

### **Case study from the POPPY project**

Olena\*, Ukraine

I am 23 years old. I come from a very poor area of Ukraine. I was not happy there. I lived with my father, mother and brother and my child. I was not married and my father and my brother did not like that. They beat me and called me names for not being married but having a child.

I did not have a proper job and spent a lot of time looking after my child and my sister's.

After a while I could not bear to be there any more, so I went to Moldova with a friend of my sister who said he could help me get work there in a restaurant, and help me start a new life. But when I got to Moldova he sold me to some Albanians who took me to their house. They locked me in, raped me and made me watch pornography. They beat me regularly.

I was forced to work at that house as a prostitute for two months, and then I escaped. They found me and brought me back to the house, but they decided I was trouble and they sold me again, to more Albanian men.

These men got me a false passport and took me by plane to the UK, to a massage parlour in Sheffield. There were other women there, but none of them was British.

When I was in Sheffield I was forced to see many clients per day – as many as 15. I worked every day, even during my periods; they made me put a sponge inside me to stop the blood. I got a very bad infection doing this and was very ill.

I was expected to make up to £400 per day for the men. I was not allowed to keep any of it and the other women would tell the men if they did not think I was working hard enough.

They did not let me contact my family, but they had connections in Ukraine and they visited my mother and threatened her. They told her that if I returned home they would kill me.

I was able to escape when I was sold again. The maid helped me to run away before the new gang arrived to fetch me. Altogether I had been kept as a prostitute for nearly two years.

Since I escaped I have had to have a big operation inside, as a result of my infection while working during my periods. I am not really sure what the operation was for, as I did not understand what the doctors said in the hospital. I have very bad headaches now, and I am scared to go out. But mainly I am angry. I am very angry that this happened to me and I can't control myself. And I do not trust anybody anymore.

\* This is not her real name.

**ENDS**

For further information contact communications officer Anna Bowden on 020 7840 7126 or at [anna.bowden@eaveshousing.co.uk](mailto:anna.bowden@eaveshousing.co.uk).