

Defrauded widow lashes out at Lloyds

The case of a 60-year-old widow who was tricked into parting with over £11,000 of borrowed money shows the extraordinary measures some fraudsters will use to get at your cash.

Her fight to have her funds returned also shows how customers sense an indifference of some banks and watchdogs to the plight of those who find themselves unfairly out of pocket.

Inna Kuznetsov, 60, fled as a penniless political refugee to the US from Russia 20 years ago with her son, and gradually built up her own small business dealing in intellectual property.

Although she says she is usually quite astute with her money, she was tricked into borrowing over £11,000 from friends by fraudsters, to send to two Lloyds offshore bank accounts based in Jersey this time last year.

Needless to say, the fraudsters proceeded to clean out the accounts before disappearing.

After realising her mistake, she alerted Lloyds to the fraud in November 2009, but it only concluded she was the victim of a scam in February 2010, after an internal investigation. It would not confirm the accounts had been closed, or that it was passing on the fraudsters' details to the police.

The Financial Ombudsman Service also turned down her request for compensation when she complained about the bank's alleged inaction to them. Their reason was simple: as she was not a customer of Lloyds herself, they could not take any action on her behalf.

Lloyds would only confirm the bank accounts had been closed after being contacted by This is Money in April, by which time the cash was gone along with any opportunity to catch the fraudsters, even though the bank had their personal details in its possession.

Lloyds also pointed Inna towards the Metropolitan Police, but they and Scotland Yard told her in turn that the bank should initiate a full investigation and get in contact with them.

Although she was originally seeking compensation for the bank's alleged inaction, Inna knows now she has no chance of seeing her money again. However, she is fighting for some authority in the UK to acknowledge that more could have been done to catch those responsible.

She said: 'Why, knowing that both accounts belong to fraudsters, knowing their names, addresses and sort codes, did the bank not do anything, even not inform the police?

'By ignoring the fraudsters, the bank, as a result, gives them a green light for [carrying out] further fraud.'