

PROPERTY



both generations.” Retirement developer Richmond Villages knows as well as any that longevity is rising – it has six centenarians at its Northampton site. “With people living ever-longer, we will inevitably see an increase in different generations from the same family living together,” says Philippa Fieldhouse, managing director of Richmond Villages. “Not only can people retain their lifestyle and their own front door, they also have the reassurance of knowing that other members of the family are close by.”

It is often the children who downsize first and persuade their parents to join them so they can make sure their parents are looked after, according to retirement housebuilder McCarthy & Stone. Val Richards was just 56 when she and her husband, Paddy, moved to Lime Tree Village, the Retirement Villages development in Warwickshire.



Style: Lime Tree Village, above and left, is in the grounds of an Edwardian manor

Churchill Retirement Living. “Because each can live independently of each other yet very close by, they can enjoy each other’s company in a relaxed way without the stress of having to travel long distances or feel guilty because the daughter or son can’t visit very often. Those who do it say it’s a perfect solution.”

Richard and Lolla Cross are already feeling the benefit since their daughter, Debbie Mountford, and her husband, Nigel, joined them at Bede Village near Coventry earlier this year. “It gives us more of a purpose having them here,” says Richard, 82, who bought a two-bedroom apartment with his wife 15 years ago and was joined a year later by his sister, Maureen, who bought one too.

“It really is a case of happy families now that my daughter is here.” Debbie, 59, a teacher, and her semi-retired husband, Nigel, 63, moved into a two-bedroom cottage six months ago.

“Although I am 82 and my daughter is 59, we don’t notice the age gap,” Richard adds. “We love doing things together. We all have the same interests and even go on holiday together.” He and Lolla have been more active since Debbie and Nigel – and their West Highland terrier – arrived. “We walk Barney every day. It keeps us active,” Richard says. “We still lead our own lives, and I still drive, but it’s nice to know that Debbie and Nigel are on hand to help us if we need it. We need younger people around. They are stimulating company.”

Even if they don’t come with dogs, having children return to the nest can rejuvenate older mums and dads. Maureen Abbott has rediscovered her passion for baking since joining her daughter at Lime Tree Village. Her Victoria sponge would rival any on *Bake Off*.



TOGETHER Debbie and Nigel joined her parents Richard and Lolla at Bede Village

That was nine years ago. Earlier this year, she persuaded her mother, Maureen Abbott, an 88-year-old retired teacher, to buy a two-bedroom flat there too.

“It’s given her a new lease of life,” says Val. “Mum could never have been so independent if she had stayed in her own home in Leamington Spa. She was housebound and dependent on friends or me to take her everywhere. Here, she can dine with friends in the restaurant and has joined the craft group.” The move has also made it easier for Maureen’s three grandchildren and great-grandchildren to visit. Between her and Val, they can put up the whole family, as they each have two bedrooms and there is also a guest suite.

Practicalities aside, living as neighbours can strengthen a family’s relationship. “The great advantage we have seen is that there is a renewed bonding between parent and child,” says Spencer McCarthy, chief executive of

In Selby, North Yorkshire, 101-year-old Hilda Hammock moved to Anchor’s Pymble development to join her daughter, Thelma Foxhall, 81, who has lived there for four years. Thelma lives on the first floor and Hilda on the ground floor, so they have their own independence but can see each other every day.

“As I am an only child, we have always had a close relationship, and it is lovely to have her nearby,” says Thelma. “I have three children, 10 grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren (Mum’s great-great-grandchildren) so we have plenty of visitors.”

Hilda and Thelma are not alone in being family members who have reunited under one roof late in life. “As the average life expectancy continues to grow, the age gap between our youngest and oldest residents is increasing, so multi-generational living in our retirement developments is becoming more common,” says Howard Nankivell, Anchor’s housing operations director. “We appreciate that the needs of a 55-year-old differ significantly from someone in their 80s or 90s. We, therefore, take a flexible approach that adapts to the needs of

Flying back to the nest with mum and dad

Retirement villages are filling up with members of the same family as multi-generational living increases, says Jane Slade

“Good night, Momma.” “Good night, Daddy.” “Good night, Grandpa.” “Good night, Grandma.” “Good night, John-Boy.” For many baby boomers, these words will evoke memories of *The Waltons*, a Seventies television show about a multi-generational family living under one roof. Forty years on, a real-life version is being played out in retirement developments across the UK, where several generations of relatives are living next door to each other (and visited by younger generations on weekends).



Home: Paddy and Val Richards with her mother, Maureen Abbott

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