



# #2 - INDUSTRIAL DECLINE

## It Comes Up ...

This is the second of [four resources](#). Each is inspired by a subject that can come up in **Who is Your Neighbour?** conversations around South Yorkshire. The subjects are local - and yet similar topics arise in other places. They are familiar - and yet they can be difficult to talk about.

People often tell us a story about coping with the impact of Industrial Decline. **Who is Your Neighbour?** makes space for exploring that: in our conversations, people can wonder together about what they have been through, what this says about who they are and what comes next.

Industrial Decline brought suffering to many. People's feelings about it can be manipulated, creating division. Open conversations, held with empathy, open up different ways of talking, listening, working through problems and telling new stories together.

To explore working with us on conversations that might benefit people and families in your area, get in touch - [team@whoisyourneighbour.org.uk](mailto:team@whoisyourneighbour.org.uk)

Proud of this Place	Industrial Decline	New Arrivals	Living the Legacy
			

[Who is Your Neighbour?](#) is a charity (# [1196667](#)) that holds conversations around South Yorkshire and shares learning across the UK. We welcome subjects that can be troubling - like race, immigration and culture - inspiring curiosity in ourselves and others to support change.

# Industrial Decline: a South Yorkshire story

Rapid Change:

Impact:

Insight



**“all these collieries - at least six pits in this area. Lives depended on industry”**

~ Audrey\*, nr Rotherham

## Rapid Change

**Pit closures** around Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham, the **decline** of Sheffield steel, and related events - like devastating **strike action** - had a deep impact. Conversations about it can be troubling.

Jim\* worked for Steel, Peech and Tozer (now Magna) which “employed 9,000 people”. He remembered a lost Sheffield that:

“housed all your little factories making stainless steel cutlery. I know girls that worked as Buffers, shining up the brass.”

Pat\* remembered the “dreadful” **Battle of Orgreave**, during which her husband, a glazer, was delivering a piece of glass for an Orgreave school window:

“He was trying to get this huge van through the police and miners. He said: ‘I’d better not go down there with a big sheet of glass. It’s the last thing they need.’ It was **awful**, a war zone.”



## Impact

At the time and in the aftermath, people **suffered**. Years later, moving in or out remained difficult, as the housing market “got really slow”.

Feelings about such troubling things can get **hijacked** by external groups. Instead of listening, they can pit against one another people who went on strike and people who didn't; people glad to move on from their old jobs and people who miss them; people who grew up locally and newer arrivals.



## Insight

In conversations **WiYN?** held around Rotherham, residents of houses built for pit and railway workers were **invited** to bring their **varied** experiences. These were **heard**.

Audrey explained that judgements made about her place, with its visible industrial past, are upsetting:

“I'd love to see these beautiful streets lose the reputation. There's some absolutely lovely people - that take great pride in their homes.”

A **real story** was emerging, about the lasting impact of industrial decline, varied lived experience and sadness that people outside make assumptions; they “just don't see” things as they really are.

\* names have been changed



## What we learned:

We had been invited to work in communities hit hard by industrial decline. Financial hardship can be a reality for people there. Sometimes, residents fear that new arrivals won't be welcomed.

The stories that emerged revealed a longing for those on the outside, looking in, to better understand. With space and time to talk, people reflected on the past as it was for them. They explored the hard work required of them in the past and present.

"Unseen" was a word that emerged; it invited a caring about local realities, good and bad.

We prioritise offering conversations in places where people don't feel heard. Many of our facilitators have experienced feeling unheard in their own lives.

## Conversations Matter ...

Observations from **WiYN?** conversation facilitators:

- "you can feel it, when somebody is marginalised"
- "giving people, who don't get heard much, a **chance** to be heard is important"
- "many get left out of the conversation"
- "we work in places where people had a difficult time; life's hard"

Find out more in [It Comes Up ... #3 - New Arrivals](#)

## Next steps

Look out for the other subjects in [It Comes Up ....](#)

- [Proud of This Place](#)
- [New Arrivals](#)
- [Living the Legacy](#)

We're exploring ways of working together with others involved or interested in conversations that support positive change. We'd love to hear from you!

<p><b>Individuals</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Tell us your #IndustrialDecline Story:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <a href="#">in a form</a></li> <li>○ <b>on Social Media</b> using the # above</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Local groups</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>follow / contact us</b></li> <li>• <b>join our <a href="#">mailing list</a></b></li> <li>• <b>tell us you'd value a conversation in your area</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>UK partners</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b><a href="#">email</a> to explore ways of working together</b></li> <li>• <b>browse <a href="#">our site</a> and find our more</b></li> </ul>

## Who is Your Neighbour?

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Mailings: <http://eepurl.com/h-eULb>



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