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"There was nothing we could do to comfort our children because they were a long way away at the time."

Nathan Sked, 13, from Southsea, said: "I felt gutted. We had been looking forward to it for ages. It was the main thing we were going for and we hadn't expected that to happen."

A spokesman from Fifa said that it was unfortunate that the incident had occurred but that those buying tickets should only do so from official sources.

The spokesman said that the Florida-based ticket firm, KickSports, was not endorsed by Fifa and should not have been using its logo on its website. But Activ4 criticised Fifa for failing to deal adequately with agencies purporting to be official ticket outlets.

Police today confirmed they had launched an investigation into the matter of the Kent-based website. "We are at the initial stages of an investigation into an allegation of obtaining property by deception in specific reference to World Cup tickets," a spokeswoman for North Kent Police said.

A spokeswoman for Kent Trading Standards said that she was aware of the internet ticket company and that other members of the public could also have been affected by the scam.

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