

Intergenerational Linking Activity Ideas

Postcards and letters



Always a great way to start a connection!

Thousands of children across England have already written a letter or sent a postcard to someone living in a care home.

These young people in Newcastle started their linking journey by writing a postcard to their new care home friends.



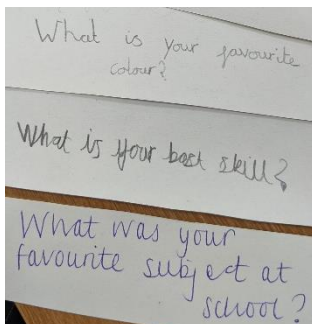
These ladies live in a care home in Bury and loved receiving postcards from children at the local school.



See [Week 6 of our 'Become a Care Home Friend Challenge'](#) for a template postcard and ideas of ways you could decorate it.

Tip - encourage children to make their handwriting as clear as possible, to support those who may find reading more difficult.


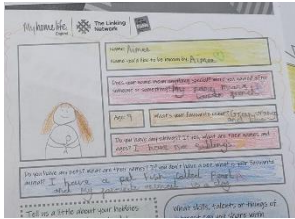




'Getting to know you' activities



Once you've decided to link, the next step is to find out more about each other. There are many ways that younger and older people can introduce themselves and get to know their new friends:

- Write a message on a whiteboard and send a picture of you holding it (like the couple on the right). This works well if you are getting to know each other virtually.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asking 'Curiosity Questions' of each other (see picture on the left) – you could write your questions on paper, put them in a jar and hand deliver them.  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Filling in a One Page Profile (see our step-by-step activity instructions and template) 
<p>Seasonal and topical activities</p> 	<p>Tying in activities to occasions that are already being celebrated is a great and time-efficient way to link. These could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seasonal and religious holidays National days – E.g. National Kindness Day Special days – e.g. Remembrance Day Awareness days – E.g. Dementia Action Week <p>In Leeds, children made red paper roses for every older person on Valentine's Day, then hand delivered them to the care home. In return, older people wrote back with some poetry written inside hand made cards.</p> 
<p>Artwork exchanges</p> 	<p>There are so many options! Younger and older people could create their own artwork and exchange them, or you could work on a shared artwork piece together.</p> <p>Younger and older people from Bury made this beautiful flower mosaic by each completing their own square, before bringing together every segment.</p>  <p>In Bradford, a link created a "tree of togetherness". Younger and older people each made their own paper leaves and annotated them with messages – young people shared memories of their favourite</p>

journeys, whilst older people wrote Words of Wisdom for the children. The leaves were exchanged and together the generations created a shared tree artwork.



Remember - activities including artwork exchanges don't need to be complicated to be successful. In fact, simple is often best!

Personalised gifts



What do you know about younger and older people's interests? How could you use this to make a thoughtful gift with a personal touch? You could brainstorm your ideas first.

In Bradford, children made 'Kindness Packs' for their care home friends. These packs were filled with gifts, including word searches that were personalised to the residents' favourite hobbies and interests.



[See our Wordsearch activity step-by-step instructions and template.](#)

Children from Plymouth made personalised suncatchers for residents to enjoy whilst they were isolating. The suncatchers were hung in each bedroom window so older people could enjoy the colours reflecting in the light, even from bed.



Knowledge/History exchange

"Older people are full of wisdom"
Pupil - Sefton

"I enjoyed listening to older people's knowledge. For example, Jupiter is the largest planet and it's like a big brother to Earth" Pupil – Leicester



Intergenerational Linking is a fantastic opportunity for knowledge exchange. Being able to pass on memories and wisdom to the younger generation can give older people a sense of pride and purpose. Equally, there are many things that young people can share with the older generation.

A lady from Sefton, originally from Germany, shared her experiences of what it was like to live through Word War II. Afterwards, inspired pupils made memory crosses to honour those from their town who had passed away in the war.



In Derby, a group of care home residents shared their memories of Windrush with a local youth group, supporting the young people to explore their West Indian heritage.

Meanwhile in Bradford, children created a giant hanging mural of “what I’d like to be when I grow up” to hang in the care home. Older people then shared some life advice based on these aspirations.



“I felt encouraged because the older people encouraged us to follow our dreams and they’ve been giving us some hope for the future”.

Planting bulbs and seeds



Painting a ‘pot of love’ (plant pot) and filling it with seeds and/or flowers is a lovely way to connect.

Children from Cornwall painted plant pots and then filled them with herbs and seeds, popping personalised messages into the soil for older people to read and enjoy.



Later in the year they visited the care home and helped to prepare a meal using the freshly picked herbs!

[See our Pots of Love step-by-step activity instructions.](#)

Gardening / tree planting



Getting outdoors has benefits for every age group and it can provide a lovely setting for connection.

Younger and older people from Leicester took part in tree planting together, creating a permanent memory of the friendship between their school and local care home.



Young people from Sefton who wanted to do some social action in the community as part of their Duke of Edinburgh award helped to tidy up the garden of their nearby care home, ahead of the care home having a garden party... which they were then invited to!



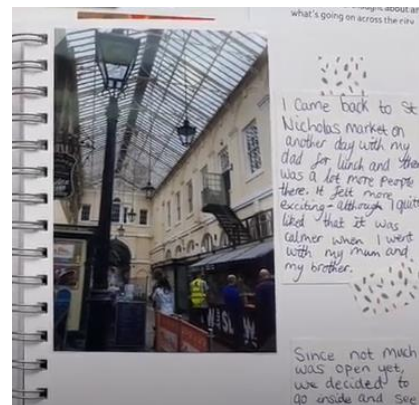
Sharing about the local area



Feeling connected to the local area and community can improve quality of life, giving people a sense of place and purpose.

Why not invite older people to reminisce and share their memories of local places? This could be particularly beneficial for older people living with dementia, who may find it easier to recall longer term memories, rather than shorter term.

Perhaps there are local places that are important to older people, but they've haven't been able to visit these places for a while. Children from Bristol asked care home residents what their favourite local areas were. They then visited these places themselves and created 'Maps of Memory' for the older people, recording their visits through videos, photos and scrapbooks, so that they could still experience them from inside the care home.



In person visit to the school or care home



It's important that you plan a structure for an in-person meet, but still have flexibility so that you can be led by individuals and what happens on the day.

Alongside chatting, here are some of the things you might like to do when meeting in person:

- Jigsaws
- Parachute & playground games
- Storytelling sessions
- Creating artwork
- Singing a song/doing a music activity e.g. with percussion

Once your link is established, you could even plan a garden party together! You can make the invitations and decorations, and perhaps do some baking.



Theatre/Drama



Getting involved in theatre/drama is a great way to break down barriers between generations. People play characters different to themselves and may find it easier to open up.

You could enlist the support of a local theatre company or arts practitioners to help you facilitate a session.

You could also incorporate younger and older people's favourite songs and dances into the session.

Tip - Ask older people to lead the warm up exercises – this sets a positive example to children that age shouldn't be a barrier to participation.

