Strictly star gives heart warrior Alya a birthday surprise she won’t forget

Friday 5 March, 2021

A little girl who has undergone three major heart surgeries received the best birthday present she’s ever wished for – a surprise visit from Strictly Come Dancing superstar Anton Du Beke.

Alya Waites, from West Yorkshire, was shocked to open the door to find Mr Du Beke standing in front of her with a cake to wish her a happy birthday.

Born with a rare heart condition (truncus arteriosus) which meant her heart didn’t work properly and made it difficult for her to breathe, Ayla has spent much of her life in and out of Leeds Children’s Hospital undergoing lifesaving surgery and treatment. Over the years, her parents, Clare and Adam, have been supported by The Sick Children’s Trust which gave them a place to stay at its ‘Home from Home’ Eckersley House, minutes from their daughter’s side. When Mr Du Beke, a supporter of The Sick Children's Trust, heard about his biggest fan turning seven years old he wanted to make the big day special for her. **He said:**

“After hearing all about Alya I felt so inspired by her strength. She is an amazing little girl, and a talented dancer. I am so pleased that despite the current challenging circumstances and social distancing that I could do just a little something to put a big smile on her face for her birthday.”

Alya, who attends ballet class via Zoom every Saturday morning, said: “I never thought my favourite Strictly dancer would visit me to say happy birthday. Mummy and daddy told me there was a surprise visitor and I thought it might be a friend from school. Seeing Anton was even better. I felt so happy, excited and special.”

Alya’s mum Clare added: “Alya loves to dance and every Saturday night, she is there dressed up in front of the television ready to dance her socks off to Strictly Come Dancing. It never fails to make me smile and fills me with so much love. She is a huge fan of Anton’s and this surprise blew her mind.

“We want to say a huge thank you to Mr Du Beke and The Sick Children’s Trust for organising this, and to the charity for its support. Your child being is hospital is traumatic but can be made easier with help from The Sick Children’s Trust and as a family we want to do whatever we can to help raise awareness of this incredible service.”

The Sick Children’s Trust supports families with seriously ill children with a place to stay across it’s ten ‘Homes from Home’. The charity relies entirely on voluntary donations to do this and estimates to lose 25-30% of its income due to cancelled fundraising events. To donate to the charity visit sickchildrenstrust.org/donate

For further information about The Sick Children’s Trust, please visit sickchildrenstrust.org

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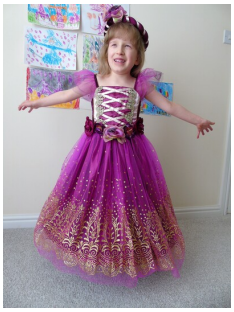



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