

LISE

SEXUALLY EXPLOITED AT THE AGE OF 15

My name is Lise, I'm 19. I come from a normal background and grew up in a loving family. But, when I was 15, everything changed and I experienced things that have scarred me deeply. Here's my story.



I was in year 8 when I started at a new secondary school. I found it hard to fit in at this new place. So, when I was invited for the first time to a party at the home of a very popular classmate, I saw this as an opportunity to join the group.

That night, I had a few drinks even though I'd never drunk alcohol before. It was late at night and we started doing dares. These were pretty harmless to begin with, but they became more and more audacious. When my turn came, the challenge was to perform a sex act in front of everybody. I felt that I had to go along with it because of the pressure from the others. Only someone was filming it all. The next day, the video was being shared by the pupils at the school.

Everyone saw it and commented on it. I was so ashamed that I didn't tell anyone. I felt terribly alone. This was the point at which I started smoking cannabis. It helped me stop thinking about it.

That was when a 25-year-old man called Hugo got in contact with me via social media. He had seen the video and made flattering comments to me. He wanted us to meet up. He said that he could help me make money. For my part, I needed money to buy hashish, so I agreed. When we met for the first time, we drank and smoked together. I don't remember what happened next. But when I came to, I realised that he had raped me. I was in shock.

“He became violent when I wasn't bringing in enough money”

He comforted me and told me that I was a diamond in the rough, that I could make a lot of money with him. This reassured me and I trusted him. That's how he brought me my first clients. He got me a place to meet with them and bought me nice clothes. In exchange, I gave him part of the money I made.

I lived like this for a year, up until the day that my parents noticed. They tried to put me in touch with a specialist association, but I didn't see any point. I was at last making a living and I wasn't asking anyone for anything. So, I ran away to Hugo. Only his attitude had changed. He became insistent, threatening and violent when, in his opinion, I wasn't bringing in enough money. The situation became dangerous and I wanted to cut all ties with him. So I went back home and asked me parents to move house. Then, I agreed to get help from the association with rebuilding and changing my life.



KEY POINTS

The sexual exploitation of minors is a form of human trafficking. It corresponds to a situation in which an underage victim is forced either directly or indirectly to satisfy the sexual desires of a third party. “Human trafficking” has occurred if the victim being exploited is underage, his or her age being sufficient to establish the existence of constraint.



WHO ARE THE VICTIMS?

Victims of sexual exploitation helped by associations are young people aged under 18 and who can on occasion even be very young children. They are often young girls who for whatever reason have lost total or partial contact with their families, but these victims can be of any nationality and come from all socio-economic backgrounds. However, most of them have experienced a period of trauma which has made them particularly vulnerable to predators, such as harassment at school or an initial trauma of a sexual nature of some kind... making her or him an ideal prey for sexual predators.



HOW CAN THEY BE IDENTIFIED?

It is difficult to identify these victims whose exploitation most often uses digital interfaces. These enable rapid exploitation which can be multiplied and make the identification of the victims complicated.

In addition, underage victims of sexual exploitation are distinguished by the fact that they are frequently in denial of their exploitation situation. If a potential victim is identified, an attempt should be made to provide support even if it has not been possible to put the situation into words.

In the event of a meeting with a potential victim, each individual can try to identify a bundle of evidence raising suspicions regarding a situation of sexual exploitation (hyper-sexualisation, concerning physical condition, repeated running away, drug and digital addiction, etc.) In all cases, it is important to turn to specialist associations who will be able to advise you on how to steer or accompany the young person or people without putting yourself in danger, the child being most certainly linked to a trafficking networks.

WHY DOES THIS SITUATION OCCUR ON THE SIDELINES OF MAJOR SPORTING EVENTS?



On the sidelines of major sporting events, the significant influx of tourists increases the risk of the sexual exploitation of minors. The larger number of potential “clients” is an opportunity for perpetrators of exploitation, acting in organised groups or in isolation, and attracts new criminal groups. For children, who are particularly vulnerable, the risk of becoming a victim of trafficking is higher as a result.



The perpetrators of trafficking will take advantage of the sharp increase in searches for sexual favours to considerably increase their income.

This increase is linked to the massive influx of people in a particularly celebratory context, sometimes having a sense of impunity linked to being away from home, to the exaltation generated by the results of the competition or to the presence of an “offer” in terms of “prostitution”.

Criminal organisations will be tempted to recruit massive numbers of new victims from among vulnerable minors in order to seize this opportunity.

