

‘Our friend stole £12,000 from us for her FAKE big day’

Helen Morse was excited for her friend’s upcoming destination wedding – but things quickly went awry as the big day got closer...

When Helen Morse’s friend Paula introduced her daughter-in-law to-be, Charlotte, to their friendship group in 2020, Helen was delighted. Charlotte fitted in well and was soon joining her new friends on nights out and trips to the pub. So when Charlotte invited her new pals and their partners to the lavish destination wedding that she was planning, Helen didn’t hesitate in saying yes and paid upfront. But later, when the wedding was cancelled, and with

Charlotte not sorting out a refund, a suspicious Helen got in touch with the travel agent direct – and found out that the booking details were fake and that Charlotte had been scamming them for a fake wedding. Helen says, ‘In total, our group had paid her £12,682. She sat drinking with us, pretending to be our friend, while scamming us for a wedding that she had no intention of attending. I’ll never forgive her.’

WARM WELCOME

Helen, 51, along with her friends, Paula, Sue and Tracy, gave Charlotte a warm welcome into their group after Charlotte began dating Paula’s son, Daniel. Helen says, ‘She’d come on our nights out and we always had so much fun together. Before she and Daniel got together she’d had a tough time as her daughter from a previous relationship had been treated for brain cancer.’

Thankfully, Charlotte’s daughter was given the all-clear, and after she and Daniel had a child of their own, the two got engaged in 2022 and she invited her new gang to the big day. Helen, who lives in Tondur, Bridgend, says, ‘When

Charlotte invited us and our partners to their wedding in Turkey, we jumped at the chance. We were so touched to be included and excited for a holiday.’

With the wedding booked for May 2024, Charlotte had given the group plenty of notice. She explained that she’d book everything and then work out the costs, letting each couple know what they owed. ‘It was a five-star hotel village with lots of restaurants and pools,’ Helen says. ‘It coincided with my 50th birthday too, so it was a great excuse to go all-out.’

Charlotte told the women they could pay what was owed to her in instalments via bank

transfer – but as the months went on, the costs quickly started to mount up. Helen says, ‘She said we’d need to pay £30 each to have our hair done by a hairdresser for the wedding, and that we could upgrade our rooms to a pool view for an extra £120 each.’

BOMBHELL

In total, the group paid Charlotte £12,682. Helen paid £3,311, which was the most paid out of them all.

However, in March 2024, two months before the wedding, Paula delivered a bombshell. Helen says, ‘She tearfully told us over the phone that the wedding had been postponed.

‘PAULA PUSHED TO SEE HER BANK STATEMENTS, AND THAT’S WHEN SHE BROKE DOWN AND TOLD THE TRUTH’

Charlotte had been diagnosed with a heart condition and was unfit to fly. We were worried about her as it seemed to have come out of nowhere.’

Concerned for their friend, the four women met up with Charlotte, who apologised profusely and said she was happy to pay the extra to postpone the wedding for a year. Helen says, ‘We all felt bad,

so we told her we were more than happy to pay the extra.’

However, Helen’s husband, Harold, had a suggestion. Helen recalls, ‘He said we should still go, as it was still going to be my 50th birthday and we were keen to celebrate. I agreed so called Charlotte to ask for the booking reference so I could sort it out with TUI, who we’d booked through. ‘But Charlotte seemed

reluctant to hand it over and said we’d lose all the money we’d paid if we still went. It didn’t seem right so I insisted and eventually she gave me the booking details.’

But noticing there were spelling mistakes on the booking form was a red flag for Helen. She says, ‘When I rang up TUI, the representative said no booking matched the details I’d provided. I was worried so I confided in Sue and she took the printouts to our local TUI travel agents – but she was told that the booking wasn’t with them.’

Confused, the pair went round to Paula’s house for answers. Helen says, ‘None of it added up, and once we’d explained everything to Paula, she agreed. So she went to Charlotte’s after she refused to come round to see us.’

But Paula came back with a devastating bombshell – Charlotte had spent all the money. Helen says, ‘Paula pushed to see her bank statements, and that’s when she broke down and told the truth. Charlotte’s illness was also a lie. We were all in complete shock.’

Devastated by Charlotte’s betrayal, the women had no choice but to go to the police and, three days later, Charlotte was arrested.

FRAUD

In March 2025, Charlotte Blackwell, then 31, appeared at Cardiff Crown Court where she admitted four counts of fraud. After her arrest, she’d told police she’d used the group’s money for gambling and to pay off debts. As well as the £3,311 that she had taken from Helen, Paula had paid £3,296, Sue £3,272 and Tracey £2,803.

Helen adds, ‘Shockingly, it was revealed that just months after we’d gone to the police, Charlotte had been in court for trying to defraud a cancer charity out of £4,000. Morgan’s Army had been set up by the parents of Morgan Ridler, who’d died from a rare liver cancer when he was just three. Fortunately, they recovered the money, but Charlotte had been

given a 10-month jail sentence, suspended for 21 months, and ordered to complete 180 hours of unpaid work and 10 days of rehabilitation activity, after admitting fraud by false representation.

‘According to her barrister, Charlotte had shown huge remorse for what she’d done to us and was willing to pay the money back. She wept as the judge slammed the “fiction” and “pack of lies” created by her in her “shameful” frauds.’

The judge gave Charlotte a 12-month prison term suspended for 18 months, 120 hours of unpaid work and five days of rehabilitation activity, and ordered her to pay £3,500 in compensation to Helen, Paula and Sue and £3,250 to Tracey.

Helen says, ‘In my eyes, Charlotte wasn’t upset because of what she did, but because she’d got caught. Her sentence was an insult and it will take years for her to pay us all back. It’s affected my mental health enormously. I’ve also had to take on a cleaning job on top of my full-time job to make up the money Charlotte stole from me.’

‘Thankfully, Paula, Sue, Tracey and I have such a solid bond, and it hasn’t come between us. Daniel broke up with Charlotte too when he found out what she’d done, so she’s out of our lives for good – but I will never forgive her.’



Helen has had to take on a second job to recoup the stolen money

Charlotte Blackwell scammed her friends

Charlotte admitted four counts of fraud in court