



ARK Annual Report 2021 (Summary)

About ARK

ARK is a research, policy and impact hub, based jointly in Queen's University Belfast (QUB) and Ulster University (UU). Our activities focus on making social and political information on Northern Ireland (NI) accessible to all, supporting civic society, and challenging policies.

Our key resources include:

- Three public attitudes surveys, which record the views of people of all ages living in Northern Ireland about the issues that affect their lives – the Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey (NILT); Young Life and Times (YLT) and Kids' Life and Times (KLT);
- The *ARK Ageing Programme*, which explores how ageing is perceived and experienced in Northern Ireland, via our events, Visiting Fellows, and research projects;
- *Conflict Archive on the Web (CAIN)*, which contains information and source material on 'the Troubles' and politics in Northern Ireland from 1968 to the present day;
- The *Northern Ireland Elections* site, which provides data about elections in Northern Ireland since 1885 and detailed breakdowns of election results;
- A wide variety of knowledge transfer and public engagement activities, such as seminars, conference presentations, workshops and policy round tables.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, ARK staff worked from home maintaining contact through regular meetings online. All events were held online, as were meetings of the ARK Advisory Board.

Full details of all ARK's activities are at www.ark.ac.uk

ARK contact details

School of Applied Social and Policy
Sciences
Jordanstown campus, Ulster University
BT37 9QB
Tel: 028 9036 6339
E-mail: info@ark.ac.uk

School of Social Sciences, Education and
Social Work
Queen's University Belfast
Belfast BT7 1NN
Tel: 028 9097 3034
E-mail: info@ark.ac.uk

Twitter @ark_info @cainwebservice @yltark

Facebook @AccessResearchKnowledge or search for ARK Ageing Programme or Young Life and Times

Attitude surveys

In 2021 we continued to monitor public opinion in Northern Ireland through our suite of three surveys. Topics in both NILT and YLT included community relations, including minority ethnic communities; identity; mental health; politics and community safety and perceptions of paramilitary safety. NILT also included questions on politics and Brexit; financial wellbeing and security; the criminal justice system; and COVID-19 and work. YLT had questions on COVID - 19; coercive control; and cross community contact. YLT and KLT each asked questions on Shared Education and Community Relations, Equality and Diversity in Education (CRED).

Data from the earlier surveys were made publicly available and dissemination enhanced through the publication of nine Research Updates, as well as articles and book chapters, seminars and videos.

Northern Ireland Longitudinal Study (NILS)

ARK is collaborating with the NILS team to promote NILS and disseminate their outputs. A webinar in September 2021 highlighted the potential of NILS data for COVID research.

CAIN

The new *CAIN Associate Programme* was launched, and four Associates were appointed. Three of the Associates held webinars in 2021 (David Huddleston, Rob Savage and Roberta Bacic); the final webinar (Éamon Phoenix) was postponed until January 2022. Full details are available at <https://cain.ulster.ac.uk/associate.htm>

Recordkeeping Innovation Pty Ltd carried out a review and made recommendations on the future direction of CAIN. Following their report, Dr Adrian Grant was appointed to lead the transformation project for CAIN.

The John Hume section, containing a selection of his speeches, statements and articles, was made available in May 2021. Work on the CAIN Chronology and on PRONI and NAI material continued.

Funding was received from the Reconciliation Fund within the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs and from the Department for Communities in Northern Ireland for additional work on recently released files. These will be added to 'NAI Records on CAIN' and 'PRONI Records on CAIN' respectively. The work will be carried out throughout 2022.

Dr Matt Milliken (the UNESCO Centre, UU) worked on the development of an educational resource for the politics and history curricula in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. His final report will help guide future online resources and grant applications.

Policy Unit

Staff associated with the Policy Unit continued to engage with policy makers, NGOs and statutory organisations at policy roundtables and seminars, and by responding to consultations and attending advisory meetings. A range of publications were produced in 2021, including Policy Briefs and ARK Features. Two policy briefs on the LGBTQ+ population and inequalities, one on experiences of ageing and one on journeys to parenthood, were published (both by Dr Danielle Mackle). Two policy roundtables were held. One focused on the trauma of violence on the lives of young people in Northern Ireland, while the other explored youth work during the COVID-19 pandemic. The relevant policy briefs are available on the ARK website.

Ann Marie Gray led a team at Ulster University exploring the extent and experiences of hidden homelessness in Northern Ireland. The report will be launched by the Simon Community in the Long Gallery at Stormont on 1 March 2022.

COVID-19 and Vulnerable Groups Project

This project is now in its dissemination stage. In March, Stephanie Maguire published ARK Feature 19 *Children in Lockdown - The impact of COVID-19 on children in Northern Ireland*. An article is at final review stage with the Journal of Social Policy.

Gender budgeting

Ann Marie Gray, Joan Ballantine and Michelle Rouse were awarded a new three year grant by the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust (£200,000) to take forward the work on gender budgeting. This will commence in Autumn 2022.

Findings from the first phase of the project were widely disseminated. The second phase, *Tackling Gender Inequalities and Promoting Reconciliation in Northern Ireland: the role of gender budgeting* funded by the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust is continuing. Two policy roundtables (international lessons from gender budgeting and approaches; and gender budgeting and civil society organisations) were held in March.

Men's Health in Numbers

In 2020, Paula Devine and Erin Early received funding from the Men's Health Forum in Ireland to produce two reports. Dissemination activities in 2021 included a Twitterchat; an interview with NVTV; a session with first year QUB medical students; and the publication of *Men's Health in Numbers: Northern Ireland Report Card* - an infographic-based synopsis of men's health utilising a range of data sources.

Peace Monitoring Report

A research team led by ARK was awarded the contract to produce the sixth Peace Monitoring Report. The team comprises Ann Marie Gray, Jennifer Hamilton, Gráinne Kelly, Brendan Lynn and Richard Johnson from Ulster University, along with Paula Devine and John Topping from Queen's University.

ARK Ageing Programme

A third PhD student, Murchana Kaushik, joined the ARK Ageing Programme under the Tezpur University-Queen's University Belfast programme. She is supervised by Gemma Carney (ARK) and co-supervised by Dr. Nirmali Goswami, Tezpur University, Assam, India. Her PhD focus is 'Intergenerational communication for social change in sectarian societies'

The ARK Ageing Programme continued its series of events exploring ageing-related issues, beginning with a webinar in February - *Hearing Hidden Voices: Older victims of domestic abuse* - held in conjunction with the British Society of Gerontology. A webinar in March by Professor Susan Pickard (University of Liverpool) *Age as the new class war? Contemporary representations of intergenerational inequity* was held as part of Intergenerational Week.

As a member of the *Framing Ageing International and Interdisciplinary Research Network*, Gemma Carney presented two papers at two workshops. Gemma's co-authored textbook, *Critical Questions for Ageing Societies* was nominated for the Richard Kalish Prize for Innovation in Research on Ageing by the Gerontological Society of America. Gemma has been invited to contribute a chapter on Ageing and Diversity to the International Handbook on Sociology of Ageing.

Dementia in the Minds of Characters and Readers

Gemma Carney and Paula Devine are Co-Investigators on this AHRC-funded project. Four sets of online reading groups were held (with student social workers, people living with dementia, family carers of someone living with dementia, and general public), and analysis of the data has begun. A series of activities were undertaken, including a two-day Dementia Fiction festival. Project updates can be found at <https://blogs.qub.ac.uk/dementiafiction/>

ARK Dissemination

ARK organized 15 events throughout 2021, including webinars, a symposium, panel discussions, events related to the CAIN Associate Programme, and the Dementia Fiction Festival.

Findings were disseminated via blogs and videos, and publications included eight articles in peer reviewed journals, nine Research Updates, six policy briefs, three reports, ten ARK newsletters and one ARK Feature. ARK staff presented papers at ten conferences/workshops, including three at the European Survey Research Association conference.

Funding

In 2021, ARK obtained grant funding of 243,269.

Web statistics

The ARK resources online continue to be heavily used. In 2021, overall the ARK sites attracted 3.5 million page views, and 850,000 visits. Within these figures, the CAIN site had approximately 2 million page views, and 623,000 visits.