Assets and Resilience
Liam and Julie at the drop-in St John’s, Balby

With the help of Julie from Caring in Doncaster, Liam has been in his own home for a year now after an extended period on the streets of Doncaster. Most Tuesdays he still drops in to meet and socialise with Julie and others.

Craganour TARA, Denaby

Craganour runs a number of well attended events, including the Arts and Craft night, open to all ages, all raising a small amount of money each time that is ploughed back into the community.

Craganour’s Saturday breakfasts provide an opportunity for locals to mix and eat a value for money cooked breakfast, again raising money for the community.
Siobhain and James drop in at St John’s, Balby

Siobhain and James have just arrived in Balby from Tottenham, the church has supplied them with so many household items that Father Alun is going to give them a lift back to their new home. With little money the couple have been exploring Doncaster on foot.

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Sandra, Denaby

“I used to tell him everything”.

When Sandra's parrot died, she found herself at a loss, practically she had to reach out to find the help to safely dispose of his body, initially finding help at the Bumping Space she then began to make friends and soon found herself having her first night out in ten years.
Drop in at St John’s, Balby

Daily bread: all supermarkets throw away their store baked bread unless they can donate to a local charity. St John’s receives Tesco Extra Woodfield’s Monday evening allocation, giving it out from 10–12 the next day. As the volunteers say, “we’ll never say ‘no’”.

Ministry of Craft Cafe 35, Conisbrough

Antonia and her working dog, Page at Ministry of Craft, Conisbrough. Antonia does crochet, a number of her pieces are for sale. “It’s like a [return] to the community spirit”.
Drop in at St John’s, Balby

For two hours a week St John’s provides a free, warm, safe space.

‘Steve’ uses the drop in as a quiet space to read a book.

Drop in at St John’s, Balby

Father Alun notes that ‘the lads’ call this ‘Crumpet Tuesday’.

The crumpets even have their own sponsor who donates £5 per week to buy 45 crumpets that are toasted every week of the year.
Emergency Clothes Bank at St John's, Balby

The clothes bank accepts all types of clothes, but adult male clothes are the most widely needed. Father Alun cited how the regular attendees, "were wearing better clothes, they smell better, they’re clean" as evidence of progress in the last year. "Tom’s dressed in a Ben Sherman jacket."

Drop in at St John’s, Balby

Harvest Festival donations from Woodfield School to St John’s. Father Alun used the Harvest Festival to request food (that can be heated using a kettle), and other items that meet the specific needs of regular attendees.
Ministry of Craft Cafe 35, Conisbrough

Mick at Ministry of Craft, Conisbrough. He’s drawing cartoons that will eventually become a calendar for sale. “This place should’ve opened years ago...Conisbrough deserves a place like this. I’m using it as a base for my work. I can bounce ideas off people down here. Most of my life is...nostalgia”. 
Margaret, widow, Denaby

"I've never had any help. I've never bothered anyone for anything, only when Eric had his stroke. I had him at home for two years after being told he only had two days to live. I'd looked after him from just before he was 70. I lifted him and everything, I even did his insulin for him. But after his stroke I couldn't lift him anymore".

"I've had a couple of falls since Eric passed away".

"Sometimes I want to be quiet, sometimes I want to be going into the shops and talking to people. I go to Befriend at Springwell Centre, its good to know its there".

Harrogate Drive, Denaby

"It's only £4.40 but..."

It's been collected, counted and saved. It happens weekly. It accumulates and goes towards things decided upon by the group.

Kim, young mum, Denaby

Kim says of her daughter, "She's made me a better person".

Support from Karen at the Hub has been key for Kim. A house in Mexborough arranged through Green Gables meant Kim was too far from her family in Denaby and couldn't access the sessions at the Hub she enjoys. She's moved back to her parents' home and wants to work with disabled children locally.

Kim was in labour with her second child when this photograph was taken.
Rachel in Mexborough

"[Now] we are safe". Rachel came to live in Mexborough with nothing, fleeing domestic abuse, the family arrived with only a couple of toys and some clothes. She says, "I had to use my neighbours’ fridge and cooker for six months".

"I’m very isolated" but Rachel has been engaging with all services, the house came through Green Gables. She also has help through Homestart and the church, as well as being supported by Karen Seaman.

"Food’s a big one, but I learnt batch cooking [at the Children’s Centre, Denaby]".

"I think my illnesses affect my children. I’m happy I’ve managed to get out of bed. On the worst days I just have to be on the sofa". Rachel has fibromyalgia and borderline personality disorder.

Megan at the Hot Chocolate Lounge, Denaby

"I used to avoid talking to people. I used to get my mum to pay for things".

After getting in touch with Talent Match she now works thirty hours a week at the Hot Chocolate Lounge. “It’s given me a lot more confidence. I do training, it’s been a big change, I have loads of qualifications. If I hadn’t come here I don’t know what I’d be doing”. Her exemplary customer service was recently highlighted by a customer.

Megan volunteers at Craganour TARA and has taken the £10 challenge with her work colleague, Shannon, making greetings cards. They are already in profit and are planning Christmas cards.
Assets and Resilience

What makes life worth living? For most of us it’s our families and friends that make the difference. Whether we like it or not we are hard-wired to be social, to connect, to enjoy the company of others. That’s why loneliness and bullying are two of our biggest social challenges as they get to the heart of who we are and have long term impacts on our health.

What these images show me is that a smile, a kind word, a small act can be the difference between isolation and connection, the difference between illness and wellbeing. Can we stop being blind to what’s happening around us? Can we stop and notice what’s happening in our homes, workplaces and communities? What do the images say to you? What’s your next act?

Rupert Suckling, Director Public Health, Doncaster Council

To make these photographs I spent a great deal of time with the subjects, their friends, family, volunteers, health and other professionals, and many others who have not been pictured. The small, quiet moments captured aim not just to highlight a notable act or detail, but to point towards something bigger. Perhaps something that has been improved (in Sandra’s case, her isolation), or could be improved upon (the need for food banks), or opportunities for all of us, as Rupert suggests, to act.

We all have something to give, and giving makes us feel better. Photography is often discussed in terms of taking, spending time with so many interesting people in this project did not feel like ‘taking’, but if I have, then I offer back this small series of gestures as recompense.

Les Monaghan, photographer