

Law student who 'opened door' in £750,000 bank fraud is spared jail

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Courts Correspondent

A LAW student who helped fraudsters steal nearly £750,000 from a businessman's account has been spared jail.

Faith Whitter "opened the back door" for scammers while working as a cashier at Metro Bank in Edgware, by changing the password to customer Munir Hussain's account.

Inner London crown court was told that Whitter, 22, had "no idea" so much money would be stolen, and when arrested by police she immediately confessed and identified others involved in the fraud.

Her barrister, Leila Gaskin, said Whitter was midway through a criminal law degree but that her dreams of finishing her studies and becoming a qualified lawyer were now in tatters.

"She is kind, generous, bright, and despite coming through a fairly difficult childhood she was making the most of her life," she said.

"Her family are in shock and struggling to comprehend the events leading up to seeing Ms Whitter in the dock."

Ms Gaskin added that Whitter - who has now set up her own beauty brand - was drawn into the fraud in August and September 2016 by a friend who "took advantage of her loyalty and trust". The court heard that

Whitter's law studies were interrupted when she was involved in a serious car crash, but that she had been planning to go back to university.

Prosecutor Robert Meikle said the bank had noticed Mr Hussain's account being drained and stopped most of the money transfers.

Whitter, from Mill Hill, pleaded guilty to one charge of fraud. Recorder

Andrew Hurst sentenced her to 18 months in prison, suspended for two years. He also ordered her to complete 200 hours of community service, pay £640 in court costs and fees, and observe a 7pm to 5am curfew for the next two months.

"You opened the back door of the bank to the fraudsters," he told her. "Without you it couldn't have happened. It is a tragedy of the case,

that, as a consequence, a very promising career you had ahead of you has now got a severe question mark over it."

The judge said that most people in Whitter's position would go to jail to send a message to other would-be fraudsters, but he agreed to suspend the sentence because "society's best interests are not served by you going to prison".

E.S. 16.01.18

Guilty: Faith Whitter worked at Metro Bank in Edgware