

## Bulletin #30 - January to April 2024

# Happy New Year!

It's 2024, and it's started out cold... make sure you're staying warm and safe, and if you're out and about then why not pop in on a Friday and say hello at our Friendship Friday.

This bulletin includes some news about where Disability Equality North West is heading to in the future, as well as some new faces you might like to meet.

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We've also produced an audio version of this bulletin for those that would prefer to listen to it rather than read – visit [disability-equality.org.uk/bulletin-30/](http://disability-equality.org.uk/bulletin-30/) to listen.

## Moving Forward

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We're reaching out to share some important updates regarding our move to a new home – the 'Disability Equality Community Hub' and the temporary adjustments to our services.

As of now, we have not finalised our move, we're sure you'll understand there's a lot to do and the process is ongoing.

We anticipate that the move will be gradual, with all of our services being delivered from the new hub by April, just in time for Spring! We will obviously keep you updated (if you're not already on our membership list please email [heather@disability-equality.org.uk](mailto:heather@disability-equality.org.uk) and will let you know much more about the new location and our plans as soon as we can.)

Please note, that in preparation for this transition, we're undertaking some necessary work at our current premises on Church Street, and packing up our belongings – as we've been in the building 24 years it may take a while 😊 We also want to leave the building in as good order as we found it for our landlords.

In the coming week, our team will be focusing on these preparations, and whilst we are doing everything we can to minimise any disruption this may cause, there will be some inevitable disruption to our services. In particular, those services delivered from our building, which we estimate could last for approximately 8 weeks.

It's important to note that during this period, we are not conducting standard appointments, nor are we closing our doors entirely. Instead, as we progress with our move from Church Street, some events and activities may be hosted at alternative venues. We are dedicated to maintaining our support services during this period, and all contact methods via phone, text, and email will remain available for those who need assistance.

We kindly ask for your patience and understanding as we navigate these changes. For any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to reach out to us. Your support during this time is invaluable, and we look forward to emerging from this transition stronger, with enhanced capabilities to serve you from our new premises. We believe in doing things well, and with your support, we'll achieve just that.

Thank you for your continued support.

## Lesley Finley Award 2023 Winner

We are delighted announce that the winner of the Lesley Finley Award for 2023 was Catherine Watkiss. She was presented with her certificate by Lesley's mum, Sandra, at our AGM that was held back on the 7<sup>th</sup> of December 2023.

Congratulations to Catherine on winning, and to all the nominees for being nominated.



## Volunteers Update

We're still looking for some more volunteers to be based in reception on a Friday. If you are interested in volunteering, and haven't been in touch already, get in touch with Dean and he'll get an application form to you.

**Email:** dean@disability-equality.org.uk

**Text:** 07841 017472

**Telephone:** 01772 558863 (option 2)

## Are you struggling?

Are you struggling physically, mentally or financially? We hold:

- Face to face, telephone, email or video advice sessions available Monday to Friday 9am - 4pm, email hello@disability-equality.org.uk to book a slot;
- Friendship Fridays every week where you can get together with other people to have a chat and a brew;
- Direct payment advice from LILS;
- Food parcels.

During these tough times, food parcels are available for those that are experiencing hardship and are disabled or are parents of disabled children. For further information, contact Des.

**Telephone:** 01772 558863 (option 4)      **Text:** 07709 710195

**Email:** hello@disability-equality.org.uk

## New Faces

We've got a few new faces for you! Find out what they do below:

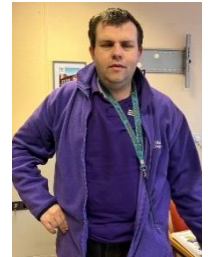
### Sandra – Safety First Project co-ordinator

Hello! My name is Sandra and I am thrilled to have recently joined the team at Disability Equality NW, my role is Safety First Project Co-ordinator. Previously, I had worked in Health and Social Care for over 20 years helping staff to support adults with Learning Disabilities to live safely, and independently within their own homes. I'm sure that I will enjoy my new role here every bit as much, and am really looking forward to meeting everyone soon!



### Peter – Volunteer

Say hello to Peter who volunteers on reception on a Monday and a Wednesday – he's the friendly face when you come in the door on either of those days.



### Shamim – Volunteer

Say hello to Shamim who volunteers on reception on a Tuesday and a Thursday – she's the friendly face when you come in the door on either of those days.



## Friendship Friday

We will be holding Friendship Friday on the 9th of February at our Church Street premises for the last time – from **16th Feb 2024** until **22nd March 2024** it'll be held at Central Methodist Church, Lune Street, Preston, PR1 2NL from 1pm-3pm.

**Email:** [safetyfirst@disability-equality.org.uk](mailto:safetyfirst@disability-equality.org.uk)

**Text:** 07841 017472

**Telephone:** 01772 558863 (option 2)



## Peer Support

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### What is the Lancashire Peer Support Network?

The Peer Support Network (PSN) was set up in March 2022, to encourage more people to consider direct payments to pay for their care and support needs, and to provide ongoing support for direct payments users, carers and family members, and employers of personal assistants (PAs).

There is a vast wealth of direct payments and employment knowledge throughout Lancashire, and we wanted to connect people with experts with experience, to give them the confidence to take up direct payments themselves, as the process can seem extremely complicated and time-consuming at first, and many people decide to stay with commissioned services, or to receive no support at all.

Peer Support is an important part of supporting people through their direct payments journey, and we believe more people will choose this option, if they speak to other people who successfully use direct payments to employ their own staff.

### How do I get support?

We have a friendly online peer support group. Peer support enables people to draw on their own experiences and offers great opportunities to meet with other people who have or want to find out more about direct payments. It's a great way of meeting other direct payment employers, sharing ideas and supporting each other. It is an opportunity to ask questions, offer advice, and to talk to professionals, who we have invited to attend future peer support meetings.

We can arrange for a peer support volunteer to speak privately with someone who would like more advice and support before they approach social services.

We holding online get-togethers using Zoom every couple of months, and we are hoping to arrange face-to-face meetings at the DENW office in Preston on Wednesdays. The next online meeting is on the 21<sup>st</sup> of February - get in touch using the details below to receive the joining link.

### I'd like to get involved. Where do I start?

Peer Support is available from 11am-2pm every Wednesday, on 01772 558863 (option 1).

Alternatively, you can email [lils@disability-equality.org.uk](mailto:lils@disability-equality.org.uk) with the subject header "PEER SUPPORT REQUEST"

## Disability Equality Services

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### Lancashire Independent Service (LILS):

LILS offers Direct Payment information, advice & payroll support to local people who are in receipt of a Direct Payment from Lancashire County Council.

- *Monday to Friday: 9am - 5pm*
- **Telephone:** 01772 558863 (option 1)
- **Email:** [lils@disability-equality.org.uk](mailto:lils@disability-equality.org.uk)
- **Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/LancashireIndependentLivingService>

### Safety First:

The project supports disabled people from Preston, Chorley and South Ribble to maintain their safety at home, in the community and in their personal relationships.

- *Monday to Friday: 9am - 4pm*
- **Telephone:** 01772 558863 (option 2)
- **Text:** 07841 017472
- **Email:** [safetyfirst@disability-equality.org.uk](mailto:safetyfirst@disability-equality.org.uk)

### Supported Banking:

If you've had a Social Care Assessment, or are in receipt of Direct Payments or Personal Budgets from a Local Authority or the NHS, and you're: struggling with the paperwork, worried about dealing with staff payroll, timesheets, etc. then our experienced and dedicated Supported Banking team can help.

- *Monday to Friday: 9am - 4pm*
- **Telephone:** 01772 558863 (option 3)
- **Email:** [supportedbanking@disability-equality.org.uk](mailto:supportedbanking@disability-equality.org.uk)

### General Enquiries:

If you need general / benefits advice or support with renewing them, we can help. Get in touch to book an appointment.

- *Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday: 9.30am - 4:00pm*
- **Telephone:** 01772 558863 (option 4)
- **Text:** 07709 710195
- **Email:** [hello@disability-equality.org.uk](mailto:hello@disability-equality.org.uk)
- **Facebook Page:** [www.facebook.com/DisabilityNW](http://www.facebook.com/DisabilityNW)
- **Facebook Group:** [www.facebook.com/groups/94427530295](http://www.facebook.com/groups/94427530295)
- **Twitter/X:** [www.twitter.com/disabilitynw](http://www.twitter.com/disabilitynw)

## Dates for your diaries - all FREE!

Please note that all meetings and activities are held at DENW unless otherwise stated. We will promote each event separately with exact locations and venue details nearer the time via our membership and on social media.

Please contact [hello@disability-equality.org.uk](mailto:hello@disability-equality.org.uk) for further information.

DATE	EVENT	TIME
Friday 9 <sup>th</sup> Feb	<p><b>Roses Creation Session @ DENW</b></p> <p><i>Don't worry if you couldn't make it to our creative session on the 2nd February! Yet again, we will be inviting you to create Roses and accompanying messages of togetherness for others to read across the North West.</i></p>	1pm – 3pm
Tuesday 27 <sup>th</sup> Feb	<p><b>Meet the Medics @ The Foxton Centre</b></p> <p><b>Units 10/12, Oakham Court, Preston, PR1 3XP</b></p> <p><i>Come and talk to our placement medical students Samuel or Artin about your lived experience of Disability. A warm brew is always on offer.</i></p>	1pm – 3pm
<b>FRIENDSHIP FRIDAYS</b>		
Friday 9 <sup>th</sup> Feb	<p><b>Last Friendship Friday at DENW on Church Street</b></p> <p><i>Drop in for a chat with good company, a free hot drink and a bite to eat every Friday.</i></p>	1pm – 3pm
<b>February 2024:</b> 16 <sup>th</sup> , 23 <sup>rd</sup> , 29 <sup>th</sup>	<p>Drop in for a chat with good company, a free hot drink and a bite to eat every Friday.</p> <p>The sessions have temporarily moved to: Central Methodist Church, Lune Street, Preston, PR1 2NL</p>	1pm – 3pm
<b>March 2024:</b> 1 <sup>st</sup> , 8 <sup>th</sup> , 15 <sup>th</sup> , 22 <sup>nd</sup>		

Keep an eye on our socials for up-to-date event information:

**Facebook:** [facebook.com/DisabilityNW](https://facebook.com/DisabilityNW)

**X/Twitter:** [twitter.com/DisabilityNW](https://twitter.com/DisabilityNW)

## Other Attachments

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We've attached leaflet from other services along-side this bulletin just for your information:

### **Lancashire County Council - Safe Trader Scheme**

The Safe Trader Scheme helps residents find reputable traders for property repairs, home improvements, gardening services, mobility aids and other services around the home.

### **Stop Loan Sharks - Winter 2023 Newsletter**

Stop Loan Sharks investigates and prosecutes illegal money lenders and provides support for borrowers in the UK.

### **Ingeus – Work & Health Programme North West**

Work and Health provides support for those unemployed people with health conditions or disabilities. It is also designed to help those individuals who have been out of work for a long time as well as those who might need some specialist support.





# Safe Trader Scheme

## Are you looking for a reputable trader?

Trading Standard's Safe Trader Scheme can help you find reputable traders for property repairs, home improvements, gardening services, mobility aids and other services around the home.

Further information:

**0303 333 1111**

[www.safetrader.org.uk](http://www.safetrader.org.uk)

[safetrader@lancashire.gov.uk](mailto:safetrader@lancashire.gov.uk)

SCAN ME



[lancashire.gov.uk](http://lancashire.gov.uk)



**Lancashire**  
County  
Council



## Brave borrowers share their stories to help others trapped in the clutches of a loan shark

**In 2023 we had two borrowers who agreed to share their experiences of being in debt to a loan shark. They wanted to help raise awareness of how they escaped the clutches of an illegal lender to help others who might be stuck in the same position.**

Anthony, a father-of-four, told how 2023 would be the first Christmas in around 15 years he was free from the grip of a loan shark.

Anthony, 39, borrowed over £10,000 in small loans from someone he thought was a family friend and a legitimate lender to help him through difficult and expensive times, like Christmas.

But following an investigation by the England Illegal Money Lending Team, he was horrified to discover that the lender was not authorised and was in fact a loan shark who had been profiting from his family.

**Anthony** (not his real name) said: "I am so angry that he was effectively profiting from our misfortune. He had taken money off my kids to fund his own life.

"The interest was just horrific. I had to pay back £60 or £70 on top of every £100 I borrowed. Over the years I have borrowed over £10,000, so that's a lot of profit he has made from me - thousands and thousands of pounds."

Anthony said Christmas was often the biggest thing he needed to borrow money for. He said: "We had two or three loans, maybe even more over the Christmas period. You want your kids to have a good life and you want to be able to have a decent Christmas and make memories with them. If someone is there saying here is some money you can pay back a bit a month, it's too easy not to do it."

Anthony believed the lender was legitimate, but when he struggled to repay, he was faced with threats and intimidation. That included the lender turning up at his home when he was out and making inappropriate sexual comments to his wife and daughter.

But it was only when officers from the IMLT paid him a visit that he realised the truth.

He added: "It angers me because I have been made to feel like a fool. I have funded someone else's life and to find out afterwards there were so many other people he was making money off - it just makes me so angry.

"It's a vile thing to have hanging over your head - it's like being stuck in a never-ending hellhole of recycling money."

Anthony added: "We have been without him for months now and I don't miss it at all - things have come up but now we just do without if we can't afford it.

"Money does make the world go round but it doesn't bring you happiness. We're a lot happier now we're not borrowing from him anymore."



### 'Anthony' shares his story

Another borrower was **Sarah**, a mother-of-two, whose name has also been changed. She said she felt violated after finding out the lender, who she thought was a longstanding family friend, had been profiting from her.

Sarah, 37, said: "He had known me all my life and knew my parents - I trusted him completely. To see how much he actually made from me over the years was a real kick in the teeth. I feel violated and I'm sickened to think of how much he made from so many people. He was robbing us blind."

She added: "We had a whirlwind few years and I needed money. He was there, offering a loan and of course I took it. I considered him a family friend and I trusted him. He knew we never had anything and used that to his advantage.

Christmas was the worst time - I just wanted to give my kids what I never had and so I had to borrow money at that time. I saw him as a way out. But it just kept rolling on year after year and it was never paid off."

Figures showed that Sarah borrowed in the region of £3,000 and paid back around £5,000 over a period of 10 years. She was one of more than 100 borrowers.

She said: "I was horrified to see how much I had paid and to think how many other people he was lending to. how much money he was making out of us all.

"He was living a good life, while we were struggling. I did ask myself why I trusted him, but I had no reason not to. It's almost like I was being groomed."

**We are hugely grateful to Sarah and Anthony for sharing their stories. You can read Sarah's full story [here](#) and watch Anthony tell his story [here](#)**

## Christmas behind bars for 'cruel' loan shark

**A 53-year-old man who illegally lent money and then intimidated and even attacked borrowers when they couldn't make repayments has been jailed for 28 months.**

Alvin Hutchinson, of Telford, forced one borrower to buy a 65in TV on credit, which he then used, leaving the customer struggling to make the repayments.

Hutchinson, of Hartley Close, The Rock, admitted charges of illegal money lending and concealing the proceeds of crime and appeared at Shrewsbury Crown Court on December 22 for sentence.

The case was prosecuted by the England Illegal Money Lending Team (IMLT) in partnership with Telford Trading Standards and West Mercia Police.

Mr Simon Mortimer, prosecuting, told the court Hutchinson ran his lending operation between January 2015 and May 2019, but did not have the necessary authorisation from the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA). He said regulation ensures borrowers are legally protected and without it they are left at the 'behest of the illegal money lender'.

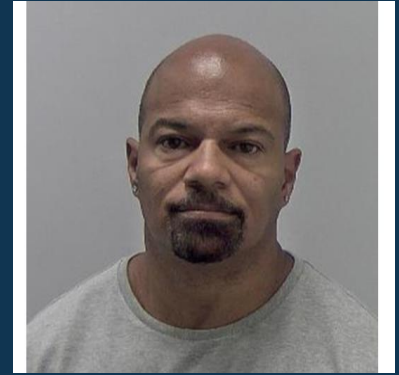
Investigators from the IMLT together with officers from West Mercia Police carried out a search warrant at Hutchinson's home on May 21, 2019 and seized electronic equipment.

Investigations found deposits of £92,862.93 were made into accounts registered to Hutchinson and other family members, whose accounts he was using to process payments.

Mr Mortimer said one took small loans and estimated at one point he owed £3,000 - having only borrowed between £500 to £600. He said Hutchinson would also become aggressive when he struggled to meet payments and on one occasion punched him, leaving him with a bloody nose.

Sentencing, Recorder Barker said: "Those who find themselves in positions where they have to take out loans need to be protected and it's this that makes the activity of illegal money lending so grave. You operated this business under the radar of the authorities and benefited to the tune of at least £92,000."

She added: "It seems to me that in what can only be described as an act



Jailed - Alvin Hutchinson

of cruelty you forced them to get further into debt by buying goods that they were never going to possess. You were taking advantage of people at their most vulnerable and there was little they could do to get out of your grasp . . . they were vulnerable and had to turn to a loan shark like you."

Hutchinson was sentenced to 12 months for illegal money lending and 16 months for concealing the proceeds of crime, to run consecutively.

Read the full story on our website [here](#)

## Mother and son sentenced for illegal lending

**A 51-year-old man and his 82-year-old mother who operated an illegal money lending operation in the Sunderland area have been handed suspended jail sentences.**

Graeme Lamb, of Seafields, Sunderland, appeared before Newcastle Crown Court on December 20. His mother Brenda Lamb, of Brommarsh Court, Sunderland, did not appear due to poor health.

Both pleaded guilty to illegal money lending and money laundering between October 2014 and November 2019.

Mr Simon Mortimer, prosecuting, told the court that the alert was first raised about the Lambs' operation through an anonymous call to the confidential England Illegal Money Lending Team hotline. The IMLT launched an investigation in partnership with Sunderland Trading Standards and Northumbria Police.

Mr Mortimer said investigators found evidence of 361 loans being issued to 78 people ranging in value from £50 to £1,500. During the period concerned, the Lambs received a total of £173,299.35 in payments and loans were issued with interest rates of between 40% and 69.5%.

He said Brenda Lamb had left the employment of a legitimate loan company and started her own business called Percuniam Solutions Ltd. When Graeme Lamb lost his job, he started working for his mother. Neither of them was authorised to

conduct a credit business. Sentencing, His Honour Judge Nathan Adams said the people who borrowed were left at risk as a result of the Lambs' unregulated status.

He told Lamb: "There was a wilful blindness by both of you that there were requirements you should comply with."

He said he accepted there were no threats involved and the interest rates were comparable to legitimate lenders.

Graeme Lamb was sentenced to a 12-month jail term suspended for 18 months for each offence to run concurrently. He was also ordered to complete 250 hours of unpaid work.

Brenda Lamb was given the same suspended sentence, but with no extra conditions due to her poor health. A POCA timetable has been sought.

Sunderland City Council's Cabinet Member for Vibrant City, Councillor John Price, added: "There is no place in our communities for unscrupulous lenders like this who take advantage of people who may be struggling with their finances. "I would encourage anyone with information about illegal money lending to contact the national Illegal Money Lending Team or the City Council."

Read the full story on our website [here](#)

## Loan shark pensioner jailed for 32 months

**A loan shark pensioner who ran an illegal lending operation in Staffordshire, making thousands of pounds, has been jailed for 32 months.**

Stafford Crown Court heard Robert Norman Phillips, aged 75, lent more than £370,000 over 16 years and took repayments of more than £570,000.

The court heard many of his victims were women who said he had made repeated lewd and inappropriate comments when he collected cash and even suggested 'payment in kind' if they were struggling to pay.

Phillips, of Creswell Farm Drive, Stafford, admitted two charges of money lending between November 2006 and November 2022 as well as a charge of concealing the proceeds of his crime. He was sentenced to 10 months for each of the money lending offences and 32 months for the third offence, all to run concurrently.

The case was prosecuted by the England Illegal Money Lending Team (IMLT) in partnership with Staffordshire County Council Trading Standards and Staffordshire Police.

Mr Simon Mortimer, prosecuting, said a report was made to the IMLT hotline in March 2022 alleging that Phillips was operating an unlicensed money lending business.

Initial inquiries showed little evidence as Phillips was dealing mostly in cash, but in November 2022, investigators from the IMLT together with Staffordshire Police

officers executed a warrant at his address and found items which clearly related to a loans business. A cash box containing around £10,000 was also found.

Investigators found Phillips had made his first loan on November 6, 2006, with the most recent being in November 2022.

Between those dates he issued at least 966 loans to 147 different borrowers.

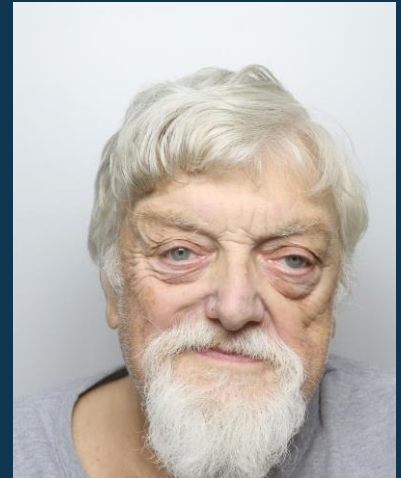
The total capital advanced was at least £372,000 and he collected repayments of over £570,000, charging either 60% or 70% interest.

Mr Mortimer told the court that several female victims had reported Phillips making lewd comments and acting inappropriately when he called for payment, and he had suggested 'payment in kind'.

One said he would call early in the morning to catch her in her nightwear. She took to leaving money under the doormat to avoid having contact with him.

Another said he made sleazy comments, making her feel uncomfortable and one said he made sexual comments to her while her children were present. Another said he asked her to wear 'sexy underwear'.

The court heard Phillips was relentless in his pursuit of payments, with one borrower saying he would knock on a door for 20 minutes if there was no answer and he continued to call even during Covid 19 when the victims could not see members of their own families.



Jailed – Robert Phillips

Passing sentence, Recorder James Bide-Thomas said he had taken into account Phillips' age, his previous good character and the fact that he suffered for a number of health problems. He also said he had taken into consideration the fact that Phillips was the sole carer for his wife who was also in poor health. However he said the offences were so serious that there was no way he could not impose a custodial sentence.

[Read the full story on the website here](#)

## Illegal lender sentenced

**A woman who ran an illegal money lending business in south London, lending almost half a million pounds and making thousands of pounds profit, has been sentenced to eight months in prison suspended for two years.**

Sophia Carandang, aged 57, appeared before Inner London Crown Court on October 6 after admitting illegal money lending, mostly in the Roehampton area.

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

Mr Tom Dunn, prosecuting, told the court that a warrant was executed at Carandang's home in Clem Atlee Court, Fulham, in 2018.

Investigations by the IMLT found that Carandang had been operating an illegal money lending business from 2014. She had made over 300 loans, varying from £200 to £6,000, to around 106 borrowers.

Recorder Nigel Peters KC said he had taken into account Carandang's previous good character and guilty plea.

## Carer appears at court

**A Birmingham carer has been handed a suspended prison sentence after admitting illegal money lending.**

Tecla Bandawe, aged 44, appeared before Birmingham Crown Court on September 29.

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

A warrant was executed at Bandawe's home in Soho Road, Handsworth, in March 2023 after allegations were made via the IMLT's confidential hotline that she was operating as an illegal money lender.

The court heard that Bandawe is a Zimbabwean national who was employed as a carer and investigations by the IMLT found she was a member of a WhatsApp group with fellow Zimbabweans from across the country. Messages were uncovered that were said to be linked to her lending. She admitted the charge and was sentenced to eight months in prison suspended for 18 months, with no conditions attached. There was no application for costs and no application for a confiscation order.

**Arrests**  
**July – December 2023**



# STOP LOAN SHARKS

Intervention . Support . Education

## Illegal lenders ordered to pay back £390,000

**Loan sharks were ordered to pay back over £390,000 in the last few months of 2023 following Proceeds of Crime Act hearings.**

John Mulvey, aged 57, and Mary Wilding, 71, appeared before Isleworth Crown Court back in February 2020 when they were each sentenced to 12 months in prison suspended for two years after admitting illegal money lending. The IMLT first executed warrants at Mulvey's home, in Greyhound Lane, Lambeth and Wilding's home in Limpsfield Road, South Croydon, back in December 2017. Officers found thousands of pounds in cash as well as loan agreements and loan books. They have now been ordered

to pay back a total of £357,719.98. Meanwhile, in another case, Anthony Suku, 66, from Liverpool, was ordered to pay back £40,000.

He previously admitted charges of unlawful money lending and money laundering and was sentenced to 22 months in prison, suspended for 18 months, at Liverpool Crown Court. He was also ordered to complete 250 hours of unpaid community work and adhere to a curfew of 8pm-6am for three months.

The court was told former doorman Suku started by lending to people he knew but the business grew to a point where he was making an annual income of around

£52,000. The case was back at Liverpool Crown Court on August 14 when a confiscation order was made under the Proceeds of Crime Act, ordering Suku, of Beaconsfield Street, to pay back £40,000. Tony Quigley, head of the IMLT, said: "We use the POCA legislation to ensure that these criminals are forced to repay at least some of their ill-gotten gains. "We are determined to ensure that they do not continue to benefit financially from criminal activity."

Read the full stories on the website [here](#) and [here](#)

## Fight against loan sharks stepped up in West Mids

**The England Illegal Money Lending Team met with West Midlands Assistant Police and Crime Commissioner Tom McNeil and a host of organisations from across the West Midlands to explore ways of joining forces to tackle loan sharks.**

Representatives from credit unions, housing associations, local authorities and other groups were at the event to discuss ways in which loan shark activity can be identified and victims offered the help and support they need.

Tony Quigley, head of the England IMLT, said: "So many organisations encounter victims, but sometimes they aren't ready to admit that are being targeted by these illegal lenders. We want everyone to be able to spot the signs of when someone has fallen victim to an illegal lender and know exactly what help and support is out there. We need to take practical steps to not only help the victims but share information to help rid our communities of these illegal lenders.

"Illegal lending has a massive impact, not only on a person's mental and physical health and wellbeing, but also on the wider community.

"If we all work together on this, we can help get these illegal lenders off the streets of the West Midlands."

Mr McNeil said loan sharks were using the cost-of-living crisis to target vulnerable people and line their own



Left to right Sean Lynch, Cath Wohlers, Tom McNeil and Tony Quigley

pockets and he wanted to ensure members of the public had all the tools and information necessary to protect themselves against these criminals.

He said the meeting was an important step towards a more joined-up approach to tackling the issue.

"It has been a really useful conversation to have and it's great to see that the partners agree that the scale of this issue does warrant greater attention from the police and other agencies," he said.

"This event has helped us identify a number of practical steps that can be taken to spot people who are victims of loan sharks and help them get the support that they need."

Sean Lynch, CEO of the Citysave credit union based in Birmingham, also spoke at the meeting. He said he wanted to raise awareness of the services offered by credit unions and how they can be a safe alternative to those who might consider turning to a loan shark after being refused credit elsewhere.

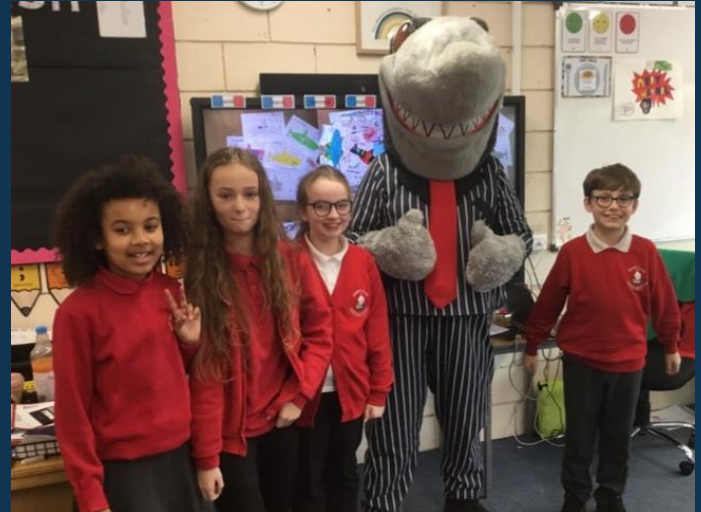
"People are still going to need to borrow so it's vital that we steer them towards more ethical lenders," he said. "They need to know what alternative options are out there."

The IMLT offers free training to organisations in how to spot the victim of a loan shark and how to access the right support. To find out more, visit [stoploansharks.co.uk](http://stoploansharks.co.uk)

# STOP LOAN SHARKS

Intervention . Support . Education

## It's back to school for Sid with Merseyside pupils



School children across Merseyside have been learning all about safe money management as part of an initiative run by police in partnership with the England Illegal Money Lending Team.

The Merseyside Police Mini Pathfinders project aims to support young people to make positive choices through early intervention. As part of the initiative the Stop Loan Sharks team was invited into schools to teach youngsters about the dangers of illegal money lenders and how to manage finances in a safe and sustainable way. The young pupils took all the advice on board and took part in competitions to design posters to share what they had learned. Here are a few pictures from schools which have taken part this year.



## Partners on board with signposts to support

The Stop Loan Sharks team works hard behind the scenes to raise awareness among partner organisations of how spot the signs that someone has borrowed from an illegal lender.

Many organisations are making changes to ensure they can support people who may be trapped in this way.

[TellJO](#), a digital innovation company specialising in customer digital wellbeing checks on behalf of councils, utility companies, housing associations, and other organisations, is enhancing its services by including referrals to the Illegal Money Lending Team.

TellJO digital wellbeing checks involve a series of questions regarding recipients' financial, physical, and mental health, leading to personalised recommendations for support. In response to escalating financial challenges, where 82.8% of respondents reported borrowing from friends, family, and acquaintances, TellJO will now ask whether these individuals are also paying interest. If they are, users will be directed to the IMLT for help.

[IE Hub](#), a digital platform where customers can fill out their income and expenditure and then choose to share this with their creditors or advice provider, is also looking for ways to spot illegal lending activity.



**IE HUB**  
INCOME & EXPENDITURE HUB

**Worried about your bills increasing?**

Head to IE Hub to use their FREE online tool and show companies what you can and can't afford to pay.

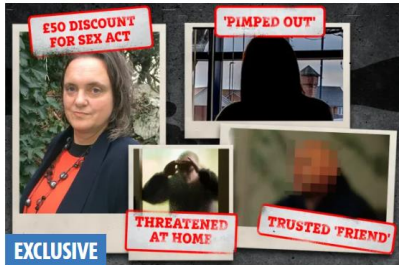
IE hub has agreed to build in an option for customers to record that they owe money to a friend. It will encourage all partners to look out for where a customer has disclosed this. In conjunction with training from the Stop Loan Sharks team, partners will then be ready to have a conversation with the customer and find out whether the lender is a loan shark.

We are hugely grateful for the help and support offered by all partners. If you want to find out more about how we can help you spot the signs of a loan shark, get in touch with us via the website [stoploansharks.co.uk](http://stoploansharks.co.uk)

# STOP LOAN SHARKS

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## Some of the media coverage from 2023



### DIRTY CASH I borrowed cash from 'pal' for Xmas... but lender turned 'pimp' & targeted my wife

AS a growing number of desperate families hit by the cost of living turn to illegal lenders, one dad-of-four in...

The Sun, December 7



Some people are going without food to pay off their debts (Stock photo)

NEWS POLITICS FOOTBALL CELEBS TV CHOICE ROYALS

### EXCLUSIVE: Millions of Brits borrow to pay for Christmas presents as loan sharks profit

The Mirror, December 16

### Jail term for cruel £92,000 Telford loan shark shows behaviour 'will not be tolerated', leader says

A jail term for a loan shark who intimidated and "humiliated" borrowers shows such illegal activity "will not be tolerated", a leader has said.

December 26 Shropshire Star .com

### Loan sharks circle desperate borrowers after doorstep lender folds - The Crusader

Thousands of desperate borrowers are being warned they are at risk from loan sharks now that Morses Club, one of the last remaining doorstep loan providers, has folded.



December 6



ITV Regional News October 4

### Dad's haunting story of borrowing money from loan shark who made his life a misery

A father has shared his emotional experience of borrowing money from loan sharks during the Christmas period.



December 9

### Crime Sunderland mother and son ran illegal lending operation with interest rates as high as 69%



December 20

### Suspected 'loan shark' arrested in North Hertfordshire

31st October 2023

CRIME BALDOCK

October 31 The COMET

### Mother and son sentenced for illegal money lending



December 20



Steph McGovern presents her daily programme live from Yorkshire, with a mixture of entertainment and lifestyle and a variety of guests

November 13



### 'The loan sharks went after Mum. She was 84'

Illegal lenders are spreading their nets and targeting families with steady incomes as well as the vulnerable, writes Holly Mead

December 16

### Anthony's Story on BBC Breakfast November 30

07:17



## Happy birthday to us!

2024 marks the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Stop Loan Sharks – here's where we are now:

At least

31,500

People supported

834

Arrests

At least

£91.2m

Debt written off

416

Number of prosecutions

598

Number of years in jail for loan sharks

1.08m

Number of people in England borrowing from a loan shark

## And what's in store for '24 . . .

The past 20 years have seen some big successes in the fight against illegal money lenders in England.

This work will continue into 2024 and beyond as we battle to rid our communities of these criminals and support those who have found themselves in their clutches.

We are extremely grateful to all those partners who work with us with this aim – 2023 saw over 550 partners download and share our social media toolkit as part of Stop Loan Sharks Week, we have delivered dozens of training sessions to organisations and more partners have become officially accredited.

Our primary and secondary education packs have

also been accredited once again by Young Money. These packs can be used by schools to help the next generation of potential borrowers learn about how to safely manage their finance and avoid the threat of loan sharks.

This year Stop Loan Sharks Week will take place in the week beginning May 13. We will be producing a new social media toolkit for partners in the approach to that week, but in the meantime, we have a host of [resources](#) available including blogs, articles and a range of posters and publicity materials.

We look forward to working with all our partners again in 2024 and to welcoming many more on board.

# STOP LOAN SHARKS

Intervention . Support . Education

## Did you grab a selfie with Sid the Shark in 2023?



## News from Scotland and Wales

### Loan shark, aged 83, preyed on vulnerable

**An 83-year-old loan shark “preyed on vulnerable people” and would threaten them if they missed repayments.**

Tabitha Richardson from Newport took advantage of her victims and would charge them 40 per cent interest on 28-week long loans.

One couple, who were victims of Richardson, described feeling “trapped in a cycle of debt” and had to pay the loan shark more than their income every month.

When they missed the payment, Richardson texted saying: “Just ring me, you know I can find you” and “You have got to speak to me and let me know what’s going on before I come looking for you”.

The judge stated: “Your interest charges kept them in a “cycle of debt” and were exploiting them for profit. You told probation you were doing people a favour and helping them out and were not out to make profit for yourself. You were financially stable yourself and if so, if it were not greed that led you to set the interest you did against those people who were likely to struggle with the debts, there was no need to set the interest at that rate. I reject this was not something motivated by greed, in my view it was.”

Richardson was sentenced to 24 months imprisonment, suspended for two years.

### Loan sharking is ‘pernicious social evil’, says judge

**Cwmbran loan shark Horace Taylor, aged 73, was sentenced to three months in prison, suspended for two years, after pleading guilty to illegal money lending.**

Taylor repeatedly lent money to more than 30 people in the Cwmbran and Pontypool area. Only three victims came forward, with one victim found to have repaid £1,060.00 in interest for loans totalling £380.00.

Threats were made when they encountered difficulties in paying him back the money, including threatening one victim that he’d “*send the boys around to smash his house up*” if he didn’t pay. A warrant exercised at his home address discovered diaries and paperwork which showed details of the illegal money lending.

District Judge Webster sentenced Taylor to three months in prison suspended for two years. He imposed 15 days of rehabilitation activity and a victim surcharge of £156. He also ordered that Taylor pay £1,060 in compensation to the first victim, £660 to the second and £40 to the third — the amounts of interest each had paid. The judge described loan sharking as a “*pernicious social evil*” that targets “*the most vulnerable in society*”.

### Two arrested after operation in Scotland

**Officers from the Scottish Illegal Money Lending Unit (SIMLU), with the assistance of partner agencies, conducted an operation in relation to illegal money lenders in Stranraer and the surrounding areas.**

Three properties were searched in Stranraer, Kirkholm and Cairnryan during the operation in November. This operation resulted in a 47 year old male and a 31 year old male being arrested in relation to illegal money lending. A report will be submitted to the Procurator Fiscal in relation to this matter.

**To report suspected illegal money lending activity in Wales:**

Visit: [stoploansharkswales.co.uk](http://stoploansharkswales.co.uk)

Call: 0300 123 3311

Email:

[stoploansharkswales@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk](mailto:stoploansharkswales@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk)

**If you are in Scotland:**

Visit: [stopillegallending.co.uk](http://stopillegallending.co.uk)

Call: 0800 074 0878



# Work & Health Programme North West



## Put yourself first with WHP Pioneer

**WHP Pioneer  
is a free  
programme  
to help you  
find work and  
stay in-work.**

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- ✓ A personalised 4-week accelerator plan.
- ✓ Access to local employers hiring now.
- ✓ Access to health support.
- ✓ Wide range of employability courses.
- ✓ Practical help with CVs, applications, interviews, travel and more.
- ✓ Career progression and development support once in-work.

**Ask JCP to refer you to WHP Pioneer or visit our website  
[www.workandhealthnorthwest.co.uk](http://www.workandhealthnorthwest.co.uk) to register.**

WHP Pioneer is part of the Work and Health Programme. Eligibility criteria applies.

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