

An illegal immigrant has been jailed for 13 months after he was involved in harvesting a cannabis plantation worth £96,800.

The court heard how on 22<sup>nd</sup> of February the South Yorkshire police have executed a search warrant at the former Sheffield Arms pub on Upwell Street, in Brightside, where they found 176 cannabis plants.

Prosecuting, Louise Gallagher said the police had to break their way in using “power tools” in order to force their way through the steel gate.

Klajdi Bica, aged 21, of Upwell Street was hiding in the bathroom when the police arrived and was found in possession of the keys for the metal gate and doors.

Judge Andrew Smith said: “You voluntarily brought yourself into this situation.”

Bica entered the country illegally from Belgium in a lorry van and came to Sheffield looking to work somewhere else other than building work.

When interviewed by the police, Bica claimed he was offered a “gardener job to water plants” by a Romanian man, and that the payment will be discussed at the end once the batch have been harvested.

Miss Gallagher also claimed that the electricity meter had been bypassed, and that the production would have continued if the defendant wasn’t caught in time.

Eran Reilly, defending, claimed Bica was in €25,000 debt and that his mother was threatened by those people he owed money to, therefore he did not understand “the gravity of the situation.”

Mr. Reilly, said: “His main purpose was to come here and earn money to help his mother who has been paralysed since 2014 and needs an operation.”

Judge Smith said: “I accept that you were in debt and that your mother and family are in perilous circumstances in Albania, so you wanted to help.

“The involvement of people like yourself performing limited function under the direction allows large profits to be made by criminals higher up the chain.”

Mr Smith sentenced Bica who has no previous convictions, to a 13-and-a-half-month custodial term including an entitlement to 25% discount to guilty plea.