



ARK Annual Report (Summary)

This summary annual report details our key activities in 2017

About ARK

ARK is a research, policy and impact hub, based jointly in Queen's University Belfast and Ulster University. Our activities focus on making social and political information on Northern Ireland 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 help us to think what it means to be old 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.

In 2017 funding for ARK's work totaled £371,928.

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

Web statistics

The ARK resources online continue to be heavily used:

- 3.9 million page views from 1.2 million visits and averaged 61,000 distinct visitors per month.
- The CAIN site had 786,700 visits, with 2.2 million page views. Unique visitors per month were, on average, 44,000.
- The other resources on ARK had 1.5 million page views from 306,000 visits with an average of 14,000 distinct visitors per month.

Attitude surveys

In 2017 we have continued to monitor public opinion in Northern Ireland through our suite of surveys. Topics covered included attitudes to abortion, racism, community relations and Brexit (NILT); culture, family, health, education and community relations (YLT), and minimum age of criminal responsibility, bullying and education (KLT). Data from the 2016 surveys was made publicly available and dissemination enhanced through the publication of 10 research updates and briefings on the findings, as well as articles and book chapters, seminars and video podcasts.

CAIN

During 2017 staff from CAIN and the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI) have continued to work together to add previously secret records to the CAIN website (available at <http://cain.ulster.ac.uk/proni>). Alongside this work with PRONI, CAIN has continued its partnership with the National Archive, Ireland (NAI), funded by awards from the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, to select, digitise and make available further batches of Irish government records to complement the existing material for the years 1965-74. A new collection of 926 items covering the period 1975-80 were made available in June 2017. In a further development, CAIN was approached by The National Archives at Kew and a pilot project commenced in 2017 with a first batch of files. This work, and the resultant public output, is of great value as a heritage and historical resource to the academic community but is also of interest to the wider public.

Peace Monitoring Report

A team, led by ARK at Ulster University won a tender to compile the 5th Northern Ireland Peace Monitoring report. This is a project led by the Community Relations Council and funded by Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust. The report will measure Safety, Equality, Political Progress, and Cohesion and Sharing.

Policy Unit

Work continued on the ESRC-funded abortion project, and the NILT findings on attitudes to abortion were launched in 2017, via an ARK seminar and Research Update. The ARK Policy Unit was part of an international team of researchers led by Professor Sue Yeandle, University of Sheffield, awarded an ESRC grant for *Sustainable Care: connecting people and systems*.

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.

Events

During 2017 ARK held a wide range of public engagement events including seminars based on public attitudes to abortion, to bonfires and flags, and to the minimum age of criminal responsibility. The ARK Ageing Programme hosted two visiting speakers. Dr Anna Tarrant (University of Lincoln) participated in workshops on kinship care and grandparent's experience of kinship care. Professor Jill Manthorpe (Kings College London) gave a seminar on adult safeguarding.

Nicholas Whyte, Director of the Northern Ireland Elections website and Visiting Professor at Ulster University delivered a lecture on *Votes, People and Parties – what's next for the Assembly?*

Events also included Textile Language of Conflicts international colloquium, a Textile Language of Conflicts exhibition, and a Textile Language of Conflicts interactive workshop for students (an ESRC Festival of Social Science event).

ARK has a collaborative agreement with the National Centre for Research Methods (NCRM). During 2017, two NCRM courses were hosted by ARK and held at Queen's:

- CADQAS Software Planning Seminar (25 January)
- Introduction to data linkage (5 September)

Conferences and publications

ARK staff presented papers at Learned Society international conferences including the British Society of Gerontology conference, the European Survey Research Association conference, the Political Studies Association Conference and the Social Policy Association Conference.

In addition to research updates, policy briefs, blogs and videos, ARK staff published 8 articles in peer reviewed journals and 3 peer reviewed book chapters.

2017 also saw the launch of a new publication - ARK *Features* – which provides short articles on current political and social policy topics.

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