

Mum who left her son (3) at home alone is spared prison

By Andrew Phelan

A YOUNG mother who left her three-year-old son home alone for hours has avoided jail for child abandonment.

The Lithuanian woman has been told she will be left without a criminal record after a court heard she was a "responsible young lady" who had made a mistake.

She admitted leaving the toddler at her south city apartment for two and a half hours.

Judge Bryan Smyth had warned he was not ruling out a prison sentence.

However, this week he described a probation report on the accused as "very good" and instead told her to make a €500 donation to the ISPCC. "She certainly appreciates that leaving a young child in the apartment in the circumstances was wrong," her lawyer told Dublin District Court.

"She realises on that day, she neglected to focus on her primary concern of looking after her child."

The court heard previously she had gone to the shops to get groceries, expecting to be no more than half an hour there but in the meantime got into a row with her boyfriend.

While they were out arguing, gardai coincidentally raided the apartment with a drugs warrant.

The child, who had been taught no English, was found crying hysterically. Her lawyer asked Judge Smyth to deal with her as leniently as possible.

"I would ask you not to criminalise this lady," he added. "She made an error in the circumstances."

Risks

"I accept the probation report is very good," Judge Smyth replied. "Nonetheless, she exposed a very young child to risks which were unknown.

"We don't know what might have happened to the child. Nothing did happen, but that is not really the point."

The judge said, however, that he accepted there were "extenuating circumstances".

The court heard the accused had been in Ireland for three years, was working part-time and had no previous convictions.

She had no drug problem herself, and the search was nothing to do with her.

The HSE had been involved and the child had been in foster care for some time, but was now living with his mother again.

Judge Smyth adjourned the case to May 20 and said he would dismiss the charge under the Probation of Offenders Act if the accused made the €500 donation to the Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children.

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