



GlobalARRK

Global Action on Relocation and Return with Kids

UK Registered Charity Number 1170455

## Ellie's Story

### Family background:

This case involves the mother Ellie and father Max and 2 children Oliver and Ben. The mother, father and children are all of British nationality. The children were born the U.K in the years 2010 and 2011.

The parents met in Cyprus (Ellie's parents lived in Cyprus, and Max was on a holiday). At his invitation Ellie went to the UK in 2009 with the intention to stay temporarily prior to an arranged job in France. However, it would transpire that as a result of abuse and coercive behaviour Ellie would not go to France and instead remain in the U.K. In May of 2012 they moved together to Cyprus.

### Before the initial move:

Before the family moved abroad initially the mother said she did not know about the law on habitual residence.

### About the relationship breakdown:

The parents separated in November 2012.

In 2009-2012 the mother described incidents of domestic abuse perpetrated by the father involving: physical, sexual, and emotional abuse. In the years between 2009-2012 Ellie details that he would not permit her to work nor to have any money. Furthermore, he "gradually got me away from friends down there... I was very isolated. There was major coercive control and constant depletion."

In the U.K Ellie tried to leave 4 times and ask for emergency housing. However, with each attempt Max would be called and argue she had a happy home and emergency housing would not be required.

In Cyprus the abusive behaviour continued. Ellie states that the Cypriot authorities did not take any of her complaints seriously. After they had separated Max would intimidate Ellie; he would call and stay silent with sound of spinning tyre wheels in the background. On one occasion Max left their 18-month old son in a Cypriot police station.

### After the relationship breakdown

After the relationship breakdown Ellie wanted to go back to the State she considers her home country (UK) to live with her children. Ellie tells the interviewer that between 2013-18 they were constantly at Court. By 2015 Max had moved home to the U.K but he put a 'stop' at the border to prevent Ellie and the children leaving Cyprus. He visited every three months to see the children and would conduct acts of intimidation and make serious (untrue) allegations to the Cypriot authorities about Ellie's parenting. In 2015 Ellie asked Max whether he would agree to have the port stop lifted so she could return home with the boys. Max gave a host of conditions he wanted Ellie to personally meet e.g to live in a 50 mile radius of him, which he knew she could not afford. It was at this point that Ellie felt truly 'stuck'. Ellie tells the interviewer; "It was really after that when I started to really fight to come home"

The reason she wanted to return to 'home country' was because Ellie had never intended to move to Cyprus permanently.

Ellie was not eligible for social welfare support in Cyprus because she had not worked there for 3 years nor paid national insurance. Ellie sought advice from the British Embassy. They helped to fast-track her application for her son's passports to the legal department at the HMPO. (Max held these and refused to let her renew them as he wanted them to remain in Cyprus - creating another barrier to their return to the U.K). The embassy's help meant that Ellie could renew the passports without Max's intervention.

After the relationship breakdown the mother's residence / immigration status was settled because she had a 'yellow slip' i.e status of permanent residency in Cyprus.

#### Relocation / Leave to Remove:

Mother did apply for relocation/leave to remove order at the end of 2017. The mother was not eligible for legal aid. The relocation process took 1 year. The mother said she found the process a relief as she was expecting (as were her legal team) for the process to take 2.5 years.

#### About the return:

In March 2019 the children returned with Ellie to the U.K. When they returned, the mother and children were escorted by armed police from the airport to their home to ensure their safety. Part of the Court Order had meant that Ellie had to disclose *where* they were living. On accounts of Max's extensive criminal record and the domestic abuse the Police Force deemed it fit for the children to be escorted.

The longer-term outcomes for mother are that an unease that there was a need to disclose the home address and children's school in order for them to return to the U.K. However, Ellie states that she feels 'safer' now there is a non-molestation order and Prohibited Steps Order that prevents Max from going to the children's school. However, she worries about the delayed reception from Social Services and still awaits a visit and evaluation from them.

The longer-term outcomes for children are that their prolonged stay in Cyprus was disruptive and upsetting. They are relieved and happy to be back in the U.K. The children have disclosed they no longer want to see their father.