

- Build on its Ageing theme's creative stream of work by further developing projects such as the *Lively Project*, or working in partnership with creative organisations such as *The Playhouse* in Derry~Londonderry.

## Challenge policies

A major part of ARK's mission in recent years has been its critical policy work. This role emerged partly because of expressed interest among voluntary sector and policymaker partners in such a facility. ARK seeks to facilitate and stimulate critical social policy debate in Northern Ireland, achieving impact via more informed and effective policymaking. ARK will:

- Continue to run its *Policy Roundtables* engaging policymakers, practitioners and academics in a Chatham House Rule roundtable discussion on key issues facing Northern Ireland.
- Continue to produce its *Policy Brief* series which summarises both the research evidence and the discussions at the associated Policy Roundtables.
- Consider initiating its own critical policy blog and will continue its input into other relevant social policy blogs.

## Position with the universities

ARK values enormously its unique position within Ulster University and Queen's University Belfast and seeks to support actively the aims and values of both institutions. As Northern Ireland's social policy information hub, our mission is to impact on social renewal in its broadest sense. We can achieve this via:

- Undertaking high quality international research on global issues common to many societies.
- Supporting Northern Ireland civic society with the research and evidence that it needs to build social renewal from within its various sectors.
- Bringing together academics, policymakers and representatives of civic society to debate and challenge policymaking as it evolves.

**ARK's position as an inclusive cross-university, collegial hub which openly values collaboration across all disciplinary and sectoral boundaries is key to achieving our aims and we are grateful to the universities for their ongoing support.**



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**Strategic plan**  
2017-2022

[ark.ac.uk](http://ark.ac.uk)



ARK is Northern Ireland's social policy information hub shared jointly by the two universities in Northern Ireland.

We provide the academic and wider community with open access survey data, we carry out our own research and facilitate research by others, we support civic society, and provide a forum for challenging policies.

Impact has been at the heart of our mission since the establishment of ARK in 2000. ARK's websites now average over 54,000 unique visitors per month. Over the next five years ARK will continue to:

- Provide open access survey data.
- Provide open access political resources.
- Support the research and evidence base.
- Support civic society.
- Challenge policies.

## Provide open access survey data

Through our three surveys ARK will continue to provide attitudinal data from all age groups to inform policy development. Over the next five years there will be a greater emphasis on partnering with academic colleagues to facilitate research both within social science disciplines and more widely.

- A module of questions within the 2017 *Northern Ireland Life and Times* (NILT) survey will be run as an 'Academic Omnibus' allowing colleagues from both universities to buy small numbers of questions on the survey for their own research. If this works successfully it will be continued on an annual basis.
- Full NILT modules will be integrated into wider research projects where this has the potential to lead to significant impact.
- The surveys will be further embedded into the work of relevant schools and research centres in both universities.
- Partnerships outside social science disciplines will be developed as a priority.
- We will continue to develop and promote Teaching Datasets from all three surveys.
- High quality academic publications from all three surveys will be a priority both from within the team and with other researchers.
- All three surveys will seek cross-national and international partners where there are opportunities to further knowledge and to maximise impact via internationalisation.

## Provide open access political resources

ARK provides access to a broad range of information on the Northern Ireland conflict and politics in the region, including detailed results of elections. Through its resources ARK aims to facilitate researchers and others in understanding the underlying causes of conflict and to assist conflict transformation and peace-building locally and internationally.

- The Conflict Archive on the INternet (CAIN) will seek funding to streamline and enhance its international impact as an academic resource. A decision has been made to 'bookend' the period covered by the archive and this academic resource will become *CAIN: A Troubled Heritage 1968-2018*.
- CAIN will continue to work with information providers (members of the public, academic colleagues, organisations, agencies, etc.) to expand the resources on the site.
- CAIN will build on its relationships with Public Records Office Northern Ireland and the National Archives, Ireland. CAIN will examine possible cooperation with The National Archive at Kew.
- CAIN will also seek funding to create *CAIN into the Community* focusing on neighbourhood impact where CAIN materials could be used to build smaller local history hubs.
- CAIN will continue to explore other funding opportunities and will collaborate with international colleagues in on-going Horizon 20:20 bids.

- CAIN will continue arrangements for the resource to be incorporated as a special digital collection within the Library at Ulster University. Work with the Library and Information Services on centralisation and long-term preservation will be a priority.
- The Elections site will maintain and add to its resource as elections occur and will seek funding to support a site redesign.

## Support the research and evidence base

ARK has its own research programme. We also support the research of others by providing space on our surveys and by working in partnership with others to collect robust survey-based evidence. We disseminate results from both our own research and that of others to achieve maximum impact via a variety of platforms. Our focus is to *create, facilitate* and *disseminate* knowledge.

- ARK will continue to carry out research on our current themes including *Good Relations, Children and Young People, Ageing, Health and Well-being*. High quality academic publications from all three surveys will be a priority.
- Cross-national and international work will be another priority.
- ARK will build networks with Swansea University to make ARK Ageing a core member of the Celtic Ageing Network (a network of researchers in devolved regions of the UK).

- ARK will extend existing networks beyond the UK, particularly into Brazil, Russia, India and China and Global South with a view to establishing research training on Ageing and Humanities/ Citizenship for students from those countries (funding source – Global Development Fund).
- ARK will further develop its links with Dublin City University through the Ulster-DCU memorandum of understanding on ageing to expand cross-border research on ageing.
- ARK will continue (via its surveys) to support the research of colleagues across a range of disciplines in the two universities.
- ARK will review its successful public seminar series (now in its sixteenth year) and will redesign, if necessary, to support researchers to use this as a platform to disseminate their own research findings.
- ARK will continue to produce its *Research Update* series of briefing papers and will encourage colleagues to use this as a platform to disseminate their own research findings.
- ARK will build further its social media and blogging activities to continue to reach wider audiences.

## Support civic society

Since its inception in the newly devolved Northern Ireland, ARK has been committed to working for, and with, the widest possible range of civic society representatives. ARK has worked with voluntary organisations in sectors such as LGBT, Ageing, Young People, Dementia and Disability. ARK has also collaborated with schools, health trusts, local government districts, the BBC and Public Records Office Northern Ireland. ARK will:

- Continue to provide a survey helpline for non-profit organisations who need tables which are not available on the website.
- Continue to provide Excel survey datasets to *Detail Data* at NICVA.
- Continue to provide bespoke tables to District Councils, NINIS and others on request.
- continue to provide reports to schools using Kids' Life and Times survey data for their pastoral care needs.
- Continue to include civic society partners in survey modules either as co-investigators or as representatives on question design groups.
- Continue to invite civic society partners to co-write briefing papers and to give seminars and commentary based on ARK survey data.
- Initiate public engagement work within local communities to bring CAIN into the community in the form of local history hubs.