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'I want to stay in custody for a while,' said the 17-year-old boy in a weary voice. 'I want to stay for as long as I can'

THE CHILDREN'S COURT: THE BOY in the yellow T-shirt was pleading with the judge to send him into custody.

"I want to stay there for a while," he said in a weary voice. "For as long as I can."

He looked tired and older than his 17 years. In the corner of the room, his mother sat with her head in her hands, crying quietly to herself.

It was the boy's second time in court in the space of a few hours, on separate charges.

Judge Clare Leonard looked puzzled.

"This is unusual," she said "And he has no previous convictions? He seems a bit confused."

Moments earlier the boy had pleaded guilty to abusive and threatening behaviour near Chapelizod last April.

A garda gave evidence of finding him, along with four others, drinking and acting in a threatening manner.

"They were all intoxicated, Judge," the garda said. "His brother was so intoxicated that he was pale and wasn't responsive. The defendant here was shouting at his brother, saying, 'you're a f**king wanker - look at the state of you.' He motioned as if to punch him, Judge, but didn't make contact."

The boy's mother recoiled and put her hands to her forehead.

"Another of the males fell and hit his head quite badly," the garda continued. "The defendant was still aggressive, running out in front of taxis."

"He was also verbally abusive to the ambulance crew when they arrived. He went to physically assault a passenger in a taxi and had to be held back . . ."

The judge interrupted, asking for more details about the threats to the ambulance crew.

"He continued to be abusive," the garda said. "He said, 'I'll f**king sort you out', and, 'You f**king scum' and, 'Let's have a straightener, one-on-one'. He was calling on his friends to help and they surrounded us at one point. When we put handcuffs on him and placed him in the patrol car, he started to headbutt the window of the car."

"So this was directed as people were trying to help his brother?" the judge said.

The garda nodded.

"And when we got back to the station, it didn't get any better," he said.

The judge asked what substances had he taken.

"He was extremely intoxicated," the garda said.

"Just intoxicated?" she said, sceptically.

The boy's solicitor, Kelly Breen, intervened.

"He has a major problem with alcohol and prescription drugs, your honour," she said.

"He has asked to go into custody to help deal with these problems as he finds it extremely difficult in the community."

The boy's mother stared at the floor, wringing her hands.

Ms Breen said he had been in St Patrick's Institution on remand on a previous occasion. This followed another incident in which he asked to be remanded in custody.

The judge examined the charge sheets in front of her.

"Okay, then. I'll remand him in custody in St Patrick's and direct that a course - preferentially a residential treatment centre - be organised to help him deal with these problems," she said. "We'll give it two weeks."

The boy shook his head quickly and whispered to his solicitor.

"Judge, he is seeking a longer stay," Ms Breen said.

"Can I stay for longer, Judge?" he said.

"I'll give you three weeks in that case."

His mother wiped her eyes and looked over towards him from the other side of the court. She tried to catch his eye but he didn't see her.

There was no visible reaction from the boy. He rose to his feet and, accompanied by two gardaí, walked with slumped shoulders down to the cells of the court.

The boy's case was one of a number yesterday where alcohol appeared as one of the key factors involving children accused of criminal offences.

Another 17-year-old was in court after pleading guilty to threatening gardaí.

The incident occurred after he was found by a bridge near Blanchardstown drinking a can of beer with two others.

The garda said there had been complaints about the boys which he was responding to. When he arrived and asked the boy for his address, he said he gave several false ones.

"I arrested him and directed that the other two leave quietly. He was very intoxicated. He called me a 'rookie' and a 'brave man' for trying to arrest him on my own.

"At the station, he was threatening and said he would file a lawsuit against me," the garda said. "I would classify him as a pup, Judge, pure and simple."

The boy's solicitor, Michelle Finan, said her client was very apologetic.

"He might be, Judge, but I'm still in doubt," the garda said. "He didn't look me in the eye when he apologised."

Ms Finan added that the boy's friends told him they had spiked his drink, but that he had no recollection of the event.

"He is working with the probation services and he's been doing great things," she said.

"I expect him to be doing nothing but great things," the judge said drily. "I'll put him on a probation bond of €100."