

CASE STUDIES
DON'T CLOSE YOUR EYES

CASE STUDY 1 – Ana's story

On a recent flight, a Flight Attendant noticed a couple on board who were travelling with a young child. The child, Ana, looked to be about 9 years old. The couple were very well dressed; wearing expensive looking jewellery and clothes. Ana, by comparison, was wearing poor quality clothes.

The Flight Attendant noticed that the couple were Irish but the child was not – she supposed the child could be adopted. However, after some time, the Flight Attendant also noticed that, as the couple spoke among themselves, the girl looked unresponsive and she seemed to be gazing into space. The Flight Attendant initiated a conversation with the child asking if the child had been to Ireland before. The man accompanying Ana immediately intervened and asked the Flight Attendant to leave the child alone, he said she was tired after her long journey. The Flight Attendant felt that something about the situation was not quite right. She informed the Pilot of her concerns. The Pilot decided to alert ground immigration officials by radio so that they could watch out for the couple and child when passing through immigration.

It turned out the couple, who were Irish, had “bought” Ana from her “uncle” back in her home country. They had drugged Ana before the flight. They were taking her to Dublin to become a domestic servant for a wealthy couple who had paid for her in advance. The couple were arrested. It was the actions of the Flight Attendant that saved Ana from a life of slavery.

CASE STUDY 2 – Christine's Story

Christine is a 19 year old Albanian girl. She has primary school education and speaks very little English. She spent most of her teenage years working for her family at home. One day a friend of her uncle offered to take Christine to Europe for work. She willingly accepted his offer and her father gave his blessing. The friend organised all her travel arrangements and they flew to Dublin via London.

When they arrived at Dublin airport the friend handed her over to a man called Jim and it wasn't until she arrived at Jim's house that she realized her fate. Jim raped her and told her she had to do everything he said. He informed her that she owed him €50,000 for travel and that she would have to pay it back by selling sex to men. Christine was horrified as she never wanted to be a prostitute but she was frightened of what would happen if she refused.

Jim told Christine that if she went to the Gardaí she would be thrown in prison because her travel documents were illegal. It didn't take Jim much to deter Christine

from going to the Gardaí because her only experience of policing was one of corruption in Albania.

Jim took Christine to a house where there were 3 other young women and she was introduced to the life of prostitution. Christine had to have sex with 5 to 10 men a day. Jim or his driver would collect the women's earnings everyday and the women would receive €20 a day to buy food and condoms. Christine lived in the brothel with the other women and while they were free to go the shops, they could never go too far away from the house because they had to be available 24/7 when men rang to use them.

A few weeks later Christine was taken to another location and this time she was in a brothel on her own. Christine initially felt totally isolated in a new town with no one to talk to, except the men who used her or her pimp. In time, Christine frequently spoke with a friendly woman in the local supermarket, but she was afraid to tell her the truth.

Occasionally Christine would ring her family but she felt too ashamed to tell them what had happened. The only option Christine felt she had was to do as she was told and hope that maybe when the debt was repaid she would get free. Christine often blamed herself for deciding to go abroad and trusting the family friend.

One day the brothel was raided by the local Gardaí and Christine was arrested for not having ID and for engaging in prostitution. Christine had a lifelong fear of police and she decided not to tell them her true story.

Christine was granted free legal aid and in time built up a trusting relationship with her legal representative, who having heard her story, formed the view that she was a victim of sex trafficking. In accordance with existing arrangements in this area Christine was granted a 60 days recovery and reflection period for the purpose of

- recovering from her ordeal
- giving her time to reflect on her position and
- deciding whether or to assist with a police investigation.

She was also provided with safe and secure State accommodation. Christine opted to assist the police with their investigation and she has now been granted 6 months temporary residency.