



# ARK

## ARK Annual Report 2022 (Summary)

### About ARK

ARK undertakes research on a range of social and political issues in Northern Ireland (NI), and engages in critical policy analysis. Based in Queen's University Belfast (QUB) and Ulster University (UU), ARK provides robust and independent evidence, which informs policy debate and policy making and supports civic society. Acting as a hub for social and political information on Northern Ireland (NI), we focus on providing and disseminating accessible research and data through wide ranging activities and our website - [www.ark.ac.uk](http://www.ark.ac.uk)

Our key resources include:

- Three public attitudes surveys of people of all ages living in Northern Ireland – 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;
- *Conflict Archive on the Web (CAIN)*, a repository of 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 publications, seminars, conference presentations, workshops and policy round tables.

In 2022, we were pleased to welcome three new members of the ARK Team: Dr Alexandra Chapman (Ulster University), Dr Erin Early (Queen's University Belfast) and Dr Elizabeth Martin (Queen's University Belfast).

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### **Attitude surveys**

During 2022, the ARK survey teams monitored public opinion in Northern Ireland through our suite of three surveys. As in previous years, topics in both NILT and YLT included good relations including minority ethnic communities and refugees; identity; politics; and community safety and perceptions of paramilitary safety, while questions on gender-based violence were introduced in both. NILT also asked about understandings of palliative care, and income and poverty. YLT and KLT included questions on Shared Education, whilst KLT asked respondents about home and family, self-esteem, bullying, the transfer test, and the environment.

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

### **ARK Ageing Programme**

The research being undertaken by the three ARK PhD students continued during 2022. The ARK Ageing Programme has planned three events within the *Next Generation Thinking in Research on Ageing* series. The first of these was held on 11 May 2022: *Wandering the wards: institutional 'rules' and their consequences for people living with dementia*, presented by Professor Katie Featherstone (University of West London).

Gemma Carney is a member of the Framing Ageing International and Interdisciplinary Research Network. She organised a conference for early career researchers on 14 December 2022, in collaboration with the Science and Culture Research Group at QUB.

### **Dementia in the Minds of Characters and Readers**

Gemma Carney and Paula Devine are Co-Investigators on this AHRC-funded project, and in 2022, work focused on dissemination and engagement activities. In August, *A Little Unsteadily into Light* was published by New Island Press. In this anthology of fourteen new short stories, commissioned and edited by Jan Carson and Jane Lugea, some of the best contemporary writers powerfully and poignantly explore the depths and breadth of the real dementia experience, traversing age, ethnicity, class and gender, sex and consent.

### **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, and Paula Devine and John Topping from Queen's University. The project is underway, and the report is due for publication in 2023.

## **CAIN**

As part of the CAIN Associate Programme, Éamon Phoenix held a webinar in January 2022. Full details of the programme and associated activities are available at <https://cain.ulster.ac.uk/associate.htm>

Funding was received from the Department for Communities in Northern Ireland for additional work on 'PRONI Records on CAIN'. As a result, a selection of recently released British government files for the years 1997 and 1998 were made public on 7 December 2022. Following the receipt of funding from the Reconciliation Fund of the Republic of Ireland Department of Foreign Affairs, work was carried out on Irish government files for the years 1995 to 1998. These new files will be added to 'NAI Records on CAIN' and made public in April 2023.

A report by Dr Matt Milliken (the UNESCO Centre, UU) focused on the development of an educational resource using CAIN for the politics and history curricula in NI and the Republic of Ireland.

Work continued on the CAIN Transformation Project, and plans are in place to implement changes to the website for the purposes of modernisation and diversification in 2023.

## **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. The team responded to the consultation on the Reform of Adult Social Care, and the Cost of Living in Northern Ireland non-inquiry session of the Northern Ireland Committee at Westminster.

Drawing on findings from 2021 NILT and YLT, a policy roundtable examined public knowledge and understanding of coercive control, along with policy implications.

Publications included a Policy Brief on the public understanding of coercive control, and on sports-based intervention with young male prisoners. Ann Marie Gray led a team at UUU exploring the extent and experiences of hidden homelessness in Northern Ireland. The resulting report was launched by the Simon Community in March 2022.

## **Gender budgeting**

The second phase of the Gender Budgeting project, *Tackling Gender Inequalities and Promoting Reconciliation in Northern Ireland: the role of gender budgeting* funded by the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust (JRCT) included development, piloting and dissemination of a suite of training resources. In November 2022 the JRCT awarded three-year funding to consolidate the capacity and competence of key stakeholders to apply gender budgeting in NI. The aim is to influence policy, budgetary processes and the way in which allocation of funds in order to address gender inequalities, promote gender equality and protect human rights.

## **Youth Volunteering**

Dirk Schubotz and Martina McKnight, with Emily Mitchell Bajic (project research assistant QUB) and Eddy Hogg (Kent University), worked on a project funded by Volunteer Now focusing on Youth Volunteering in Northern Ireland.

## **Dissemination**

ARK organised eight events throughout 2021, half of which were held in person.

Findings were disseminated via blogs and videos, and publications included four articles in peer reviewed journals, five book chapters, four Research Updates, two Policy Briefs, two reports, and ten ARK newsletters. ARK staff presented papers at 20 conferences/workshops.

## **Funding**

In 2022, ARK obtained grant funding of £542,818.

## **Web statistics**

The ARK resources online continue to be heavily used:

- In 2022 the CAIN site had approximately 1.8 million page views, and 670,000 visits.
- The other resources on ARK had 4.5 million page views and 151,886 visits.