

# StopLoanSharks National Newsletter

## Court's Round Up:

### Steve Basstoe- Havering, London

A 41 year old man who operated as a loan shark in Havering was sentenced to 15 month custodial sentence for illegal money lending and 3 years for an associated blackmail offence to run concurrently.

Steve Basstoe of Eastern Road, Romford was convicted following a six day trial at Basildon Crown Court.

The investigation and prosecution was led by the England Team working in partnership with Havering Council Trading Standards and the Metropolitan Police.

Basstoe ran the illegal money lending business between January 2008 and the point of his arrest in February 2011, threatening borrowers and forcing them to pay back far and above what they borrowed and could afford. No paperwork was ever given in respect of the illegal loans.

A typical interest payment would be £150 per month, per £1000 borrowed until the whole amount borrowed could be repaid in one lump sum. If borrowers fell behind on payments, late charges were added at £100 each day, meaning they fell deeper into a spiral of debt. Sometimes this was increased to £500 per day.

The first payment was often taken immediately, so those who borrowed £5000, would actually only receive £4250 but still be expected to pay back the whole £5000.

One victim had his car taken from him 'as security' on the loan, which was then sold on as a loan to a further victim. He asked for the vehicle to be returned as he needed it for work but this was refused. The victim eventually fled London, after Basstoe threatened his elderly grandmother,

Another victim had been forced to take out further loans with Basstoe, and was soon made to believe he owed in excess of £20,000. Basstoe made veiled threats, that the loans had been given by a third party and that there would be severe repercussions for defaulting.

This individual initially took out a £2000 loan as he was struggling financially in the run up to Christmas 2008. When he struggled to pay the monthly interest payments, which went no way to clearing his loan, he was hit with the £500 daily late payment charges.

The court heard how Basstoe kept records of his illegal money lending business on a hand held computer which was discovered by officers from the Metropolitan Police during the search, and passed on to the Team. The records appeared to be incomplete so it was impossible to ascertain the true scale of the illegal business.

A financial investigation under proceeds of crime legislation is ongoing.

Upon sentencing Basstoe, His Honour Judge Owen-Jones said ***"It was clear to him that once the people had borrowed the money they would be under your control and power. Your demands increased simply to supply your greed for more and more money. Your behaviour was totally reprehensible, and loan sharks that resort to blackmail must be deterred. This matter is so serious that it must result in an immediate custodial sentence."***

## Marie and Michelle Bailey- Kings Lynn, Norfolk

Marie Bailey, 43, and Michelle Bailey, 45, both from West Lynn were investigated and prosecuted by the England Team, working in partnership with Norfolk County Council, and sentenced at Norfolk Crown Court in October. Marie was sentenced to an immediate term of imprisonment of eight months whilst her sister in law was sentenced to five months suspended for two years.

Furthermore following a financial investigation, Marie was ordered to pay back £75,000 or face a further of two years imprisonment.

Earlier this year just before they were due to stand trial, the two women pleaded guilty to running the unlicensed money lending business between July 2008 and November 2009, the point when they were arrested.

The total criminal benefit of their illegal business, which was inherited from Michelle's late father was valued at £109,496.

During the search numerous documents believed to be records of the illegal business were uncovered, including at Marie's home a book detailing approximately 67 loan transactions and at Michelle's a book with approximately 30 records. At Marie's home almost £45,000 in cash was seized from various locations along with jewellery valued in

excess of £38,000.

The records showed interest varying between 50% and 100%, meaning some borrowers were paying back double what they had borrowed. Extra charges for late payment meant a figure equivalent to the weekly repayment was added to the balance- although the records show these weren't routinely imposed.

The Judge acknowledged that the true scale of the illegal business was unknown, as there is a possibility that previous records could have been destroyed, the supposed figure due in repayments at the end of December 2009 was almost £137,000.

The financial investigation revealed Marie's assets included the cash uncovered, money in bank accounts, jewellery, and a share of two properties.

Upon sentencing Judge Holt said it was ***“Well known that people, sometimes known as loan sharks, cause psychological and even physical pressure. In this case there was no evidence of coercion, threats or violence however the overall amounts involved show that it was very substantial business”***

He added ***“This sort of crime can result in real hardship, preying on the vulnerable in society.”***

## Shaun West- Osset, West Yorkshire

A 49 year old man from Osset in West Yorkshire who ran an illegal money lending business, offering short term unsecured loans to extended family and friends with high interest added, was sentenced to four months in prison, suspended for 12 months, along with an eight week curfew.

Shaun West of Swithenback Avenue was investigated and prosecuted by the England Team working in partnership with West Yorkshire Trading Standards. At an earlier hearing he pleaded guilty to three counts of illegal money lending.

West was arrested in October last year when officers from the England Team executed a warrant at his home and uncovered a notebook recording the details of his illegal business.

According to his own records, between January and

October 2011, West gave out loans in excess of £6400 with a return of almost £8000 from weekly payments from just six individuals. The records showed extra charges for late payments were also added.

Leeds Crown Court heard how the loans were generally for small amounts with interest added sporadically. Some borrowers ended up paying back double what they had borrowed and no paperwork or agreements were ever signed.

In interview West admitted to officers that he had been running an illegal cash loan business since he started work at 17.

Upon sentencing, Judge Jameson said Sean West had ***“exploited the vulnerable”***.

## Keith White- Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire

A Buckinghamshire loan shark was sentenced to 12 months in prison, suspended for 12 months on a charge of illegal money lending and charge of money laundering to be served concurrently.

Keith White, 57 of Chantry Road, Aylesbury must also complete 250 hours of unpaid work and pay £9,000 in costs to the prosecution, following the hearing at Aylesbury Crown Court.

White was investigated and prosecuted by the England Team, working in partnership with Buckinghamshire County Council. He pleaded guilty to the offences at an earlier hearing.

White did not hold a Consumer Credit Licence and had been lending illegally to work colleagues for almost three years.

He was arrested in July this year, after being reported. The Team executed warrants at his home and workplace, uncovering documentary evidence including two diaries, listing the names of 30 colleagues and the amounts he lent to them.

On behalf of the prosecution Simon Mortimer told the court how White charged £30 interest on top of every £100 borrowed. In interview he admitted to the offences, stating that he was loaning between £3000 and £4000 each month, out of his savings, to colleagues in financial difficulty.

Upon sentencing White, recorded Roscoe said ***“These were extremely serious offences, with by no means insignificant amounts involved”***

## Credit Card Killer- Basil and Amanda Rankine

The England Team led the investigation into Credit Card Killer and Basil and Amanda Rankine, A couple who fraudulently claimed they could clear people's debts.

Basil Rankine, 46 and his wife Amanda, 36 of Somerset Avenue, Rugeley in Staffordshire, set up Credit Card Killer (CCK), a trading name of Momentum Network Limited. According to their website, CCK was “a specialist company that purchases debt directly from consumers and commercial companies”. They claimed to “help thousands of sellers to clear their debts in just two weeks.”

Following a seven week trial, the pair and their company were convicted of a total of 14 offences including fraud after providing misleading and false information on their website, through their agents and in correspondence with clients. Mr Rankine was sentenced to four years imprisonment and Mrs Rankine was given a 12 month suspended sentence plus 200 hours of unpaid work.

Birmingham City Council warned CCK that the service they provided didn't comply with the law. They failed to ever provide a through explanation of what their business involved but gave this description on their website;

“CCK was developed in 2004 as a trading name of Momentum Network Limited. The company was formed by Basil and Amanda Rankine, pioneers of the recently established debt cancellation industry. The Rankines made history by challenging credit agreements with their lenders and successfully cleared in excess of £100,000 worth of debt. Inspired by their success CCK was launched to champion the voice of debtors”.

The company claimed they could buy people's debts from them for the sum of £1, Following which the debt would transfer to CCK and the borrower would no longer be liable for the debt. However this so called debt sale was done without the consent of the lender, and as was highlighted in a High Court case

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by His Honour Judge Simon Brown QC was “legally and factually flawed”.

Once it became apparent, that Basil and Amanda were continuing to operate the business, the Team visited their business premise at Baskerville House, Birmingham City Centre. A large quantity of material, including computers and correspondence between lenders and debtors was seized as evidence.

The Court heard how it became apparent that the business was having a collective impact on consumers, many of whom who had been convinced to sell their debts to CCK after visiting its website or watching a BBC Panorama programme called ‘Can’t Pay Won’t Pay’ in which the Rankines featured.

Each of those who sold their debts paid between £800 and £18,000 in administration and other fees. Customers generally received a letter to confirm that CCK was then liable for the debts, and lenders were also sent a letter from CCK to state that the debts had been bought by them

As debts can’t legally be sold without the consent of the lender, the lenders continued to contact and pursue the borrowers for payment of their debts. As late payment charges added up, borrowers fell deeper into arrears, some had their bank accounts frozen, some had legal action taken against them and others had charging orders registered against their homes.

When they contacted CCK for advice, little help was given to them and requests for refunds were refused. Mr Rankine was said to have become aggressive and intimidating when people questioned why they weren’t allowed refunds.

Many paid for a further service offered by CCK known as ‘Total Protection’. CCK claimed that ‘Total Protection’ would allow their Solicitors to contact

lenders, and prevent them from pursuing borrowers. However those who paid for this so called service were still continually contacted by the lenders.

The borrowers believed that by taking out ‘Total Protection’, their credit history would not be adversely affected. However their credit reports continued to show the late payments even after they had “sold on” their debt. This adverse credit history affected the employment of some as well as their chances of being able to obtain credit in the future.

CCK was at one point a large enterprise, claiming to have had offices in Birmingham and London, employing around 70 agents to encourage people to sell their debts. The agents were trained by the Rankines and given standard responses to give if borrowers questioned why they were still being chased by their lenders.

There were over 2000 clients and the company was thought to be making in excess of £2million through fees and charges.

In July 2009, CCK claimed that they had purchased more than £10million of consumer debt.

Upon sentencing His Honour Judge Tomlinson commended those involved with the case and said ***“The real harm and loss in this case was human, affecting the pride and self respect of many decent victims. The harm done to these people was much greater than financial, they continued to be pursued by lenders and had no idea how stressful this would be.”***

He added ***“There was no secret formula. The business had no legitimacy whatsoever. Even after a high court judge had told them they simply could not do what they had been doing, they continued.”***

## Derrick Morgan - Proceeds of Crime



Derrick Morgan

A convicted loan shark who preyed on vulnerable adults in the Neath, Port Talbot area of South Wales has been ordered to pay back £100,000 following an investigation by the Wales Unit.

During a hearing held at Newport Crown Court under the Proceeds of Crime Act (POCA), Derrick Morgan was told by the trial judge he has to pay back the full amount within six months or he will be imprisoned for a further two years.

Morgan has already served a 12 month custodial sentence after he was convicted of illegal money lending and benefits fraud during a hearing at Swansea Crown Court on August 11, 2011.

For several years, Morgan operated as a private landlord in the Neath, Port Talbot area where he specifically targeted vulnerable adults in the community.

When a new tenant moved into one of his properties he would initially offer to lend them the bond on the agreement that they would pay it back in instalments on top of the rent. The tenants would agree to this and make the extra payments but the debt never cleared; in part because of the extortionate and undisclosed interest charges he added to the initial sum.

With the most vulnerable tenants, Morgan took control of their finances by getting them to sign a power of attorney. He would also get his tenants to sign blank sheets of paper, which he would use to make false benefit claims on, pretending to be on their behalf, and have the money paid into accounts held or controlled by him.

## Stephen Chapman - Croydon, London

A 47 year old man who operated as a loan shark in Croydon, was sentenced to eight months in prison.

Stephen Chapman of Gorse Road, pleaded guilty to charges of eight charges of illegal money lending at Croydon Crown Court. He was investigated and prosecuted by the England Team working in partnership with Croydon Council Trading Standards.

In April 2012 officers executed a warrant at Chapman's home and he was arrested and charged. During the search £1,500 in cash was uncovered along with notebooks and other documentation listing names, amounts and interest added. There was also a record of late payment charges. Some of the loan books dated back to January 2005.

Through the illegal business Chapman lent almost £137,000 made up of around 144 loans to at least 86 individuals across nine surrounding boroughs in the

London area. On this he claimed a return in excess of £220,000.

Typical loans were usually for fairly small amounts, although on some occasions loans of up to £5000 were made. Steep interest payments were usually added- Loans included £200 with £300 back, a loan for £150 for which £240 had to be repaid within a period of just five months, and £2000 back on a £1000 loan. Although borrowers were sometimes given paperwork at the beginning, they weren't always given this and soon lost track of how much they were repaying.

Chapman has already served much of his sentence, having been remanded in custody since September for breaching his bail conditions.

A financial investigation under Proceeds of Crime Legislation is ongoing.

## Courts and Enforcement Round Up - England

- A 60 year old man from Rochdale pleaded guilty to illegal money lending just before he was due to stand trial at Manchester Minshull Street Crown Court.

Mohammed Aslam was investigated by the England Team working in partnership with Rochdale Borough Council. He admitted being involved in the illegal business for nearly two years, lending to members of the local Asian community and will be sentenced in January.

Aslam was arrested in October 2011 following a warrant in which cash and documentation was seized. Further enquires into a second suspect are ongoing.

- A 61 year old man from Stanford-le-Hope in Thurrock pleaded guilty to illegal money lending but denied 13 other charges during a hearing at Basildon Crown Court.

The defendant was arrested in July following an investigation by the England Team, working in partnership with Thurrock Council and Essex Police. A trial is due to commence in March 2013.

- A 56 year old man from Weoley Castle in Birmingham is to stand trial at Crown Court in May 2013 in relation to illegal money lending and money laundering offences. The suspected loan shark was arrested in March 2012.
- Two women from Cherry Hinton, Cambridge are to stand trial in June 2013 charged with illegal money lending and money laundering. The suspects aged 46 and 40 were arrested after warrants were executed at their homes in 2012.
- Court proceedings are ongoing for suspected loan sharks in Warrington, Knowsley, Bradford, Runcorn, Burnley, Westminster, Folkestone, Manchester and Cambridge.
- Enquiries are ongoing following recent arrests in Warrington, Liverpool, Birmingham, Wakefield, Cornwall, Warwickshire, Leeds, Cambridge, Devon, Telford, Oldham, Tameside, Manchester and Hull.

## Courts and Enforcement Round Up - Scotland

- A case which involved a female operating as an illegal money lender is progressing on summary proceeding at Airdrie Sheriff Court. The initial pleading diet was on 27th November 2012 but was continued without plea until January.
- On 23rd October 2012 a subject of a investigation by the Scotland Unit was found guilty of an offence under the Misuse of Drugs Act and received a suspended sentence.
- Proceeds of Crime action against convicted

illegal money lender Thomas Reid of Motherwell remain ongoing. Reid was convicted of illegal money lending and fined £750.

- A male in his 40's has been reported to the Procurator Fiscal in Dundee for suspected illegal money lending offences.
- The Unit are currently preparing reports to the Procurator Fiscal concerning illegal money lenders operating in Glasgow, Edinburgh, West Lothian and East Renfrewshire.

## Latest News

### Stop Loan Sharks Awards



The Stop Loan Sharks awards took place for the first time this year, hosted by the England Team to recognise those who have made a valuable

contribution to highlighting the dangers of loan sharks in their communities. Almost 100 worthy submissions were received and eleven regional winners were chosen.

West Middlesbrough Neighbourhood Trust (WMNT) in partnership with Middlesbrough Council were chosen as the overall winners for their work around the innovative 'UChoose' event. For more information on WMNT and all of our worthy winners, see our special edition of the Newsletter:

[Please see Stop Loans Sharks Award Edition of Newsletter](#)

## Your Choice Update

The 'Your Choice' initiative continues to be a success across the country. Events have recently been held in Harlow, Worcester, Peterborough, Brighton and Reading with a wide range of community groups receiving funding to spend on worthwhile projects. An online version of the event was piloted in Birmingham.

In the coming months events will be held in Wiltshire, Worcestershire and Newcastle.



## Taxi Initiate Update

A decline in self employed people turning to loan sharks has shown the initiative aimed at self employed taxi drivers has been a success. Previously 16% of loan shark victims were self employed; this has now fallen to 6%. Events have

recently been held in Stoke, Rochdale, Newcastle and Sefton aimed at encouraging drivers to turn away from loan sharks and towards local credit unions as a safe and legal alternative.

## Computer game project aimed at College and University Students

Student groups at colleges and universities across England are invited to develop a computer game and quiz to raise awareness of the dangers of borrowing from loan sharks.

The Team have developed the initiative and will fund successful projects using proceeds of crime money taken from convicted loan sharks.

The games should be around five minutes long and feature the Team's mascot 'Sid the Shark'. They should be suitable for use on standard computers without the need for specialist equipment, or as a mobile phone download, and should encourage the user to learn about loan sharks in a fun and interactive way.

Furthermore the student groups will also be encouraged to compile a 5 minute interactive quiz on the topic of illegal money lending, aimed at older youths and adults to upload to Facebook and other websites.

Students taking part in the project will be encouraged to attend training sessions with the Team to give them an in depth understanding of the issue of loan sharks, and where they turn to if they or someone they know should fall victim.

Student groups are encouraged to submit a story board of ideas, any technical specifications and rough costs in the first stage of application. If they are through to the second stage the Team will pay the developmental costs before the project is completed in the final stage.

## Big Lottery Funding in Birmingham and Wolverhampton

The England Team were involved in Birmingham and Wolverhampton's bids for the Big Lottery Funding. Improving Financial Confidence Wolverhampton were awarded £568,948 for their Better Off In Wolverhampton campaign which aims to support nearly 3000 social housing tenants and maintain their tenancies through access to advice and information on a range of issues, including the dangers of loan sharks.

In Birmingham, Ashram Housing Association were awarded £999,134 to work with 6,000 young first time tenants to complete a structured self assessment and complete a personal development plan that will include learning about budgeting, benefits, access to affordable credit and how to spot and avoid loan sharks.

## Partnership with Bid Services for the Deaf

The England Team are working in partnership with Bid Services to ensure key messages about avoiding loan sharking and reporting the crime reach vulnerable community members that have a hearing impairment.

Birmingham based charity Bid, have worked with the Team to put together a video which explains through British Sign Language what a loan shark is, why they

should be avoided and where people can turn for help.

The video is to be distributed widely for training purposes and also available to view online.



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Furthermore, should anyone who uses sign language fall prey to a loan shark, the Team have introduced webcam facilities to set up a meeting whereby they can discuss their experiences in confidence, via a translator from Bid.

Jo-Ann Moyles, BID Services Operations Director said: ***“As a provider of services to vulnerable***

***people with a hearing impairment, BID Services is fully behind this important work. We are committed to helping our clients improve the quality of their lives and to live more independently. Through this programme, we can provide our clients with the knowledge and information they need to avoid being targeted and keep safe.”***

## Welsh Stop Loan Shark Champions Award



The Wales Unit were proud to recognise both The Flintshire Youth Forum and The North Wales Financial Inclusion Partnership for their assistance in combating loan sharks within their communities. In order to celebrate and support their future work, both organisations were awarded a cheque for £1000. Welsh Assembly Member Sandy Mewes awarded the cheques at an award lunch held at the Northop Hall Hotel in Flintshire in November

**The Flintshire Youth Forum (FYF)** is a group of young people in NE Wales who represent the voice of young people at a local and national level. They meet with decision makers including those in National Government and the Local Council to discuss issues which impact on the lives of young people, and to bring about change. Thanks to them the Wales Unit now has access to a fund created specifically to offer short term emergency financial support to the victims of loan sharks.

The idea came about at a financial capability conference hosted by Citizens Advice. As a part of the event the FYF performed a short drama about the dangers of loan sharks and were later offered £200 as a thank you. They declined the offer suggesting that the money should instead go towards supporting the victims of loan sharks.

The Loan Shark Victim Support Fund was later formally established and attracted donations totalling nearly £2,500 before the management of it was transferred from Wales & West Housing to Cardiff Trading Standards early in 2012.

The FYF has also turned their original drama production about the dangers of loan sharks referred to above into a short film which can be viewed at TAPE TV's website [www.tapetv.tv](http://www.tapetv.tv)

Sandy Mewes AM, in support of their nomination for the award wrote “Loan sharks often leave their victims frightened and penniless. By providing money to the Wales Unit this unique fund has enabled them to support the victims of loan sharks in really practical ways such as providing food vouchers and getting essential services reinstalled..... Such gestures leave one looking for superlatives but on behalf of all the victims of loan sharks in Wales I would just like to say a big ‘THANK YOU’.

The North Wales Financial Inclusion Partnership (NWFIP) includes representatives from all of the Housing Associations in North Wales, namely:

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- Cartefi Conwy
- Clwyd Alyn Housing Association
- Cymdeithas Cymunedol Gwynedd
- Cymdeithas Tai Clwyd
- Cymdeithas Tai Eryri
- North Wales Housing Association
- Wales & West Housing

Members of the NWFIP have worked closely together over a number of years to tackle the challenges of financial exclusion faced by the majority of their residents. One of the principal elements is access to affordable credit. There has long been a generational acceptance of high cost home credit but this is now being superseded by a much more socially unacceptable type of lending in the form of loan sharks. Whenever NWFIP come across examples they pass information to the Wales Unit.

A DVD was created “My Home...Making Every Penny Count” in collaboration with TAPE Community Music and Film; the Wales Co-operative Centre’s Financial Inclusion Champion; the Flintshire Youth Forum and local residents.

The NWFIP launched the ‘My Home’ initiative as a way of highlighting the dangers of loan sharks before residents fall prey to their practices. Initially produced in the form of a booklet and supporting leaflet, it quickly moved on to a more visual DVD format as a way of getting the message across. The DVD was designed by existing residents of the

partnership (with the invaluable help of the FYF) to help new tenants manage their money and ‘bite back’ at loan sharks. The overall theme of the DVD was decided and shaped by these volunteers and contrasts the fortunes of two families – one of them gets it right and stays in credit by following the guidance within the ‘My Home’ booklet. The other family gets into difficulty when they ignore the advice and fall prey to a loan shark. 12 volunteers (whose ages ranged from 18 to 80 years) were directly involved in the design of this project and took part in every stage of its development including:

- Coming together as a collective at the outset to decide upon the key objectives for the project and ideas as to how these might be achieved (i.e. how we could best portray key messages through film)
- Planning
- Storyboarding
- Pre-production (i.e. determining locations/actors/scripts/camera skills etc)
- Acting in the leading roles
- Filming
- Editing
- Producing a soundtrack
- Authoring the DVD.

Since its launch in May 2011, a copy of the DVD has been offered to every new Housing Association resident in North Wales, with many other organisations across Wales using it as inspiration to develop their own initiatives.

The DVD can be viewed at [www.tapetv.tv](http://www.tapetv.tv).

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## Scottish Illegal Money Lending Unit and Adults at Risk of Harm

In November the Scottish Business Crime Centre hosted a conference entitled “Vulnerable Adults at Risk of Financial Harm”. A presentation was given by the Scottish Unit on illegal money lending and vulnerable adults.

Illegal money lenders tend to lend to people who are highly likely to repay them with the minimum amount of effort. They do not want to have to resort to

violence, which can attract too much attention to them, or to having to pursue people for the debt. They will lend to those who are likely to make payments on time and without prompting and these people will tend to be vulnerable for one reason or another.

In Scotland, victims of illegal lenders often have other issues such as alcoholism, drug dependency,

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mental health issues and gambling addictions.

With many lenders their interest is not in getting someone to pay off their debt but insuring a regular income from them. They will target those who are vulnerable and offer them top up loans or simply make up spurious charges to extend their relationship.

Lending to vulnerable people minimises the risk of being reported to the authorities.

People who are on Disability Living Allowance are more attractive clients for illegal lenders because of their higher income than those on other benefits.

The relationship between an illegal lender and a victim can often be compared to an abusive relationship. The victim sees the lender as their friend as they are the one person who will give them cash for whatever it is that they see as a necessity. They do not recognise that they are being

manipulated and taken advantage of. They will live in fear of the lender but at the same time become more and more dependent on them. Victims of illegal money lenders will pay back far in excess of what they borrowed or even what they agreed to pay back often because they wish to maintain the relationship so that they can access more cash.

Lenders will often insist that victims provide them with their bank or post office card and PIN giving them direct access to the victim's income. The victim is then placed in a position where they have to ask for money and become totally reliant on the lender.

An illegal lender will often lend money regardless of the borrower's ability to repay. For those with a lack of understanding about budgeting this can have disastrous consequences. The ease of access to cash and the speed with which they receive it can make a loan from such a lender seem very attractive and the easy answer to an immediate problem. Their ability to understand the long term damage can be very limited and the lender will certainly not explain that at the outset.

## Case study- Scotland

A couple fled from their home due to the issues they were having with two separate illegal money lenders. The female suffered from a degenerative muscle wasting condition and both had learning difficulties and low levels of literacy. Initially they borrowed £10 from one of the lenders on the understanding that they would have to pay back £13 the next week. They managed to do this but then started to borrow other, larger sums and found themselves in a situation where they were borrowing from another lender to pay off the first. Despite having a joint benefit income of around

£300 per week they found that they were left with less than £20 when they had paid what they needed to the lenders. Both lenders harassed and threatened the couple which is why they decided to flee their home. Whilst they were in the process of moving one of the lenders turned up and physically assaulted the male. They then received threatening text messages from the other lender. By this stage they had been borrowing from both lenders for around 10 years and estimate that they had paid back well in excess of £20,000.

## Round Up: England

- Awareness raising work in schools has continued with a number of schools highlighting the dangers during their Christmas plays. Schools in South Tyneside, Widnes, Sandwell, Staffordshire, Stoke and Worcester took part.
- Following on from the conviction Gerald Daord, a



Pupils at All Saints School in Widnes with Sid the Shark

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loan shark in Birkenhead, the Team held a week of awareness raising events in the Wirral. Throughout the week in August, community members were able to drop in for advice. Training sessions were also held for frontline staff at local agencies.

- In September a series of fun events were held to raise awareness in St Helens including a 'Sharky does Zumba' session, 'Sharky does Roller Disco' and a treasure hunt with Thatto Heath Children's Centre and Jellytots playgroup. Residents were able to drop in to speak to representatives from the Team and other agencies during an advice day, and assemblies on avoiding loan sharks were held in local schools.



Sid hands out beer mats in St Helens.

- A month long campaign was held to raise awareness in Lincolnshire including sessions for frontline agency staff, community drop in sessions, awareness raising in schools and work to target students at Lincolnshire University during fresher's week.



- A week of awareness raising in Harlow, Essex was launched as agencies met to sign a charter agreeing to unite to tackle the issue of illegal money lending. The campaign which was aimed at people aged between



16 and 25 also included a Your Choice event and a football tournament with teams taking part receiving a football branded with the hotline number, and a voucher encouraging them to join the local credit union.

- Community interest theatre group Shontal are continuing to perform 'It's just a few quid', highlighting the dangers of loan sharks as it focuses on one person's journey from victim to survivor. Performances were held in Torbay, Bridgwater and South Tyneside.

- Following the conviction of Stoke on Trent loan shark Giovanni Carusso, residents were encouraged to drop in for advice on a mobile bus located near Fenton Market. The Team also worked with Staffordshire Credit Union to offer a £10 bonus paid for with proceeds of crime money to those who joined up and continued to save.



Rob Ffello MP for Stoke South and Joy Garner Labour candidate for Staffordshire Police & Crime Commissioner at event in Fenton.

- Poole residents were warned of the dangers of loan sharks during a week long 'Bite Back' campaign in October. Representatives from the Team and other agencies hosted a presentation at the Hamworthy Network Event. Banners and posters were displayed throughout the community and the Team worked with Poole's licensing department to ensure information and advice was shared with self employed taxi drivers, senior citizen pass holders and disabled car pass holders.

- The Team are working in partnership with West Leeds Debt Forum, West Yorkshire Trading Standards, West Yorkshire Police and a range of other partners to host the 'Feeling the Pinch' campaign to encourage people to turn away from loan sharks, promote safe and legal alternatives and give advice on a range of money matters. A series of community and agency events will be held over the coming months.

- Through an event organised in partnership with

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Sandwell Primary Care Trust and Sandwell Council Trading Standards and funded with the proceeds of crime money taken from convicted loan sharks the Team were able to provide around 70 community workers and practitioners with the knowledge needed to help people avoid becoming involved with loan sharks.

- A series of events were held in Blackburn in November to engage the community and raise



awareness. Events included a drop in advice day, 'Bingo with Sharky' and a 'Street Clean with Sharky'. The Team also offered advice at Shadworth Youth Clubs, worked with Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service as they offered fire safety advice, and visited more than 500 homes to speak to residents.

- Residents in Hartlepool were able to drop in for advice during events held as part of a campaign week in November. The Team also visited



homes, displayed posters and leaflets throughout the community and worked with schools, launching a competition to design one of three awareness raising murals to be displayed at West View Advice and Resource Centre as a lasting reminder that loan sharks are a danger.

- As part of National Consumer Week in November, representatives from the Team were out and about in Sheerwater, Woking and Surrey visiting homes, shops, churches, mosques, pubs, community groups, libraries and children's centres, offering advice on avoiding loan sharks and distributing posters and leaflets with the hotline number. A similar campaign was also held in Newhaven, East Sussex.
- Warwickshire residents could pick up information and advice on avoiding loan sharks as part of a

series of events held over the past months. Training sessions were held to give frontline staff at North Warwickshire Borough Council an understanding of the dangers of loan sharks, and representatives from the Borough Council and Warwickshire



Co-operative Development Agency were accompanied by the Team's mascot Sid the Shark as they visited primary schools to speak to pupils.

- An awareness raising campaign was launched in Nottinghamshire focused around the Mansfield, Worksop and Ashfield areas, including events for the public and training for agency staff. The Team worked with Gedling Homes, and Nottingham Credit Union using proceeds of crime money to encourage new tenants to join the credit union.

- The Team took part in Hull City Council's Christmas Borrowing Campaign. Through a series of drop in events, residents were encouraged to think about avoiding loan sharks and how best to deal with the financial pressures of Christmas.

- A week of action was held to tackle loan sharks in Brookside, Telford including an awareness raising event at a local shopping centre. The Team worked with Brookside Improvement Group and Telford and Wrekin Council.



- The Team along with Telford and Wrekin Trading Standards and Citizens Advice Bureau took part in a "Know Your Rights Week". Throughout the week displays included information on loan sharks.

- In Enfield the Team worked with a range of

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organisations including Edmonton Firefighters, Enfield Homes and Enfield Council through community events, leaflet drops and door knocking.



- The Team worked alongside several local agencies in Lichfield as part of the 'Lets Work Together' initiative, ensuring frontline staff had an understanding of the dangers of loan sharks, and would be able to support and signpost anyone they met in their daily work who was a victim of the crime.

- The Team raised awareness in Islington with a loan sharks road show, visiting schools, the local market and Islington Town Hall.



- A week of action was held in partnership with local Trading Standards in Southwark London, which included training sessions for a variety of organisations and information on avoiding loan sharks on display throughout the borough in Courts, Libraries and other public locations.
- A week of action was held to tackle loan sharks in Torrington, Devon in partnership with Devon County Council Trading Standards and Tarka and Sanctuary Housing which included door knocking, leaflet drops and a drop in event at Holsworthy Livestock Market.
- A campaign to tackle loan sharks in Colchester, Essex was launched when a number of agencies met to sign a charter pledging to unite to raise awareness. Throughout the week representatives from the Team were out and about visiting homes and hosting coffee mornings to warn residents of the dangers. The Team also hosted sessions for representatives from Colchester Borough Homes enabling them to support and signpost anyone

they meet in their day to day work who has been the victim of a loan shark.



- The Team worked in partnership with Manchester City Council and Mancunian Way, a charity set up to reduce anti-social behaviour, to launch a campaign to raise awareness of the dangers of loan sharks focused around the Newton Heath area of Manchester. During the week the Team visited Briscoe Lane, St Wilfred's, Christ the King and All Saints Primary Schools offering advice on avoiding loan sharks to parents at the gates before and after school. They also held a drop in session for elderly residents at Crown Point Sheltered Scheme and worked with Northwards Housing to host an advice road show at Asda. The event culminated with a Christmas party with local young people

- cooking a full Christmas dinner for older members of the community, helped by the Head Chef of the Hilton, David Gale. The event gave a further opportunity to seek advice on avoiding loan sharks.



- The Team's mascot 'Sid' switched on the Christmas lights in Fenton, Stoke, as part of continued awareness raising work following the prosecution of local loan shark Giovanni Carusso. The lights were partly funded



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with proceeds of crime money taken from convicted loan sharks.

- A series of drop in sessions were held for people to seek advice from the Team, as part of a campaign in East Devon. Plough and Share

Credit Union were on hand at each of the events providing a safe and legal alternative to loan sharks.



## Round Up: Scotland

- CIH (Chartered Institute of Housing) Scotland facilitated 'Hot topics in Housing Management' in November 2012. Staff from the Scottish Unit were involved in a plenary session and presented to the professional body of people involved in housing and communities.
- At a time when there will be more pressure on tenants as a result of the Welfare Reform, the team presented on what social landlords can do to help tenants avoid the clutches of illegal money lenders.



- The Scottish Unit went along to Possilpark Kinship Care Group to provide an awareness raising session and highlighted that borrowing from an illegal money lender is not an offence and the Unit can provide support to identified victims.

Possilpark Kinship Care Group was formed by a few friends who found themselves as the main carers for their grandchildren. They formed the group to provide advice and support to each other and the group now consists of over 30 members.

The session outlined what an illegal lender is and how they should be reported. The most vulnerable people – those on very low incomes, in poor health or unable to work – are often those who are unable to obtain credit from reputable sources, making them prey for loan sharks.

With future Government Welfare Reforms meaning many people may have less weekly income the Scottish Unit have been working alongside community groups throughout Scotland highlighting the dangers of becoming involved with illegal lenders and ensuring they do not become victims.

- The Scottish Unit are conscious of the financial difficulties that Welfare Reform may cause for some people and have been working in partnership with a number of agencies in order to prevent more people turning to illegal money lenders as a result.

Key partners that have been identified include housing associations, credit unions, food banks and community groups.

Further concerns have been raised that financial difficulties may lead to more people becoming involved in criminal activity in order to fill an income gap or to pay off their debts.

The Unit are keen to engage with any organisation that recognises the issues that may arise as result of welfare reform with a view to preventing people from resorting to the use of illegal money lenders. Please feel free to contact the unit to arrange information sessions and to explore how we can work together to prevent the problem of illegal money lending growing even larger.



## The Latest National Statistics

- The Teams have written off almost £40 million of illegal debts (money victims would have paid back to illegal lenders if the Department had not acted)
- More than 220 prosecutions for illegal money lending have been secured, resulting in prison sentences totalling 150 years.
- Helped over 19,000 victims of loan sharks including the most hard to reach individuals

### To report a loan shark:

Call the **24/7 confidential hotline 0300 555 2222**  
Text **'loan shark + your message'** to **60003**  
E-mail **reportaloanshark@stoploansharks.gov.uk**  
Twitter **www.twitter.com/loansharknews**



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