



Case study from the POPPY project

Medija*, Albania

My name is Medija and I am 19. Before I was trafficked, I lived in a small town in Albania with my family. I left school when I was 14 so I could work in the market with my father. He was very worried all the time about money, and sometimes he would hit me.

While I was working I met a man called Guri. He said he had seen me around and liked me. He became my boyfriend. My parents did not approve and said I must choose between him and them. I decided to go and live with Guri, as I was tired of living in a small house.

After a few months he said he wanted to take me to live in Italy. I didn't want to go but my family had disowned me so I had no choice. I agreed to go.

Guri paid for my travel and we travelled by speedboat to Italy, where he gave me false Italian travel documents. He said I would need them because the UK authorities were prejudiced against Albanians. From Italy we travelled across Europe by coach to the UK, where we were met by a friend of Guri's. He drove us to Bristol, to a house. That's when they told me that I would be working as a prostitute.

I screamed and cried and refused. They beat me badly and raped me, and told me I had no choice. It was true. I had sex with between five and ten men every day, seven days a week, working in saunas during the day and massage parlours some nights. I was exhausted and often in pain, from all the men and from the beatings. I had no contact with my family and I was locked in the house all the time, only let out to go to work.

I lived like this for six months until the police raided the sauna. They took me to the POPPY Project, who gave me shelter and are helping me recover from my experiences. I still have many problems. I can't sleep and have nightmares, and sometimes I have panic attacks. I am afraid of people and do not like to leave the house. I don't trust anybody. I sometimes drink too much, to help me forget what happened. But it doesn't work. I will never forget what those men did to me.

* This is not her real name.

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