

### Foreword

I welcome this publication bringing together social statistics relating to a range of social policy issues in Northern Ireland and contextualising them within a lay friendly commentary. It shows that it is possible for this kind of work to be accessible without jeopardising academic quality. The presentation and dissemination of research knowledge in a way that engages a wide audience is an important part of the ESRC's mission across the UK. But it is even more crucial to encourage social policy debate in a region where devolution is still embedding. This book with its relevance for researchers, policy makers, users and providers of services and the public makes an important contribution to informing the future development of Social Policy in Northern Ireland and is very much in keeping with the current focus on maximising the impact of academic research in the wider world.

This project is the outcome of an effective working relationship between ARK and the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency. It shows the benefit to be gained from this kind of co-operation which is an important mechanism for the exchange of knowledge and effective collaboration necessary as we move towards more evidence based policy.

Professor Ian Diamond, Chief Executive Economic and Social Research Council.