

## BE DEAF TO LOAN SHARKS!

A SERIES of anti-loan shark videos designed for people with hearing difficulties, have been launched by a specialist organisation in Staffordshire.

DEAFS (Deaf English Athletics Federation Staffordshire) are a not-for-profit organisation who aim to increase sports and social interaction for individuals who are deaf, deafblind or disabled.

DEAFS have been working with the England Illegal Money Lending Team – a national team who investigate and prosecute loan sharks - to produce a series of informational videos that convey a warning against using loan sharks in to British Sign Language (BSL).

The videos help explain what a loan shark is and the dangers of borrowing money from an illegal money lender to viewers who suffer from hearing loss.

Action on Hearing Loss – a charity helping people confronting deafness to live the life they choose - estimates that there are more than 10 million (about 1 in 6) people in the UK with some degree of hearing impairment or deafness.

The idea for the videos came about as DEAFS were concerned that members of the deaf community were more at risk of falling victim to loan sharks.

The short videos help to signpost loan shark victims who suffer from hearing loss to the appropriate help and support services available through the IMLT.

**Brian Kokoruwe, DEAFS Project Leader, said:**

“Issues around loan sharks are very serious and can lead to a life of continuous debt. It is very important that the message relaying the dangers of getting involved with a loan shark is appropriately communicated to all members of the community.

“For those who are born deaf, their native language is British Sign Language (BSL), therefore verbal and written communications can often be very challenging to access and understand. This is why it is vital for deaf people that information relating to loan sharks is translated into BSL, to ensure the important message can be fully understood.

“This project will ensure the resources provided, relay the information and

reinforce the message to all members of the community – deaf and non-deaf – that we should all ‘Be Deaf to Loan Sharks’.

The project was commissioned by the England Illegal Money Lending Team using £5,000 of proceeds of crime money; cash confiscated from convicted loan shark sharks, following successful prosecutions.

**Tony Quigley, Head of Service for the England Illegal Money Lending Team, said:**

“Loan sharks operate across all communities and prey on the most vulnerable. These lenders may appear to be offering a community service but borrowers are often forced to pay back far and above what they have borrowed and can afford. Many are subjected to threats, violence and other callous enforcement methods.

“If you suffer with some form of hearing impairment or deafness and have been the victim of a loan shark, please contact us by email on [reportaloanshark@stoploansharks.gov.uk](mailto:reportaloanshark@stoploansharks.gov.uk) or visit our website [www.stoploanshark.uk](http://www.stoploanshark.uk) to report a loan shark online. All information will be handled confidentially by a trained officer from the team.”

**DEAFS anti-loan shark videos are now available to watch on YouTube:**

What is a loan shark? – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=luabOulyjms>

Mike’s Story - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1lt--qBPdJI&t=22s>

Be Deaf to Loan Sharks poster explained - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UFYCyNA1eol>

Nationally, Illegal Money Lending Teams have secured more than 378 prosecutions for illegal money lending and related activity, leading to nearly 325 years’ worth of custodial sentences. They have written off £71.9 million worth of illegal debt and helped over 26,500 people.

**To report a loan shark:**

Call the 24/7 confidential hotline **0300 555 2222**

Text a report to **078600 22116**

Visit the website [www.stoploansharks.co.uk](http://www.stoploansharks.co.uk)

E-mail [reportaloanshark@stoploansharks.gov.uk](mailto:reportaloanshark@stoploansharks.gov.uk)

Private message us on [www.facebook.com/stoploansharksproject](https://www.facebook.com/stoploansharksproject)