

# Sara's story

## Family Law

Sara came to us looking for advice on supervised access visits between her 18 month old twins and their father. Supervised access visits are when a parent is only allowed to visit their children under the supervision of another person, such as a family member or a social worker. A court had ordered such visits between Sara's twins and their father, one of whom has disabilities and complex medical needs. There was no service provider with facilities to host supervised access so a private supervised access provider was used instead. This involved the young children being handed over to a representative of this service in a car park where they were brought to meet their father. Sara was concerned that this service did not appear to have a Child Safeguarding Statement. A Statement like this is an important child protection document that provides an overview of the measures in place to keep children safe.

**Issue** The case illustrates the difficulties that arise from not having a court welfare service. This is an independent body whose job it is to promote the welfare of children and families involved in family court. Such a service exists in the UK and elsewhere. In this case, it appears the Court had to rely on the services of a private and unregulated service provider.

**How we helped** Through our clinic, Sara was advised on the protection her young twins were entitled to under law and child protection regulations that should be in place. She was informed that such a service must have a Child Safeguarding Statement and this should be available to parents, guardians, Tusla and members of the public. The service provider did not have a Safeguarding Statement and this was brought to the attention of Tusla's Child Safeguarding Statement Compliance Unit.

