



DARNALL ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH AUDIT

SUMMARY DOCUMENT



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The Darnall Environment and Health Audit, produced by the City Council and Sheffield Health, reviews the state of the local environment and its affect on the health and well being of local residents. There are many opportunities to improve health and the environment, and the Audit will be used by the local authorities and local communities to identify action that can be taken now, and for the future, to improve quality of life in Darnall, Handsworth and Tinsley.

Air quality: There are significant air pollution problems in the area due to nitrogen dioxide. In Tinsley levels of nitrogen dioxide are consistently higher than the objectives which the government has set to be reached by 2005, and in Darnall levels are very close to these objectives. Research has linked air pollution with increased death rates, breathing and heart conditions and cancer. The elderly, the young, pregnant women and those already in poor health are particularly affected.

Noise: Darnall residents suffer high noise levels due to traffic on major roads in the area. High noise levels have been linked with stress, sleep disturbance, heart disease, and poor performance in school children.

Land Use: Apart from housing, Darnall is dominated by industry, retail and leisure. Meadowhall, now 10 years old, attracts 30 million visitors per year and, along with Meadowhall Retail Park and the Centertainment complex, Sheffield Arena and Don Valley Stadium, attracts considerable amounts of traffic.

Access to facilities: Darnall lacks affordable and accessible leisure facilities, community facilities, and safe play areas for children. Although much of Darnall is well served by shops, health services and public transport, there are localised problems. Social isolation can lead to mental health problems, and food poverty to poor physical health. There are, however, approximately 30 green open spaces in the area, and the Five Weirs Walk, the Sheffield Canal towpath and the Trans-Pennine Trail run through it, all of which provide opportunities for recreation.

Land contamination: Due to its industrial past, significant areas of land in Darnall are known or suspected to be contaminated. Certain industrial land uses currently have the potential for further contamination. However, a considerable amount of remediation has been done in the area. An inspection strategy for contaminated land has been produced by the City Council.

Water quality: The water quality of the River Don meets current standards. The Kirkbridge Dyke from Staniforth Road to its confluence with the River Don, and the Car Brook from Woodthorpe to its confluence with the River Don are Class F (bad). This is due to unsatisfactory combined sewer overflows. Yorkshire Water information shows that drinking water meets current standards.

Industry: Industrial processes in the Darnall area controlled under Part 1 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 are mostly metal production and processing. Generally there is no evidence of local industries breaching the regulations under which they operate.

Environmental quality: Areas of undeveloped and derelict land exacerbate problems of fly tipping and rubbish dumping in Darnall. Rat problems have been increasing, although this problem is increasing in other areas of the city.

Housing: Compared to the city as a whole, there is a relatively high proportion of council homes and private rented homes in the Darnall area. Almost a quarter of houses have no central heating.

Health: Sheffield Health information shows that Darnall has the highest death rates from coronary heart disease in the city. Hospital admissions for stroke and circulatory disease are generally above the city average. Hospital admissions for respiratory disease are 13 per cent higher than the city average, and 22 per cent higher for asthma. Self-assessed health data show dramatically increased prevalence of chronic respiratory disease and asthma in the last 7 years. Darnall air quality and health statistics together suggest that air pollution contributes to a significant burden of ill health in the area, compared with many other parts of the city, and road traffic is responsible for approximately half of air pollution in Darnall. The incidence of depression is higher than the city average, and there has been a sharp rise in male suicide and undetermined cause of death in the area, taking these figures to a level above the national rate.

Conclusions and Next Steps: Darnall is a diverse area with many strengths, which make it well placed to take advantage of the opportunities offered through Objective 1 and other regeneration initiatives. However, parts of Darnall suffer from dereliction and neglect, and there are significant air pollution and noise problems. Evidence would suggest that these problems are adversely affecting the health and quality of life of local residents. Traffic is the main source of both poor air quality and high noise levels in the area. Action is needed now to tackle these problems. It is vital that future development plans for the area give due weight to health and environmental considerations, to deliver lasting benefits to the area as a whole. Environment and health issues form part of the Darnall Area Action Plan.