

BEWARE – LOAN SHARK FRAUDSTERS ASKING YOU TO BECOME A MONEY MULE

RESIDENTS are being urged to be wary of loan shark fraudsters who are getting them to launder money in return for cash.

The conmen are currently cold calling or texting people in the county offering them quick loans on the basis that they will have to pay a small advanced arrangement fee in order to receive the lump sum of money. On a number of occasions, residents have found that once they have paid the fee the loan fails to materialise, leaving them out of pocket.

The fraudsters, who are usually operating from outside the country, are also approaching other residents to become 'money mules.' Residents are being offered cash in order to accept the advanced fee – conned from someone else in the county – into their UK bank account before transferring it out to the fraudster's foreign account. This seemingly legal transaction is in fact laundering money and bringing misery into the lives of others.

Detective Constable Tony McClements, of Lancashire Constabulary's economic crime unit, said: "During times of austerity and the stricter lending regimes being operated by the banks, borrowing money can be difficult. These fraudsters play on the victim's need to improve their cash-flow and offer 'guaranteed' loans in return for an arrangement fee. The victim pays the fee as requested and ultimately never receives their loan as it simply did not exist.

"To compound matters the victims are paying their fees into the accounts of UK nationals who act as intermediaries; and who may or may not be aware that they are committing an offence of money laundering for which they can be imprisoned for up to 14 years."

He added: "I'd implore members of the public to be wary of cold callers and text messages offering guaranteed loans; there are legitimate companies out there making such offers but as usual the minority are giving the rest of the industry a bad name.

Page 2..

“Similarly if you are approached to accept funds into your bank account for a small reward before transferring them elsewhere, you are almost certainly being manipulated and entering into an arrangement constituting an offence of money laundering. At this time we are making arrangements to interview local people who have been facilitating this process.”

For further advice and information please visit www.actionfraud.police.uk .

May 8 2012



Sue Blackburn

Watch Liaison Officer, Community Safety Department
Lancashire Constabulary, Western Division
2nd Floor Annex, Bonny Street, Blackpool FY1 5RL
Tel: 01253 604134 E-mail: susan.blackburn@lancashire.pnn.police.uk