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Watch out! There's a shark on the beach!

Sid the Shark was special guest at the Northfield Beach event in Birmingham in July. The incredible four-day event was organised by Northfield Community Partnership. The first day was sponsored by Stop Loan Sharks and featured lots of shark and seaside-related activities, including a 360-degree outdoor cinema experience and, of course, the beach itself. Sid couldn't resist getting stuck in!



Sid the Shark enjoying his time at the beach



Let's bin illegal lending!

Stop Loan Sharks teamed up with Warrington Trading Standards, Unify Credit Union and the Warrington waste collection team recently to spread the word on the dangers of illegal lenders and promote safe borrowing options.

The waste collection team put stickers on bins at 35,000 homes across the area. That's at least 35,000 households that will see our messages about how to stay safe from loan sharks. Thanks to everyone involved in this project!

Financial crime specialist was a loan shark

A 58-year-old man from West London who worked as a qualified anti-money laundering specialist but ran an illegal money lending operation on the side has been handed a two-year prison sentence, suspended for two years.

Dharmendra Devji Solanki, aged 58, admitted charges of illegal lending and money laundering and appeared before Inner London Crown Court to be sentenced on Friday, June 27. The case was prosecuted by the England Illegal Money Lending Team in partnership with Ealing Council Trading Standards and the Metropolitan Police.

Passing sentence, the Judge, Recorder Shauna Ritchie told him: "You were, prior to these offences, a man of good character and knew more than most."

She said he took advantage of the borrowers and their insecurities and added: "You were fully trained in relation to financial crime. The business you engaged in survived by lending money to the financially vulnerable."



Inner London Crown Court

The court heard the defendant was arrested at his home in Bradley Gardens, West Ealing, in May 2022 following an operation by the IMLT. An Apple MacBook was seized at the time, which contained a CV in his name, showing he was 'Financial Crime CAMS Qualified' and listed the professional body Association of Certified Anti-Money Laundering Specialists.

Illegal lender locked up for 30 months

A 47-year-old West Bromwich loan shark has been jailed for 30 months after making thousands of pounds in profit by exploiting the 'financially vulnerable'.

Philip Walter appeared before Wolverhampton Crown Court on May 8, 2025 after admitting illegal lending and money laundering charges.

Passing sentence, Judge Simon Ward told him that he was a loan shark who caused 'human damage' to the vulnerable people he targeted.

The court was told he didn't use violence or direct threats, but Judge Ward said: "There will be some people for whom the snowballing of interest is as frightening as having their leg broken."

He said it was effectively stealing from people by charging interest and told Walter: "These are people that were absolutely desperate and thought that borrowing money from you was their only way out. When you did lend them the money, they had to pay you back at a rate way above anything that was appropriate or reasonable."

He added: "The whole point of prosecuting people like you is to stop people like you causing damage to the vulnerable and desperate."

The case was prosecuted by the England Illegal Money Lending Team (IMLT), working in partnership with Sandwell Trading Standards and West Midlands Police.

Mr Joseph Millington, prosecuting on behalf of the IMLT, told the court that Walter ran his illegal lending operation over a period of around six years, lending more than £375,000 to 58 people and receiving over £515,000.

A warrant was executed at Walter's home in Beeches Road West Bromwich in October 2023, following an investigation by the IMLT.

In defence, the court heard Walter had suffered from mental health problems, was working and had a partner and children. He started lending after being in debt himself.

Walter was sentenced to 22 months in jail for the money laundering offences and eight months for illegal lending, to run consecutively, giving him a 30-month total sentence.



Jailed - Philip Walter. Picture from West Midlands Police

You can read the full stories of these cases, and our other latest news by visiting stoploansharks.co.uk/news

Got information about loan sharks?

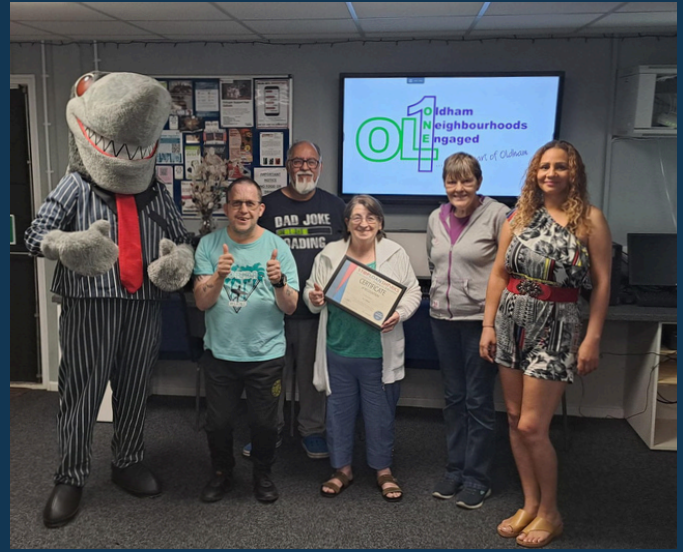
Email us  or call 0300 555 2222 

**Warrants and arrests
March - July, 2025**



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The teams from EPIC Housing, left, and OL1 - Oldham, right, show off their partner certificates

Welcome aboard to 17 new partners!

We have had a mammoth few months with an incredible 17 new partners officially joining the fight against loan sharks in England.

They have all achieved full partner accreditation by going above and beyond to identify illegal lending activity.

Another 16 partner organisations have also renewed their accreditation, continuing their brilliant work to support Stop Loan Sharks.

Our partner organisations act as our eyes and ears in local communities. This grassroots-level support means we can reach vulnerable people who might be feeling afraid or unsure about how to seek help and give them the support they need.

Welcome aboard to all the new partners and huge thanks to all those who work so hard to keep our local communities safe from loan sharks.

New partners

EPIC Housing
Bromford Flagship
Moneywise Credit Union
Wherry Dragon Credit Union
OL1 – Oldham
Leeds Teaching Hospital
Swindon Borough Council, Live Well Swindon
Taking Strides – incorporating Allport Pantry
Digital Arts Box CIC
IE Hub
Black Country Housing Group
Penny Post Group Credit Union
Leeds Credit Union
Dukes Bailiffs Ltd
Coventry City Council
White Horse Housing Association
Greenwich & Bexley Credit Union

Renewals

Just Credit Union
Cheshire East Trading Standards
Together Housing Group
Wave Community Bank
Wirral Citizens advice
North Warwickshire Borough Council
Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council
Test Valley Borough Council
Havant Citizens Advice
Citizens Advice Telford & the Wrekin
Citizens Advice Cornwall
Teign Housing
Maidstone Council
Live West
One Manchester
Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council



Greenwich & Bexley Credit Union loans manager Sutha Harahn, left, and Sophie Aland and Valerie Clayton from Wherry Dragon Credit Union, right

To find out more about partner accreditation, visit www.stoploansharks.co.uk/partner-recognition-programme/ or email catherine.wohlers@birmingham.gov.uk

Got information about loan sharks?

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Out and about with Sid the Shark and Glenda the Lender!



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Helping children stay safe around money

When it comes to staying safe in life, knowing how to handle money is right up there with crossing the road or not talking to strangers. That's why it's so important to start teaching children about financial safety from a young age - it can help protect them from dangers like loan sharks later in life.

To help with this, we've created a brand-new video as part of Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service's Safe+Sound programme.

Safe+Sound is a great initiative packed with fun, educational videos that schools use to help kids stay safe in all sorts of ways.

Our new video is specially made for children under 10, but we've got free educational resources for all age groups over on our website.



To access the education packs, go to: www.stoploansharks.co.uk/for-education/
Watch the video here: youtu.be/GKNTNpbQZg0?si=4g5OcFJG_MK78pVf

Training and slides offer

There are many ways you can support the fight against illegal money lending – and one of the most effective is by taking part in our free training sessions.

Our training is designed to equip your staff and volunteers with the knowledge and confidence to spot the signs of loan shark activity and support those who may be affected.

If your organisation already delivers training around financial inclusion or debt awareness, we can also provide slides and information on illegal lending that you can incorporate into your sessions. This was something specifically requested at our 20th anniversary event last year, and we're pleased to offer it. Whether you're interested in booking a training session or would like resources to include in your own delivery, we'd love to hear from you.

Get in touch with us by emailing catherine.wohlers@birmingham.gov.uk

Supporting small businesses



Did you know that businesses can be targeted by loan sharks too?

This year we are liaising with the British Business Bank to support Business Finance Week in September. We want to raise awareness about how we can support business owners in certain circumstances who might have been targeted by a loan shark.

As part of our support for the campaign, which runs from September 30 to October 9, we will be releasing a short animated film which explains in simple terms who and how we can help.

If you know anyone who falls into this category, or you work with any organisations that might benefit from information or training around this, or you would like a copy of the animation, then get in touch by emailing catherine.wohlers@birmingham.gov.uk

Got information about loan sharks?

Email us  or call 0300 555 2222 

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We Will Help You Make The Call: New campaign to support vulnerable borrowers

At Stop Loan Sharks, we understand that reaching out for help isn't easy - especially for those without access to a phone or computer, or without a safe, private space to make a confidential call.

For many, fear and uncertainty can also make it difficult to take that first step alone.

Yet for these people, life-changing help is only a phone call away.

That's why we're inviting our trusted partners and frontline organisations with public-facing offices to help us reach those vulnerable people by joining us in our new campaign: We Will Help You Make the Call

While we cover the whole of England and our officers are available 24-hours a day via the confidential helpline, we don't have a physical premises in every community. This campaign aims to bridge that gap.

The idea is simple: Community organisations offer a welcoming, safe space where people can access a phone or computer to contact the Stop Loan Sharks team in confidence. Whether it's a few quiet minutes in a back office or a staff member offering calm reassurance, your help can make all the difference.

The official launch is set for September, and a Liaise Officer may be in touch in the coming weeks with more details.

If it is something you can help with, you'll be offered:

- A full resources pack, including leaflets and posters as well as social media content
- Window signage to show your organisation is an official Access Point
- A practical guide for staff on how to support someone making the call
- A press release template to help you share the news locally

We believe this campaign can make a real difference. We hope lots of you agree and sign up to join us!

To find out more about how to get involved, email

catherine.wohlers@birmingham.gov.uk
or press@stoploansharks.gov.uk

We will help you make
The Call

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*Do you owe money to a loan shark?
Not sure how to get help?*

This is an official Stop Loan Sharks access point

Staff here can provide a safe space to help you get the support you need.

It could be the first step in regaining control of your money.

Remember, you're not alone. Speak to a member of staff today and we will help you make the call.

www.stoploansharks.co.uk
0300 555 2222



Operation Sharknet

... coming to a town near you!

You may have hosted a Bite Back Week or Week of Action in the past – we're now rebranding these as Operation Sharknet!

If you're working with us on a week of activities, we have a new logo to use on promotional resources. Email press@stoploansharks.gov.uk to find out more.

Got information about loan sharks?

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Stop Loan Sharks in the news

Suspected loan shark arrested in Coventry

CoventryObserver

West Ealing financial crime expert also acted as loan shark

30TH JUNE COURT CRIME

EALINGTIMES

Suspected loan sharks arrested during dawn raid in Parkgate

11TH JUNE CRIME WIRRAL

WirralGlobe

Suspected loan shark arrested in County Durham as police search Sunderland business

Officers executed warrants at a property in Murton, County Durham, and a commercial premises in the Millfield area of Sunderland

ChronicleLive

Brierley Hill: Roadshow is set to tackle loan sharks

25TH MAY CRIME FINANCE BRIERLEY HILL

Dudley News

The Sentinel

NATIONAL PRAISE FOR COMPANY WORKING TO STOP LOAN SHARKS

EPIC joins with illegal money lending team

The Sentinel

Loan shark who profited from 'vulnerable' victims is jailed

'He was running a profitable business, making money from people's misfortune'

A 47-year-old loan shark operating in a Black Country town has been jailed after raking in thousands of pounds in profit

DEBORAH HARDIMAN
Chief Reporter

Express & Star



Wednesday, 16 July

By Heart Beds/Bucks/Herts

Heart Breakfast with Jamie Theakston and Amanda Holden

2h 58m left

Join Jamie and Amanda for the UK's best Breakfast Show packed with feel good moments and chances to win! Wake up with Heart on your Alexa, just say... "Alexa, play Heart".

Surrey suspected loan shark arrested after house raid

Your Local Guardian

Birmingham loan shark suspect arrested amid illegal money lending probe

BirminghamLive



RADIO OXFORD

Sophie Law

25/06/2025



Ellie Colton at Breakfast

26/05/2025

BBC RADIO SHEFFIELD



RADIO NORFOLK

Chris Goreham

Loan sharks

BBC MIDLANDS TODAY

BBC RADIO Oxford

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Stop Loan Sharks in numbers

At least

32,500

people supported

430

successful
prosecutions

1.08m

people borrowing
from a loan shark in
England

At least

£91.6m

illegal debt written
off

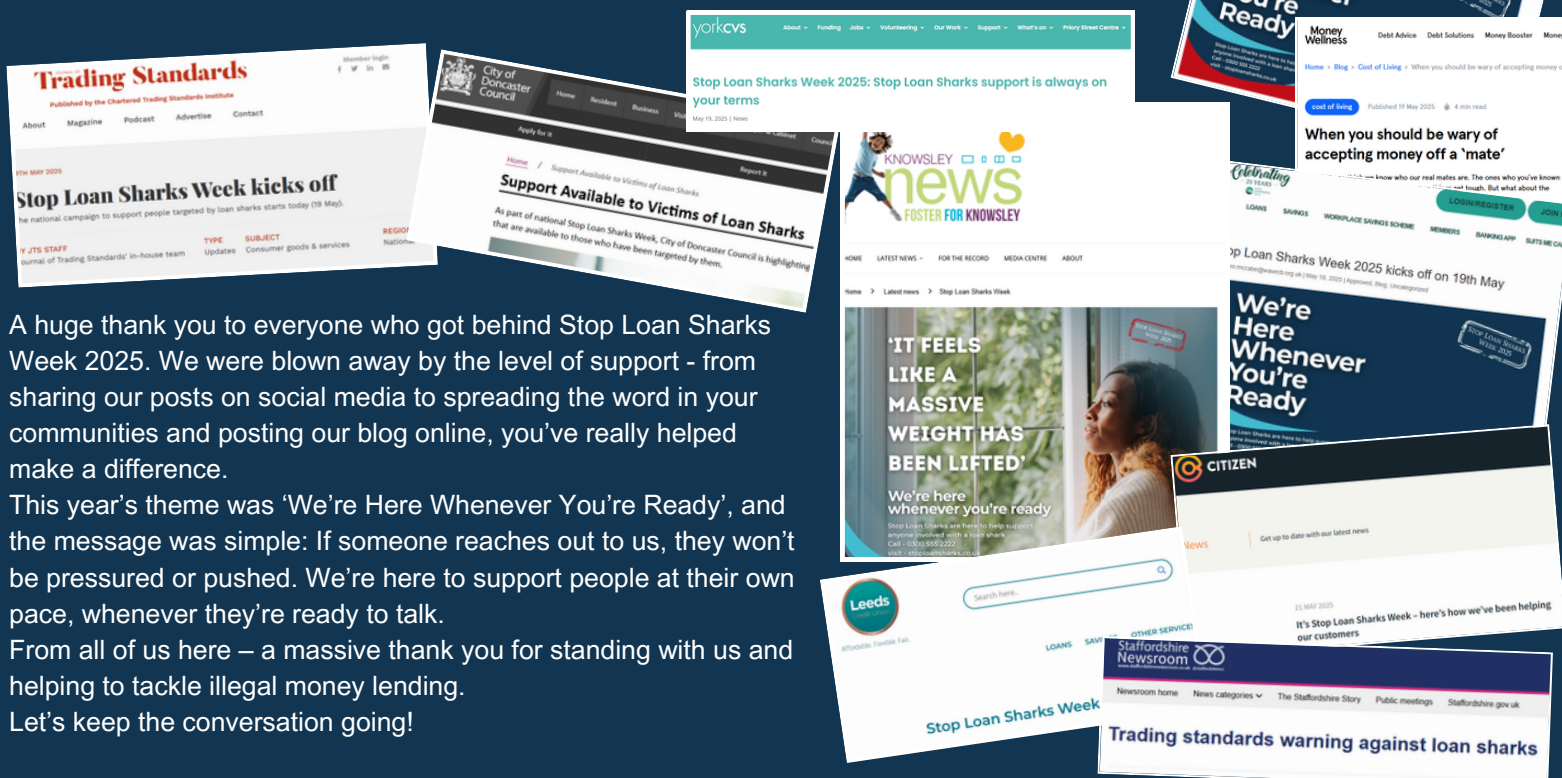
612

years in jail for loan
sharks

882

arrests

What a week! Thanks for supporting Stop Loan Sharks Week 2025



A huge thank you to everyone who got behind Stop Loan Sharks Week 2025. We were blown away by the level of support - from sharing our posts on social media to spreading the word in your communities and posting our blog online, you've really helped make a difference.

This year's theme was 'We're Here Whenever You're Ready', and the message was simple: If someone reaches out to us, they won't be pressured or pushed. We're here to support people at their own pace, whenever they're ready to talk.

From all of us here – a massive thank you for standing with us and helping to tackle illegal money lending. Let's keep the conversation going!

Got information about loan sharks?

Email us  or call 0300 555 2222 

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How we're helping international students

We have become aware that students are being targeted by loan sharks - with international students being particularly at risk.

When they come to the UK, these students can face financial pressure and loan sharks are often lurking ready to strike. These illegal lenders are sometimes from the same community and appear to be a friend offering a favour. But borrowing from a loan shark never ends well. We are launching a new campaign this year to target students and let them know about the dangers of borrowing from an illegal lender and how they can get help.

If you are work with international students in any capacity, get in touch with us and we can keep you informed about the campaign. Email press@stoploansharks.gov.uk to find out more.

New-look resources are on the way



We are in the process of redesigning all of our resources such as posters, leaflets, postcards. They will all have a fresh new look and there will be a range of different designs to choose from, aimed at both partners and the public. These designs will be available to download and order. Here's a little sneak preview of one the new-look posters. Watch our social media channels to find out when these will be available.

News from Scotland: How to enjoy a shark-free summer



In the run up to the new school term, many families will feel under increasing pressure to spend money on uniforms, bags, stationery and lunches. They may feel that they have no option but to borrow money from a loan shark to help pay bills.

The Scottish Illegal Money Lending Unit (SIMLU) is running a new campaign to raise awareness of other options that are available to families, including government grants and funding that they may be eligible to receive, credit unions, free debt advice and support from local communities, schools and charities.

Research commissioned by SIMLU last year found that 7% of respondents had encountered a loan shark either in their community or online. Across the wider Scottish population, this equates to around 300,000 people.

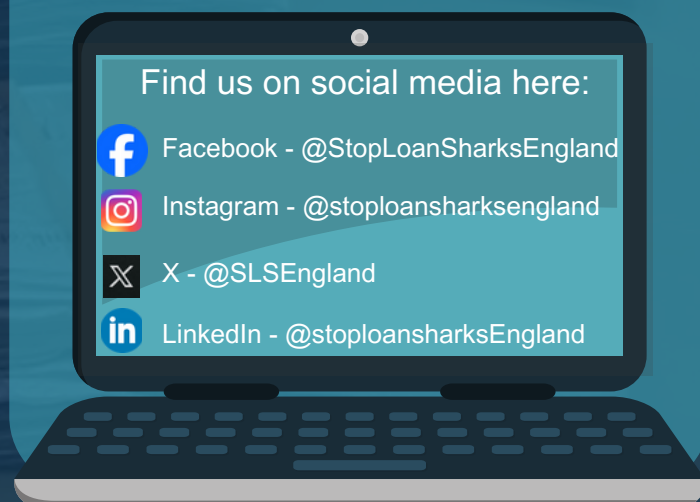
SIMLU operates a free and confidential 24-hour helpline – 0800 084 0878 – to offer immediate support with urgent issues as well as help to access local services such as credit unions, debt advice and support groups.

Further advice and support is available via the SIMLU website at www.stopillegallending.co.uk, which now has a chatbot to help users.

Keep in touch!

If you want more information about anything you've read here, or would like to speak to us about anything else, please don't hesitate to get in touch. Email press@stoploansharks.gov.uk and we'll be back in touch.

You can also follow our social media channels for details of our latest campaigns and ongoing work to tackle illegal lending in England. Thanks to all of you for your ongoing support.



Got information about loan sharks?

Email us [✉](mailto:press@stoploansharks.gov.uk) or call 0300 555 2222 [☎](tel:03005552222)