



ARK Annual Report 2024 (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 accessible to all, supporting civic society, and challenging policies. Key resources include:

Our three public attitudes surveys, which record the views of people living in Northern Ireland about the issues that affect their lives:

- *Northern Ireland Life and Times (NILT)*: adults aged 18 or over
- *Young Life and Times (YLT)*: young people aged 16
- *Kids' Life and Times (KLT)*: children aged 10-11 years olds

The *ARK Policy Unit* undertakes more critical appraisal of policy which is based on knowledge and evidence, while the *ARK Ageing Programme* focuses on how ageing is perceived and what it means to be old in Northern Ireland. The *Northern Ireland Elections* site includes information about elections in Northern Ireland since 1885 and detailed breakdowns of election results. The ARK team also undertakes a knowledge transfer and public engagement activities, such as seminars, conference presentations, workshops and policy roundtables.

This report highlights key activities of the ARK team during 2024. Full details of all ARK's activities are available at <https://www.ark.ac.uk>.

In 2024, we welcomed Dr Jonny Hanson to ARK to work alongside the ARK survey team.

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Attitude surveys

During 2024, the ARK survey teams continued to monitor public opinion in Northern Ireland through our suite of three annual surveys. In order to provide an ongoing timeseries of attitudes to key social issues, questions in both NILT and YLT explored good relations including minority ethnic communities and refugees; identity; politics; community safety and perceptions of paramilitary safety; and gender-based violence. In addition, NILT asked about demand for integrated education, skills and training, as well as public understanding of adult safeguarding issues. Other topics within YLT included school, bereavement and grief education. KLT included questions on school, home and family, bullying, and wellbeing.

Data from earlier surveys were made publicly available and dissemination was enhanced through the publication of six Research Updates and one ARK Feature, as well as journal articles, reports to funders, seminars and videos.

ARK Ageing Programme

A focus in 2024 was the development of stronger links with academic colleagues. Gemma Carney received funding from the ESRC Impact Acceleration Account at QUB to develop the Queen's on Ageing network, and a symposium was held in October.

Dissemination continued with the *Dementia in the Minds of Characters and Readers* project, with the publication of one journal article, and submission of another. Other activities included a seminar in April with Eve Worth: *The Welfare State Generation: Women, Agency and Class in Britain since 1945*.

CAIN

Work continued on selecting and digitising records, including the sections relating to the National Archives Ireland (NAI) and Public Records Office Northern Ireland (PRONI).. Element Seven continued work on the redesign of the CAIN website. The final draft version of design was approved by Ulster University. The aim is to launch the new website Autumn 2025.

However, an agreement was reached between all parties that CAIN would cease to be an integral component of ARK and would be located within INCORE at Ulster University.

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.

Publications included eight Policy Briefs (abortion access in prison; health transformation and rural communities; Healthy Start scheme; antenatal screening; substance use needs; good relations through social and community farming; mental health of young people; achieving a Just Transition). A Research Reports explored understanding the persistence of armed/paramilitary groups in Northern Ireland. Other activities include two ARK Features, four seminars and four Policy Roundtables.

Gender budgeting

In November 2022 the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust awarded three-year funding to further consolidate the capacity and competence of key stakeholders to apply gender budgeting in NI. Activities in 2024 included seven Policy Roundtables with key organisations, a pilot student with Derry City and Strabane District Council, meetings with government officials and ministers, seven workshops, and three consultation responses.

Dissemination

ARK organised ten in-person events throughout 2024.

Findings were disseminated via blogs and videos, and publications included three articles in peer reviewed journals, six Research Updates, eight Policy Briefs, two ARK Features, one report and ten ARK newsletters. ARK staff presented papers at ten conferences/workshops.

Funding

In 2024, ARK obtained grant funding of £318,598.