

Campaign aims to combat illegal lenders

A NEW campaign to combat loan sharks has been launched in Newton Heath.

The England Illegal Money Lending Team is working alongside investigators from Manchester council after reports of illegal money lending.

The charity Mancunian Way, launched to tackle anti-social behaviour in Newton Heath, is also involved.

Representatives are visiting primary schools in the area to give advice to parents. Posters in shops, beer mats in pubs and stickers on wheelie bins will also be used to raise awareness.

The Illegal Money Lending Team said an estimated 310,000 households across the country are in debt to a loan shark and with Christmas approaching, there are fears more could be targeted.

Coun Nigel Murphy, the council's executive member for the environment, said: "Household bills often pile up at this time of year, with winter fuel costs and Christmas fast approaching.

"Sadly, some people feel they don't have anywhere to go other than to illegal money lenders, meaning that seemingly modest loans to buy presents will snowball into crippling debts – coupled with the threat of violence if the exorbitant payments can't be met.

"We want to warn people to stay away from loan sharks and let them know there are alternatives out there, including a range of credit unions which Manchester residents can use if they need to borrow money."