

Barnsley Borough Profile

Barnsley Metropolitan Borough is one of four districts in South Yorkshire, lying about 15 miles north of Sheffield and 20 miles south of Leeds. The Borough covers a large and diverse area 24 miles across, from the Pennines in the west to the Dearne Valley lowlands in the east. The western half of the Borough is of a rural character whilst the east is far more densely populated with a scattering of urban areas around the main town of Barnsley. Barnsley was until recently a major centre of the coal mining industry which employed 20,000 men (22% of all workers) in 1981. The industry which shaped the character of Barnsley was effectively closed down in Barnsley during 1984-1994 and the Borough is now adjusting to a more diverse future.

Almost 40% of the Borough's population live in the Barnsley Urban Area in the centre of the Borough with a further 35% living in surrounding towns and villages. Chief amongst these are Wombwell, Darfield, Cudworth, Royston, Darton and Dodworth. There are also more outlying areas in the eastern half of the Borough at the Dearne in the east and Hoyland in the south.

The eastern half of Barnsley is generally a deprived area with low incomes and a high proportion people not working, mainly long term sick. The legacy of the former coal mining industry pervades the area, giving rise to poor health and weak housing markets. The most deprived areas are Thurnscoe, Athersley/New Lodge, Kendray, Grimethorpe, Goldthorpe, Lundwood and Worsbrough Common. There are also some relatively prosperous areas, notably parts of Darton, Dodworth and the suburbs of Pogmoor and Gawber, near the hospital.

The western half of the Borough, generally west of the M1, is centred on the small market town of Penistone, and contains only 21,000 people (10% of the total). This is an area of rolling hills with many villages, livestock farms and wooded areas, rising to uninhabited moorland reaching 1,600 feet at the top of the Pennines. The Penistone area is a far more affluent area than the east with conditions similar to or better than the national average. Car and home ownership levels are both over 75% and unemployment is low.