tackle loan sharks in your area at www.stoploansharks.co.uk/news



Together Housing supports national campaign

Together Housing is lending its support to a national campaign aiming to help tackle loan sharks.

The housing association is training staff at all levels to ensure they can identify illegal lenders and signpost victims to support confidentially and safely.

The campaign, which is being led by the IMLT, comes amid concerns more people are falling prey to unscrupulous lenders online.

The aim of the campaign is to give residents a greater understanding of how loan sharks operate and the tell-tale signs to look out for.

The campaign encourages residents and communities to speak up about the activity of illegal money lenders.



A series of videos educating people on the dangers of loan sharks were released on social media during the campaign. [Watch them here.](#)

The IMLT is delivering loan shark awareness training online for frontline staff. [Email us](#) to find out available dates.

Partner Recognition Scheme Winners Announced

Organisations across England have been awarded **Partner Recognition** status for their efforts in tackling loan sharks in their communities.

Congratulations to the latest winning organisations: Runcorn Police, Prima Group, Rhubarb Farm, Just Credit Union, Cheshire East Trading Standards, East Sussex Credit Union, Together Housing Group, Citizens Advice Staffordshire North and Stoke-on-Trent, Wirral Citizens Advice, North Warwickshire Borough Council, Havant Citizens Advice, Test Valley Borough Council, Citizens Advice Telford and the Wrekin, Citizens Advice Barnet, Bernicia Homes and Maidstone Council.



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WIMLU urge Reddit borrowers to come forward

Recent research commissioned by the Wales Illegal Money Lending Unit (WIMLU) reveals that Welsh citizens are using Reddit to look for loans from other users to make ends meet.

The majority of these loans are for relatively small amounts of money and are mostly to cover cash flow problems and everyday living expenses.

The economic effects of the pandemic are likely to be behind much of this online borrowing - the number of people running out of money before the end of the week or month had increased by 60% between March and September 2020.

WIMLU would like to speak to anyone who has taken out a loan this way, whether their experiences were good or bad. They want to make it clear that nobody would be in any trouble for taking out a loan via reddit - they simply want to get a better understanding of the situation.

Any registered Reddit user, provided their account meets basic criteria, can request a loan by simply posting in new thread on the relevant subreddit. This thread can be responded to by any other Reddit user who wishes to provide the loan on the terms requested by the borrower, wherever they are in the world, with the finer details of the transaction are finalised via private messaging.



Although loans from community-based lenders may be seen as providing a quick solution for those in crisis situations, the lenders may not be authorised by the Financial Conduct Authority and could charge huge interest rates. On average, loans from illegal lenders end up costing three times as much as a legal loan.

The Wales Illegal Money Lending Unit can be contacted on 0300 123 33 11.

In Scotland, you can speak in confidence to the Scottish Illegal Money Lending Unit (SIMLU) to report an illegal money lender on 0800 074 0878, or report it online to them at www.tsscot.co.uk.

Are you worried about someone else?

Friends, family, neighbours and community members can be a vital lifeline to those involved with loan sharks. If you are worried that someone you know may be a victim of illegal money lending, reassure them that Stop Loan Sharks and support services are still there to help and direct them to sources of support.

Visit the Stop Loan Sharks website for advice on what to do and how to help if you're worried that someone may be affected by loan sharks.

You can **report the loan shark** anonymously or you can speak to a specialist member of the IMLT in the strictest confidence.

If you have concerns about a client, speak to your local LIAISE officer or [email us](#).



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