

Retirement community resident finally meets her teen pen pal

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An unlikely pair who struck up a friendship while writing to one another during the pandemic have finally met face to face.



Maureen Almond, who lives at Jubilee Court in March, a retirement community run by Sanctuary Supported Living, and Mia Emmett, a teenager from Wymondham, first connected over four years ago through an intergenerational pen pal project, a unique initiative designed to bridge the age gap and bring people together from different generations.

Despite the 73-year age difference, they exchanged letters until the Covid-19 crisis, where communication by mail slowed down and they started speaking on the phone. After years of sharing details from their lives and becoming firm friends, they finally arranged to meet.

Their long-awaited meeting was filled with anticipation and 87-year-old Maureen was “really excited” to see Mia, who travelled an hour and half to visit. She said: “I couldn’t wait to meet Mia and her family.

“When I heard about the pen pal programme, I applied straight away. My late husband and I never had children ourselves, but we both came from large families and had a great affection for them. So, just before Covid, I was paired with Mia who was ten at the time.

“Over the years, we’ve covered everything from family and friends to school activities, and Mia’s little pets. I’ve shared stories from my own teen years, as well as my travels with my husband, who was in the armed forces.

“My husband passed in 2002, so I’ve been grateful for Mia’s companionship. I’ve treasured our chit chats and the laughter we’ve shared. Meeting her in person was incredibly special - I truly enjoyed spending time with her.”

When asked if she had any advice for other residents thinking about starting a pen pal relationship, Maureen said: “Just do it - you never know what new friends you might make.”