

Panto is more than a performance

Eleven year old Amber explained that it wasn't the first panto that she'd been to watch but she really enjoyed the evening because she loved hanging out with the other foster families, she loves watching plays and found it very funny. Ambers' favourite characters were Dame Sarah Suet, Dick Whittington, Puss, Alice Fitzwarren, King Rat and Captain Darling.

Amber enjoyed the evening with her foster sister, and Sarah her carer, who has been fostering for almost 3 ½ years. Sarah explained, 'It was lovely to get out with other carers in a social setting, rather than just seeing them at training or support groups. The girls absolutely love seeing other fostered children. We have been going to as many fostering events as possible and the girls are starting to meet the same people again and again, it is brilliant for them to be with other children, they have something in common from the outset.

Even after several years of care, both my girls find it extremely hard to settle and so events like the panto are brilliant for helping them meet with and talk to other fostered children, they don't feel so alone. We have attended many events, some paid for, thank you, some at no cost, and this has helped my girls immensely knowing that there are other children in the same situation as them.

It helps me to meet other carers and not feel so alone too. There are not many other carers near where I live, Devon is such a large rural county and we are all so spread out. To begin with I didn't meet that many other carers with whom I could form a social bond. Now these activities and events have been put on, it has enabled me get to know other carers and build relationships with them which is brilliant and much needed.'

Jack, aged nine, had seen a different version of Dick Whittington at school before, he thought this one was really funny though and particularly enjoyed throwing the cupcakes, and when the coconuts were falling on the Dame Sarah's head. Jack's favourite character was Dick Whittington, he wasn't so keen on King Rat though who was nasty and lied about Dick Whittington.

Jack's foster carer, Hannah, agreed that the pantomime was excellent. 'It was interactive and Jack was excited from start to finish. The characters were funny and there were plenty of innuendos that had the adults laughing heartily as well as the children. What Jack got from the pantomime was a happy, memorable experience that made him laugh and smile all night.

I think the pantomime, although a great event and one that was appreciated by all, is not one at which you can really socialise with other families. Summer events will be much better for this.