# Estate agent sentenced for defrauding fiancé's family and charity



Charlotte Blackwell, a 31-year-old estate agent from Coity in Bridgend, has been sentenced for committing a series of frauds that saw her steal thousands of pounds from her fiancé's family and others. The Cardiff Crown Court heard that Blackwell had developed significant gambling debt, prompting her to invent fake wedding plans to defraud her victims. In delivering the verdict, Judge Jonathan Rees KC described Blackwell's actions as a "pack of lies".

This case marks a continuation of Blackwell's criminal behaviour, as she had already received a suspended sentence last August for attempting to defraud the children's cancer charity Morgan's Army of £4,000 by falsely claiming that her daughter required expensive treatment abroad. In reality, her daughter had been in remission from cancer.

Blackwell's fraudulent activities regarding the fake wedding spanned an 18-month period, beginning in November 2022 and coinciding with her previous scam against the charity. After being engaged to her partner Daniel Thomas in February 2022, Blackwell solicited money from her then fiancé’s mother, Paula Thomas, and several of her friends, claiming it was for an overseas wedding ceremony. The amounts requested varied, with Paula Thomas contributing £3,296, Helen Morse offering £3,311, Sue Chapman giving £3,272, and Tracey Roberts providing £2,803. Altogether, these individuals lost £12,682.

The deception unravelled when Morse contacted the travel agents TUI using a booking reference provided by Blackwell. She discovered that the reference was associated with an unrelated holiday for an elderly couple that had taken place the year before. Blackwell had further misled her victims by sending fake booking confirmations, flight details, and emails that were designed to appear authentic.

Upon her arrest, Blackwell confessed to police, stating, "I'm sorry, it was to pay off debts and gambling. I have now put a block to all sites," acknowledging her addiction to online gambling.

Victim impact statements revealed that the fraud had taken a severe toll on those defrauded. Chapman reported suffering from sleepless nights and anxiety over potential financial loss, while Morse expressed the need for medical assistance regarding her overwhelming anxiety resulting from the fraud.

During her sentencing, Blackwell, who has two young children, was visibly emotional as she heard her fate. Her defence barrister, Alice Sykes, argued that Blackwell had shown significant remorse and was dealing with considerable stress following her daughter’s cancer diagnosis, which had ultimately pushed her into temporary financial desperation. Sykes highlighted that Blackwell had made significant efforts to rectify her gambling issues and had taken steps to repay her debts, having recently paid £1,200 to her ex-fiancé for distribution to her victims.

The court had previously mandated a sentence of 180 hours of unpaid work, alongside rehabilitation activity and a curfew, which Blackwell had complied with since her last sentencing, with no breaches recorded.

Judge Rees noted the gravity of the frauds, labelling them as “shameful” and underscoring the fictitious nature of Blackwell's claims. He imposed a 12-month prison term, suspended for 18 months, along with an additional 120 hours of unpaid work and five days of rehabilitation. Moreover, he ordered her to pay compensation totalling £3,500 to each of Paula Thomas, Sue Chapman, and Helen Morse, alongside £3,250 to Tracey Roberts and £150 in prosecution costs.

The charity Blackwell had previously targeted, Morgan's Army, was established in memory of Morgan Ridler, who died from cancer at the age of three. After the fraud was uncovered, the £4,000 Blackwell had initially received was successfully frozen and recovered.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.thirdsector.co.uk/woman-sentenced-attempted-charity-fraud-lying-childs-cancer-status/finance/article/1886251> - This URL corroborates Charlotte Blackwell's attempt to defraud the children's cancer charity Morgan's Army by falsely claiming her daughter required treatment abroad, though her daughter was in remission.
* <https://www.thirdsector.co.uk/woman-sentenced-attempted-charity-fraud-lying-childs-cancer-status/finance/article/1886251> - Further details about Morgan's Army and the fraud case against Blackwell can be found here, including how the charity recovered its funds.
* <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gambling_addiction> - This URL provides insight into gambling addiction, which Charlotte Blackwell claimed as a reason for her fraudulent activities to pay off debts from online gambling.
* <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/news/psychological-impact-of-fraud-victimhood> - This source discusses the psychological impact of fraud on victims, which aligns with the severe anxiety experienced by those defrauded by Blackwell.
* <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/understanding-stress/> - Information about stress and anxiety, which were highlighted in the article as factors impacting both Blackwell and her victims.
* <https://www.sentencingcouncil.org.uk/explanatory-materials/sentencing-statistics/> - This source provides general information on sentencing guidelines, which could help understand the terms of Blackwell's suspended prison term and rehabilitation activities.