

MADE OF MONEY

Stop Loan Sharks

When you're strapped for cash, the last place to turn is to a loan shark. They are not a community service and will resort to the most extreme methods to enforce their debts. One victim learnt this the hard way.

"It's caused ultimate stress and disruption to my whole life. Had to relocate, change kid's schools and start afresh. The experience has led me to depression and I now have to take medication to help and support my sleep. It has led to breakdowns in relationships, living in poverty and disruption to all forms of life"

The East of England Trading Standards illegal money lending team are urging anyone caught in a loan sharks trap, to speak out. Having supported over 14,500 victims, the team know what some of your most common worries are, and are here to put your mind at rest...

"What makes a loan shark?"

Loan sharks do not have a licence, issued from the Office of Fair Trading to lend money legally. They trap people in a spiral of debt with extortionate rates of interest- we have seen an APR rate of 131,000 %. They can then use threats, intimidation and even violence leaving their victims living in fear.

"I'm not even sure if the person I'm borrowing money from is operating illegally"

Watch out for the following warning signs, and if in doubt get in touch.

- A lender who gives you little or no paperwork.
- A lender who won't tell you how much you still owe or what the interest rates are.
- A lender who adds random charges to the loan or continues to increase the amount.
- A lender who takes items as 'security' (These could include passports, bank or benefits cards)
- A lender who is intimidating, threatening or violent.



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“What If I get in trouble for taking out the loan?”

You have done nothing wrong – the unlicensed lender has. You will not be in trouble with the authorities.

“I’ve been threatened by the loan shark and I’m worried I won’t get any support”

Contact us in confidence and we will help you throughout. As one victim said:

“If it wasn’t for the team I would still be paying the loan shark. I am not scared of him at all now – I wish I had done this a long time ago.”

“I’m in a lot of trouble with money, paying back the loan shark has led to me missing rent payments and struggling with bills”

Debt to a loan shark can’t be enforced by law. The team can point you in the right direction so you get the right support in managing your finances.

“These loan sharks can’t be stopped”

Yes they can. We have stopped them and we’ve put them behind bars. Almost 80 years worth of prison sentences have been secured so far by the team.

If you think a loan shark may be operating in your area call the confidential hotline on [0300 555 2222](tel:03005552222).

You can also text ‘[loan shark + your message](sms:60003)’ to [60003](tel:60003) or e-mail reportaloanshark@stoploansharks.gov.uk

For more information log-on to www.direct.gov.uk/stoploansharks