QUEEN'S
UNIVERSITY
BELFAST
EST 1845

COMMUNITIES
AND PLACE

Supporting Places & Communities through Engagement, Research & Innovation

About Us

Queen's Communities and Place (QCAP) is an initiative based on engagement and partnership between communities, policymakers and academics. Guided by Queen's University Belfast's Strategy 2030 and its key priority regarding social and civic responsibility, we are committing the resources of the University to work in partnership to find lasting solutions that tackle disadvantage and improve outcomes for places and communities across Belfast and beyond.

The QCAP initiative was launched in November 2021 with our anchor pilot partner in the Market community. We are also working collaboratively with projects and communities in the North, West and East of Belfast across a range of sectors and academic disciplines which include, housing, social enterprise, homelessness, children and young people, heritage, education, health and social care and food poverty.

As we progress, we will work to scale the model into other urban, small town, and rural settings across Northern Ireland to explore the transferability, impact, and suitability of our approach in different geographical and socio-economic contexts.

Follow the activities of QCAP on twitter @QUBCommunities1 and online at https://www.qub.ac.uk/sites/qcap/

Our Approach

Combining academic and experiential knowledge from the community, QCAP uses a 'place-based' approach to co-create new solutions to address persistent physical, economic and social challenges as well as strengthen the engagement between Queen's University and its surrounding communities.

Through our national and international partnerships, we draw on experience and lessons learned from best practice and a wide range of relevant initiatives with the aim to create a more durable model of place-based working tailored to the community and its needs.

The core of our approach is an integrated and cross-sectoral programme of research that will work with communities to define and create pathways out of poverty and exclusion in four ways:

- **Understanding the place-based nature of social disadvantage and developing practical alternative routes through transition points, education and the labour market to establish more inclusive futures for children and young people;**

- **Developing inclusive social economies that meet the local need, build the capacity and improve the physical asset base of the most deprived and socially excluded communities; and**

- **Supporting community-based research and innovation by improving opportunities for access and community participation in the urban Knowledge Economy.**

- **Providing evidence-based interventions that reflect and address community-based health and wellbeing concerns of individuals and families living in the most deprived areas.**

QCAP is also utilising open source and local community data to develop a community data dashboard. This provides partner communities like the Market with an operational tool to monitor the impact of their work, engage more effectively with statutory departments, and develop an evidence base that can help build new or sustain existing projects or programmatic activities.

Our Community Partners

The anchor community partner of QCAP is the Market Development Association (MDA). The MDA was established in 1995 to promote the well-being of residents living in the Market area of South Belfast and aims to develop the community into a place where people want to live, work, and socialise.

The MDA engages with statutory agencies, government departments, political representatives, the private sector, and other stakeholders in order to advance the development of the Market area into a vibrant and sustainable inner-city community. QCAP recognises the strengths already present in the work of the MDA and are working to support the organisation to increase their capacity and develop the existing asset base. For example, the MDA run a successful community education programme, which recently saw five graduates of their OCN in Community Development enroll at the University of Ulster to complete a bachelor's degree. It is also working to advance a series of asset-based regeneration projects called 'The Tunnels', a Heritage Hub and a Backpacker Hostel. Managed via a social enterprise model these physical projects will aim to redistribute wealth in a way that can create tangible benefits for individuals and families living in the Market.

The MDA aims to empower the local community through the promotion of active citizenship within the community and in the city of Belfast and QCAP has supported the Market in its campaigns to restrict the impacts of speculative investment from private property interests. MDA strives for equality, and for promoting a rights-based approach when dealing with the many socio-economic issues that impact on the Market community. The organisation works on the following core objectives:

1. **Housing**
2. **Children and Youth**
3. **Health**
4. **Community Cohesion, Community Relations and Community Safety**
5. **Strategic Planning, Community Infrastructure and Sustainability**
6. **Education, Training, Employment and Employability**

Follow the Market Development Association on Twitter @MDABelfast and on Facebook
.

Our Research Strands

The research of QCAP is organised around four cross-cutting strands that are summarised below. These strands and their content have been developed through academic expertise, community-based knowledge, open source or community collated data and information gathered from the literature. The strands also enact engagement with several policy and institutional stakeholders from across local statutory departments like the Executive Office or the Department for Communities and relevant government agencies such as The Housing Executive.

Growing Up in the Market

Completion of a qualitative 3-year longitudinal study with the Market Development Association to:
- Better understand persistent local challenges around health, education and employment
- Support place-based solutions to tackling disadvantage
- Create the conditions for positive change
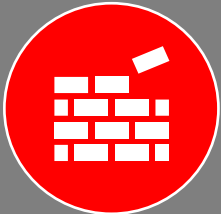
Social Economy and Community Wealth Building

Promoting asset based social enterprise development and inclusive economic regeneration of communities through:
- Technical support and applied research
- Market research and social innovation
- Advocacy and policy development
- Area based capacity building support

Communities and the Knowledge Economy

Increasing the connectivity of disadvantaged communities to the urban knowledge economy through:
- Academic institutional support
- Pathway development and access
- Stakeholder engagement and integration

Community Health and Wellbeing

Improving community health and wellbeing outcomes for those living in disadvantaged communities through:
- Engaged academic research on prevalent local issues
- Innovative issue focused interventions delivered in partnership with relevant statutory agencies and the community itself

Growing Up in the Market

Alongside the Market community in South Belfast, QCAP is carrying out a qualitative longitudinal study called 'Growing up in the Market'.

The study follows children, young people, and their families over three years to better understand the persistent challenges identified by our partner community such as declining educational and employment opportunities, increasing issues related to mental health and wellbeing and other harmful consequences connected with disadvantage and inequality. The completion of the study is supported by a community coordinator who helps to broker involvement from local families and young people living in the Market.

While the study is anchored within young people's choices around education at specific transition points from childhood to young adulthood, we use a place-based approach to find a range of possibilities that might work more effectively to provide solutions to local challenges than previous approaches.

The evidence for these solutions is distilled through a series of research briefs which in turn, shape the development of community referral pathways that are accessed via the QCAP community data dashboard. This increases the capacity of the community partner– in this case MDA to signpost individuals and families more effectively to relevant services or support programmes.

'Growing up in the Market' is a core pillar of QCAP's integrated research approach which helps to understand but also action a collaborative and community driven response to place-based inequalities.

Social Economy and Community Wealth Building

In this programme of research, QCAP helps to regenerate communities and support social enterprises to create alternative approaches to economic inclusion, local development and community wealth building.

This involves providing practical or technical support to help communities develop asset-based social enterprises that provide services and facilities that local people need, control and gain value from. It also works to develop the local policy environment by collaborating with sectoral intermediaries like DTNI (Development Trusts Northern Ireland) to engage more effectively with statutory departments and government agencies.

This research is targeted across several place-based community partner projects which are summarised below and aims to bring together theory, international practice, and global expertise to better understand the impact, capacity, and potential of the social economy on the most disadvantaged people and places.

MDA and the Market

QCAP uses financial data to forecast the potential social impacts created by a suite of community regeneration projects. This analysis is used by MDA help leverage capital investment from several funding bodies and local development agencies.

BUILD Shankill

QCAP provides technical support, housing market analysis and dedicated vacant site research to support a community led project which aims to encourage inclusive physical renewal across the Greater Shankill area of Belfast.

The Pantry New Lodge

QCAP completes impact investment research to help scale and sustain a local community supermarket which aims to tackle food insecurities and build the resilience of families affected by the cost-of-living crisis.

Hosford East Belfast

QCAP uses economic data to model the likely impacts of a transitional homeless housing model with the aim of brokering financial support from social investors and statutory departments with capital grants programmes.

Communities and the Knowledge Economy

The growth of advanced industries in Northern Ireland—those based on knowledge-intensive activities and intellectual capital—has created multiple economic and social opportunities. However, as this knowledge economy expands, the most divided and disadvantaged communities have become more disconnected and excluded from its benefits.

This research strand seeks to create a more inclusive knowledge economy and provides a platform for Queen's University, as an anchor institution, to directly support the needs of our local communities and ensure that they can adapt and thrive in future economic realities. Here we work to leverage the resources and scholarship available within the University to co-create educational, research, and innovation opportunities that are necessary for the most marginal people and places to gain access to our knowledge-based society.


The research strand also works with the QUB Institute of Electronics Communications & Information Technology (ECIT) to explore potential synergies with the Belfast City Deal and how more deprived communities such as the Market can benefit from investment into high-growth knowledge sectors like Digital, Cyber and IT.

It is also collaborating with a local interactive discovery centre called W5 to develop a dedicated summer scheme for young people from the Market community that will incorporate learning opportunities in a range of STEAM subjects (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Mathematics). Examples such as this are underpinned by co-design and engagement as the strand explores innovative ways involve the young people at all stages of the process.

QCAP Data Dashboard

The QCAP community data dashboard has been designed by QCAP academics and input from its anchor community partner the Market Development Association (MDA). The aim of the dashboard is to use data collected from open sources or collated internally by the community partner itself to strengthen its engagement with stakeholders that can help support, grow or sustain their activities.
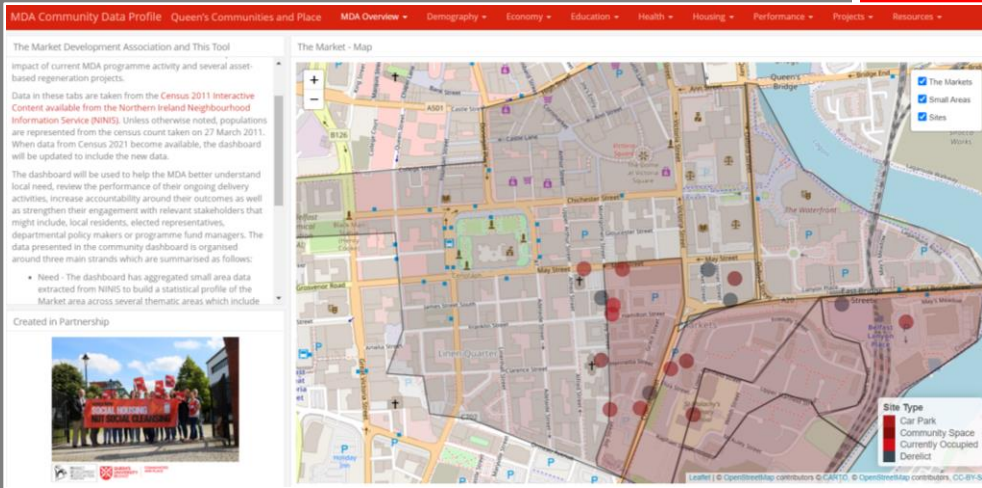
The dashboard has aggregated open-source small area data to build a statistical profile of the partner community area across several thematic areas which includes demography, health, housing, education, and employment. It also provides an online space to collate and visually profile the partner's programmatic data to help monitor and better understand the community impacts created by their own service delivery.
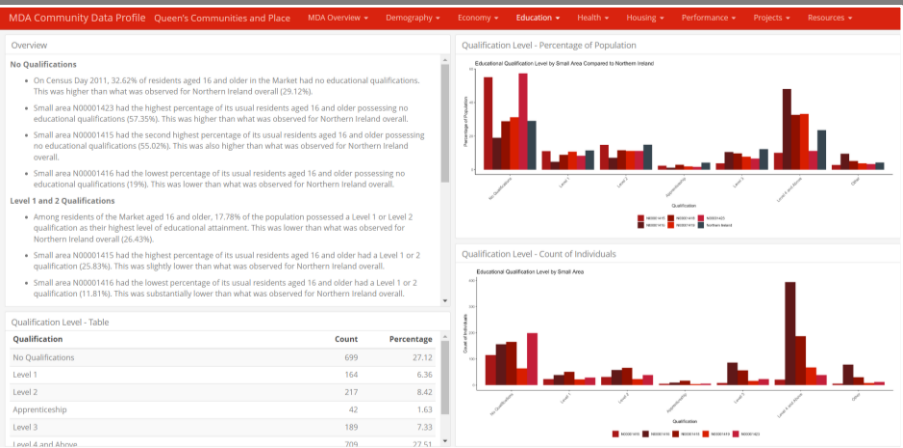
Ultimately the dashboard represents an operational tool that can help the community to collect data and report outcomes more efficiently. It can also be used to better understand local need, identify service gaps, report progress to external stakeholders or respond more effectively to local funding calls. QCAP has also used its resources to integrate the dashboard into existing reporting systems and trained community-based staff around its functionality.