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'She was extremely intimidating and verbally abusive. She threatened to stab one member of the care staff in the neck'

THE CHILDREN'S COURT: THE GIRL wore a white tracksuit with the words "play babe" on the trim and a silver Miraculous Medal around her neck. She sat with her hands clasped together, almost as if in prayer, and her eyes cast downward.

The 17-year-old in State care was in court as a result of allegations that she was threatening care staff and turning up to her care home late at night under the influence of drink and drugs.

The latest incident occurred as recently as the previous night, a garda told the court.

"She was extremely intimidating and verbally abusive. She threatened to stab one member of the care staff in the neck and threw a chair across a room," the garda said.

On the 18th of July she arrived back to her care home close to midnight and appeared to be heavily under the influence of illegal substances, the garda said. Two days prior to that she breached her 11.30pm curfew again when she appeared home late, also under the influence of illegal substances.

"Then on July 14th she used threatening and abusive language to a HSE driver," the garda continued.

"He was driving the car and she refused to put on a seat-belt. The threatening and abusive behaviour continued in the shopping centre and she said she would bash his face against a wall," the garda said.

The girl continued to look into the distance, her head cast downwards, her hands still clasped together.

"Any others?" the judge asked.

The garda continued, saying the girl was collected from a meeting with a friend on July 11th.

She was slurring her words and unsteady on her feet. And there were other alleged cases of abusive and threatening behaviour in the week previously.

"Judge," the girl's solicitor Sarah Molloy said, "she accepts many of these matters. However, there has been a huge improvement - previous to this she had been staying out all night. She accepts that she has issues around anger management which she is dealing with and . . ."

"What effort has she made?" the judge interrupted.

"She's meeting her appointments and . . .," Ms Molloy said

"According to this report there have been a number of appointments made and she is not attending them," the judge said, sharply.

"There's been a huge improvement in the latest report before you, this shows - " Ms Molloy said.

". . . That she's coming home on time?" said the judge, interrupting again. "No. That her behaviour has improved I don't see that either," the judge said.

The manager of the girl's care home spoke up from the back of the room.

"Judge, there have been issues around her threatening behaviour, but in comparison with previous reports, she has improved," he said.

Judge Leonard read through the latest report.

"I suppose it is fair to say that she attended a psychiatrist but her level of co-operation left a lot to be desired," the judge said.

"She has difficulty opening up to people," Ms Molloy explained.

"She has gone beyond the stage of having difficulty opening up to people," the judge said sternly, looking towards the girl. "It's about time that she started accepting all the help she is being offered. It's not an option for her to be going out at night beyond her curfew, drinking and taking drugs."

The girl looked up to the judge and bit her lower lip gently.

"I'll put this case back for a further probation report. I will ask that she be arrested if she breaks her curfew or if she is under the influence of drink or drugs. I'll direct urinalysis, if the Probation Service deems it necessary," the judge said.

"Drink and drugs are not an option for her - they only serve to aggravate her behaviour. It's great to see the staff are saying positive things about you - but your behaviour is not acceptable. They have a job to do and you are threatening them with knives, or scissors or whatever. You have to move on and stop this behaviour," the judge said.

"Okay," the girl said softly.

"The only thing stopping you going into custody is this positive report."

She nodded again.

The girl got up quietly and left the court with a thin smile.