

## Mother guilty of incest in 'house of horrors'

A woman who admitted that she had made her 14-year-old son have sex with her on four occasions told gardai they were living in a house of horrors.

The woman pleaded guilty to charges of incest, sexual assault, and wilful neglect yesterday at Roscommon Circuit Court.

The 40-year-old, who cannot be named for legal reasons, is the first woman in the state to be convicted of incest against one of her children and is due to be sentenced today.

The court heard that the incest took place after the woman (40) returned in a drunken state from a local pub.

“Yes, it was a house of horrors with bells on it,” she admitted.

“My kids were sexually abused, not washed and not fed – I am the worst mother in the world and I don’t deserve to get my children back.”

Her six children were aged between six and 15 when the offences took place over a six-year period at the family home. When gardai arrested the woman, she admitted the offences and said she was sorry for what had happened.

In the course of detailed evidence given to Judge Reynolds when the case opened yesterday morning, Sergeant John Hynes said that the woman and her six

children had been living in appalling conditions at the family home when he first investigated the case.

He said the children were not fed properly, suffered from head lice and were beaten on regular occasions.

The mother left her children alone in the house and went drinking on an almost daily basis.

The house itself was strewn with rubbish, dirty clothing and stale food.

Sgtt Hynes said in evidence that the children had never been properly toilet trained and often fought amongst themselves while their mother was out in the pub.

The court heard that a local doctor reported his concerns to the Western Health Board; but while social workers were coming in two days a week, the children were warned not to speak about the way they were treated.

The full details of what the woman’s sister described as horrific cruelty were not disclosed to gardai until the children were taken into care at the end of 2004.

The teenage boy later told HSE support services about the sexual assault.

The children’s plight came to the attention of gardai after the oldest child made certain disclosures to social workers in 2004.

He told gardai that the house was cold, the walls were damp, the range in the kitchen was lit about once a month, that all the rooms were “kips” that there was rubbish strewn everywhere, that bed clothes were never changed even though two of the children wet the bed and that his mother regularly went out drinking, sometimes until 3 or 4am.

Judge Miriam Reynolds heard that so much rubbish was dumped in a shed at the back of the house that it was falling out the door and that the cats used to leave dead rats at the back door . Five rats were once piled up at the door .

Sergant John Hynes said that it seemed that nothing was ever thrown out, kitchen utensils were never washed , the bathroom was in an appalling state, the toilet was never flushed and dirty water was left in the sink and that the kitchen table could not be seen because of the dirt.