



“I really wish someone had asked me sooner if I owed money to a loan shark and if the person I was borrowing from was really my mate. It would have saved me thousands of pounds, my mental health and my marriage”

“The person I spoke to didn’t ask so I thought they couldn’t help with that debt. I wish they had. It would have saved me months of heartache and stress.”

A [report](#) published by the Centre for Social Justice estimated that 1.08 million people in England are currently using loan sharks. That is 2% of the population, so that could mean at least 2% of the people you work to support. Loan shark victims are often in contact with multiple agencies but do not reveal their situation. When the Illegal Money Lending Team (IMLT) ask them why, the reply is quite simply “because they didn’t ask me”.

Stop Loan Sharks Week 2022 runs from 26th September to 2nd October and the hashtag this year is **#LetsTalkLoanSharks**. The IMLT is asking partner organisations to ask as many people as possible a loan shark question.

The usual question might be: Do you owe money to a loan shark?

However, more than two thirds of people believe they borrowed from a friend at the point at which they took out the loan. So, it may be better to ask:

- Have you borrowed money from a friend?
- Does that friend lend lots of people money?
- Are you paying back more than you borrowed?
- What happens if you don’t pay your ‘friend’ back on time?

3 yes answers, and a concern over consequences of non-payment, may indicate this person may be the victim of a loan shark.

Conversations can take many different directions. The following questions may also be useful:

- Are you scared of anyone you owe money to?
- Is the person you borrowed from authorised to lend money?
- Is anyone helping you pay your bills? Are you paying them back more than what you borrowed?
- Have they intimidated, harassed or threatened you?

Different questions may also be useful in different sectors. For instance:

- Police “Why did you shoplift?” “Why did they assault you?”
- Credit sector “Why do you need a loan?”, “Why can’t you pay?”
- Housing “Where did the money come from to pay off your arrears?”, “What’s preventing you from paying your rent?”

If you think someone has borrowed from a loan shark, then IMLT suggest saying the following:

- “We think the person you have borrowed from might be acting illegally. You have done nothing wrong. We’d like to help you get in touch with an organisation who supports people in your situation so they can talk you through your options. Is that OK?”

You can then:

- Arrange an appointment for the potential victim to be at your offices and we will come and meet them (we can do this without knowing their details if required)
- Call your local LIAISE officer and pass the phone over to the victim (“We know Emma who works at Stop Loan Sharks, we can give her a call so you can get some advice”)
- Call our Helpline on 0300 555 2222 and pass the phone over to the person you’re supporting
- For those that prefer to type as opposed to talk then help them access Live Chat via our website www.stoploansharks.co.uk (this service is available between 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday).
- Arrange a follow up appointment to discuss their situation in more detail.

We would ask that you only give the person a leaflet or card as a last resort, as in our experience they are highly unlikely to call if they are not supported to do so.

For more information please contact your local LIAISE officer or email us at partner@stoploansharks.gov.uk.