Building connections is more important now than ever before, and a national retirement living provider is ensuring residents can continue to link with their local communities.

Staff from Sanctuary Retirement Living services around the country are working to bring different age groups together, through the coronavirus pandemic and beyond. Prior to social distancing measures, one of the most popular activities was regular visits from local youngsters who would spend time with the residents.

At Jubilee Court in Cambridgeshire, the local parent, baby and toddler group would visit each month, with opportunities for play-based learning. Everyone got so much out of the sessions, with the main benefit being the ability to share experiences across the generations.

Nearby in Sawston, local college students read their own poems and stories to the residents of Bircham House.

Residents from Dunboyne Court in Devon got out and about when they judged a history project for a local school, with youngsters returning the favour by

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Bringing their homemade cakes into the service.

Heidi Hibberd, wellbeing and inclusion assistant at Greenwich Gardens in Derbyshire – where residents joined a school choir in renditions of traditional songs – said: “The residents are always smiling when the children are around, and talk about it for days after they have left. They are always asking when they can next come and it really seems to lift their moods!”

Although the hope is that these visits can resume once social distancing measures have eased, lockdown hasn’t stopped the Sanctuary Retirement Living staff from making sure residents can still socialise.

Maureen Almond, a resident from Jubilee Court, has been enjoying arts and crafts after taking part in a charity-led penpal initiative. Her new young friend sent some instructions for Maureen to make her own sock bunny. Maureen has also been writing to a local mum and daughter through the Postcards of Kindness of initiative.

And at Trellis House in London, youngsters who normally see the residents in person every week have been delivering handwritten letters, complete with drawings, with many addressed individually to residents whom they have got to know well.

Hayley Massey, wellbeing and inclusion assistant from Jubilee Court, commented: “An important part of our jobs is to make sure that our residents can stay connected and live healthy lives in the way they choose, and that doesn't just stop because of Covid-19. We want to make sure we have longevity for socialising in our retirement communities as we move through the uncertainty of the next few months.”