

Getting All the Ducks All in a Row: And Then What?

Presentation for SPRE Conference 2007

SPEaR

**(Richard Bedford, Carl Davidson,
Raewyn Good, Martin Tolich)**

“My question is: Are we making an impact?”



- Answer It depends on the sort of impact you are looking for
- SPEaR, as a cross-departmental committee, has a mandate to contribute to improving the knowledge base for social policy by leveraging the opportunities for sharing information to generate new understandings
- This presentation illustrates some dimensions of this sharing, especially through the mapping of social research in SPEaR agencies in terms of some key **Improvements to the Knowledge Base (IKB)** priorities and themes, as well as through investment in research that focuses on a particular enduring social challenge - persistent disadvantage

- SPEaR provides annual reports to Cabinet on Improvements to the Knowledge Base (IKB)
- Since 2002 SPEaR has used five approaches to assessing the knowledge base and identifying gaps, namely:
 1. Systems Modelling
 2. Policy Analysis
 3. Case Studies
 4. Mapping Analysis
 5. Integrated Analysis

Case Studies

- During 2005 a series of case studies of research and evaluation uptake in New Zealand social policy and decision making were undertaken including:
 - Working for Families
 - Te Rito: The New Zealand Family Violence Prevention Strategy
 - Healthy Housing
 - Leaving Care in New Zealand
 - Ministry of Education's Best Evidence Synthesis Programme
 - Intra-Family Money and Resource Management

The case studies highlighted that there are

NO magic bullets

for improving the uptake of R&E outcomes
into policy

What became clear was a **combination** of factors is required for R&E to add 'value' to policy, including:

- **content** – research and evaluation is high quality, well focused and rigorous. Findings can be assessed in the context of an emerging body of national and international evidence
- **connectivity** – networking and collaboration across the social sector occurs to ensure a robust, high-quality, multi-agency or multi-disciplinary evidence-base
- **application** – policy makers find the research and evaluation work relevant, timely and useful, and there are practical policy and decision-making outcomes as a result of the evidence-base

Late 2006, Cabinet agreed that SPEaR would utilise its unique mandate, collective expertise and comparative advantages to:

- **identify and co-ordinate cross-agency research** on some enduring social challenges associated with persistent, multiple disadvantage, including:
- **conduct a stocktake** in 2006/2007 of the state of the knowledge base across SPEaR member agencies about enduring social challenges associated with persistent, multiple disadvantage
- **initiate** from 2007/2008 a **cross-agency, cross-disciplinary work programme** to identify and co-ordinate research responses to the adverse and compounding effects of persistent multiple social and economic disadvantage

Why persistent disadvantage?

The **Social Report 2006** showed that, on average, most indicators of wellbeing have improved since the 1980s. Some in society continue to be disproportionately represented however, in these negative social indicators

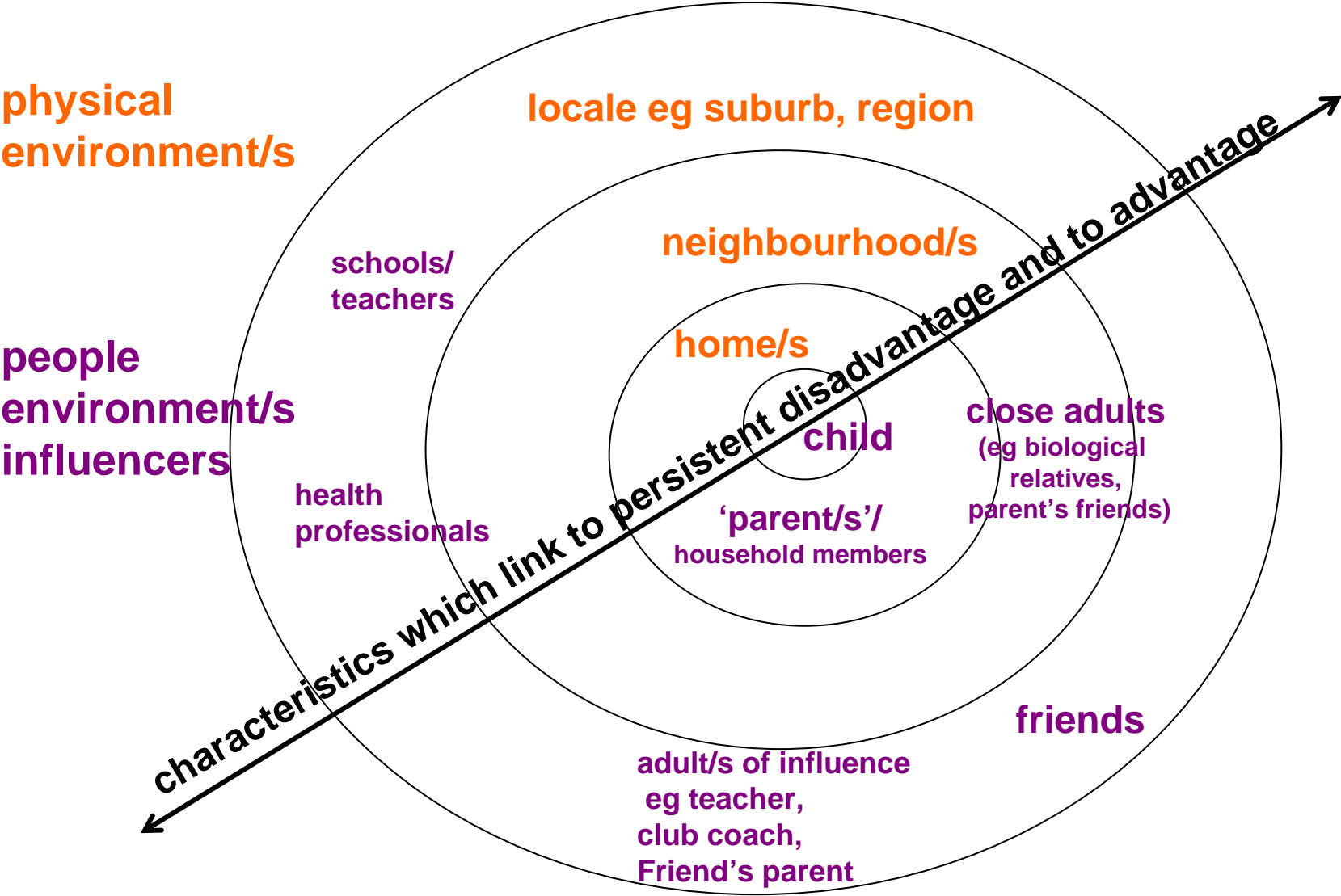
These include benefit dependency, unemployment, alcohol and drug abuse, sub-standard living conditions, obesity and other health problems, poor education outcomes, and family violence

Such adverse social challenges cut across the work programmes of many social policy agencies. Cross-agency, cross-disciplinary research designed to improve the evidence-base about persistent disadvantage is, therefore, a critical contribution to social policy

SPEaR is in the early stages of project scoping and discussion

- What do we mean by ‘persistent disadvantage’?
- What is known?
- What else needs to be known?
- What might the most effective interventions be?
- Who for?

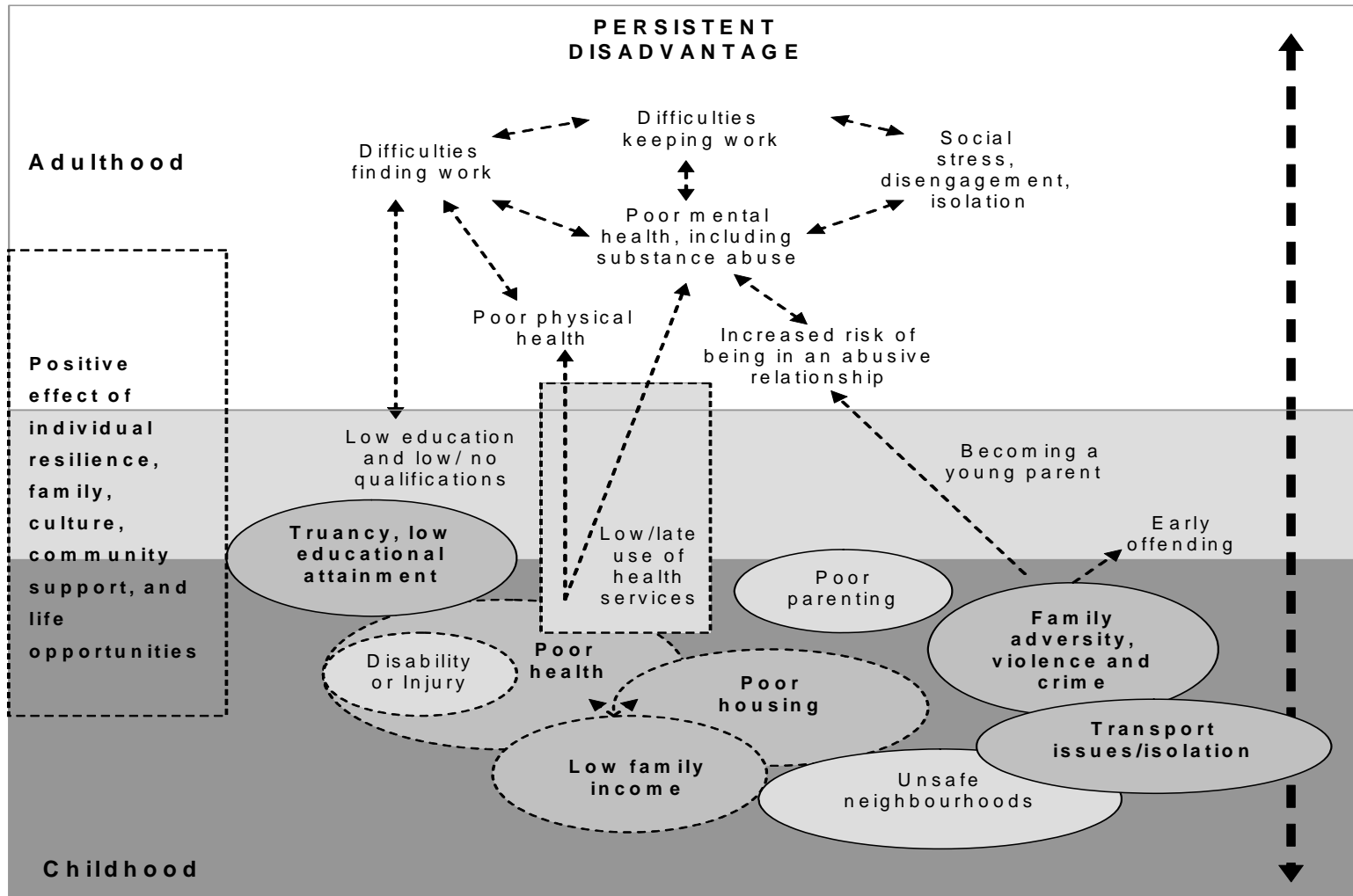
A Contextual Approach



Aspects of the Intervention Logic

- A **strengths-based** approach
- There is **hope** - targeted policies and programmes can be effective
- A **combination of factors** contribute over time – advice is to target the factors in a co-ordinated way **without ‘clumping’** the factors into a ‘complex’ and probably ‘overwhelming’ ball

Persistent Disadvantage – Intervention Logic



Sources of 'knowledge' about these 'fields'

Accumulated operational knowledge

Accumulated R&E knowledge

Specific R&E Projects

Agency knowledge and understandings

Accumulated knowledge built up in individual agencies in NZ about their areas of operations

Starting points:

- SPEaR Mapping since 2001- contains R&E projects for 19 SPEaR member agencies
- SPEaR agency representatives conduit for further information - 15 March workshop and ongoing discussion

Accumulated knowledge built up in particular fields of social science research – NZ & internationally

Starting points:

- particular academics & contract researchers with depth/overview of particular 'field' aspects
- PBRF (SPEaR/MoRST/TEC project 2003)
- Library key word searches

Specific research & evaluation projects – published and unpublished, NZ & international

Starting points:

particular research programmes eg longitudinal studies:

- Christchurch/David Fergusson
- Dunedin/Ritchie Poulton
- Competent Children/Cathy Wylie
- Pacific families/Janis Paterson

Agency knowledge and understandings

Starting points:

- SPEaR 15 March workshop
- SPRE session
- SPEaR Priorities sub-committee April

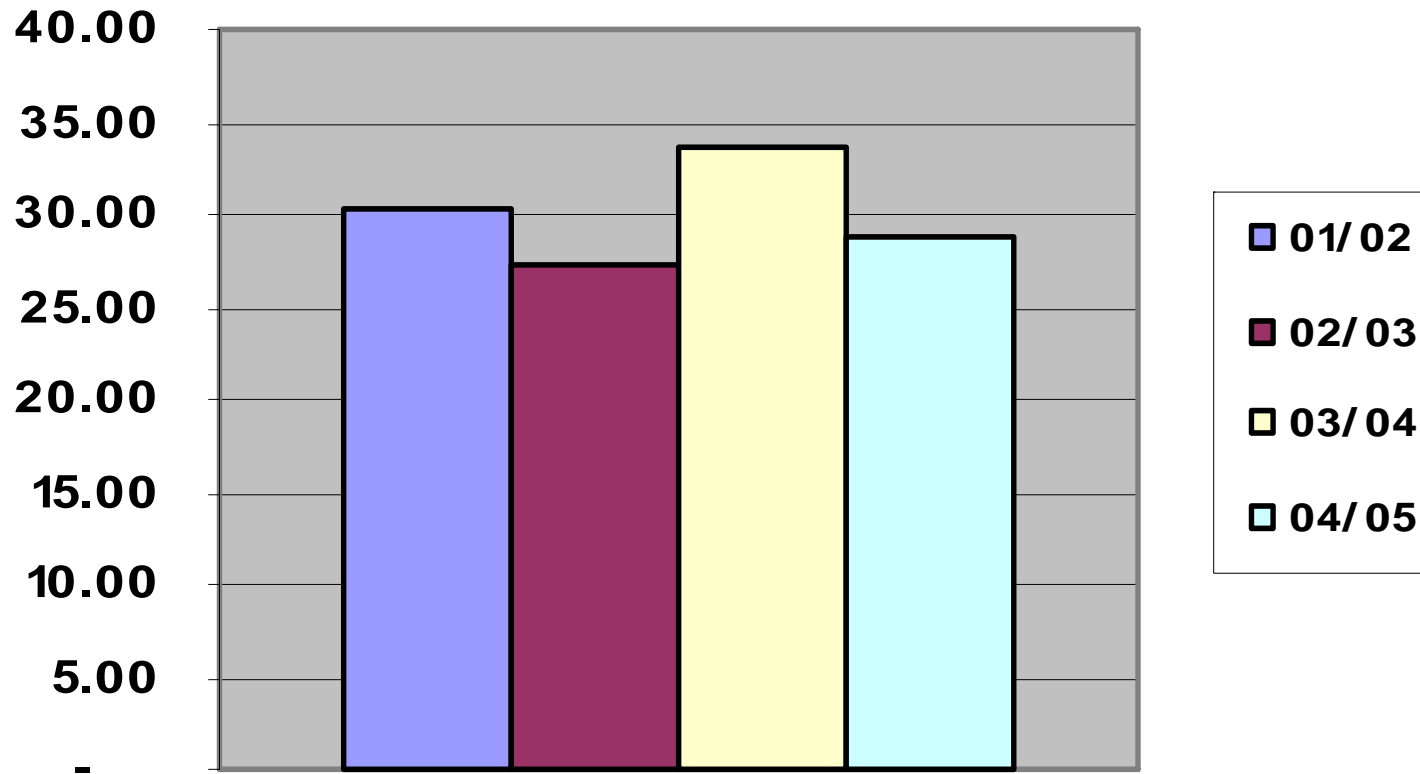
Mapping Snippets

Since the 2001/2002 Financial Year, SPEaR has collected Research & Evaluation Project information and mapped that to help build the information base needed to undertake the mandate to “maintain an overview of the governments investment in social policy R&E”

See Full Terms of Reference at <http://www.spear.govt.nz/about-us/index.html>

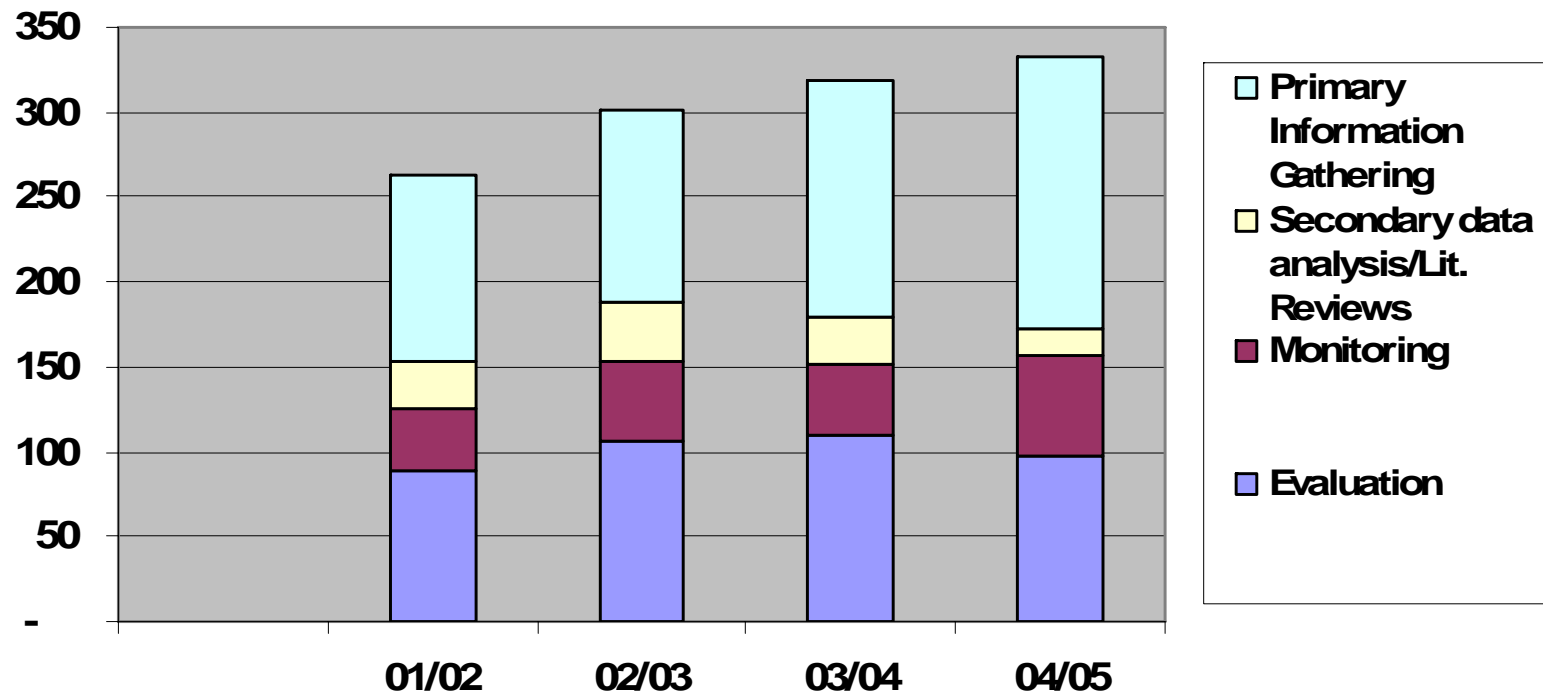
Mapping is at Project level which means that the projects can be run through a series of Frameworks.

**Comparative Reported Expenditure on Social R&E
Projects \$ in Millions
(excludes in-house inputs)**



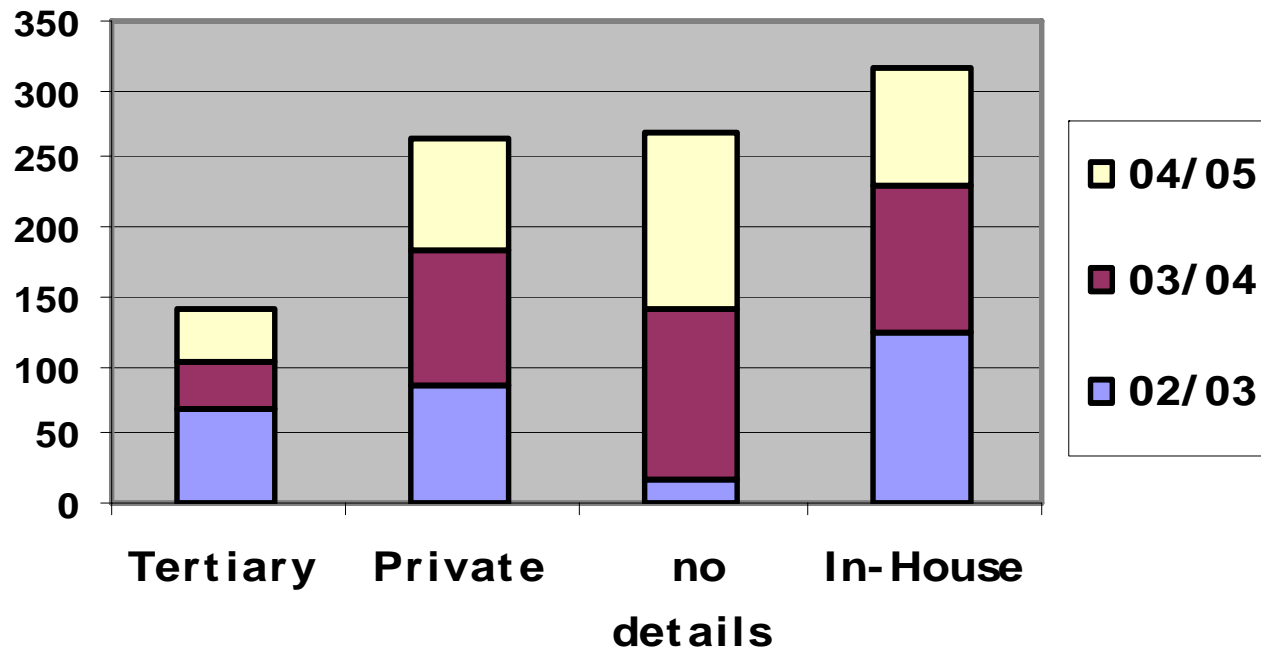
Note: Does not include FRST, HRC or Families Commission Research

Activity Comparisons for Mapped Projects



Note: these projects do not include FRST, HRC or Families Commission Research

Comparative Sector Involvement in Projects



Note: these projects do not include FRST, HRC or Families Commission Research

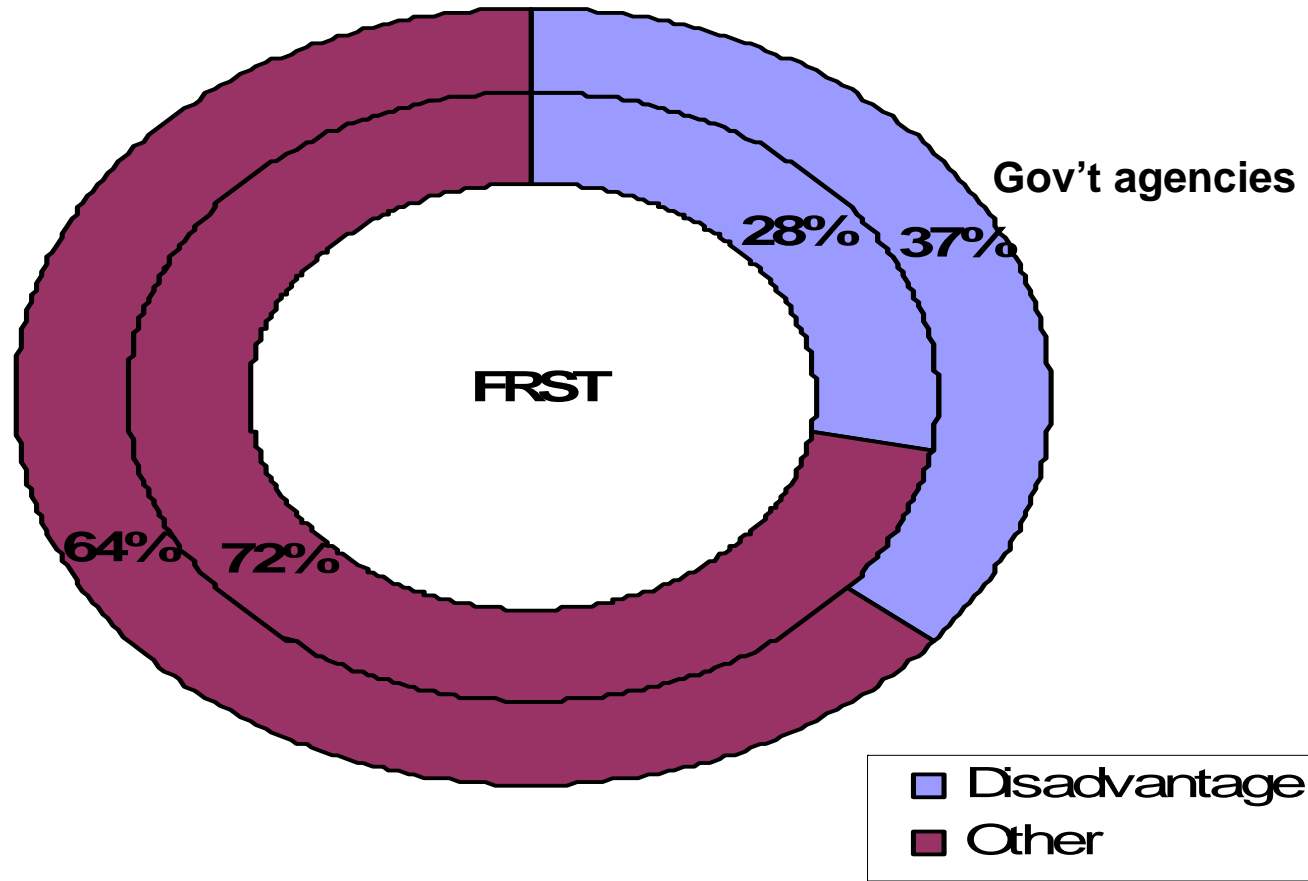
Using the Fields in the Intervention Logic (Slide 13) as a Coding Frame on the Mapping Database, we are building part of the jigsaw about 'what is known'

For example, in **2003/2004**:

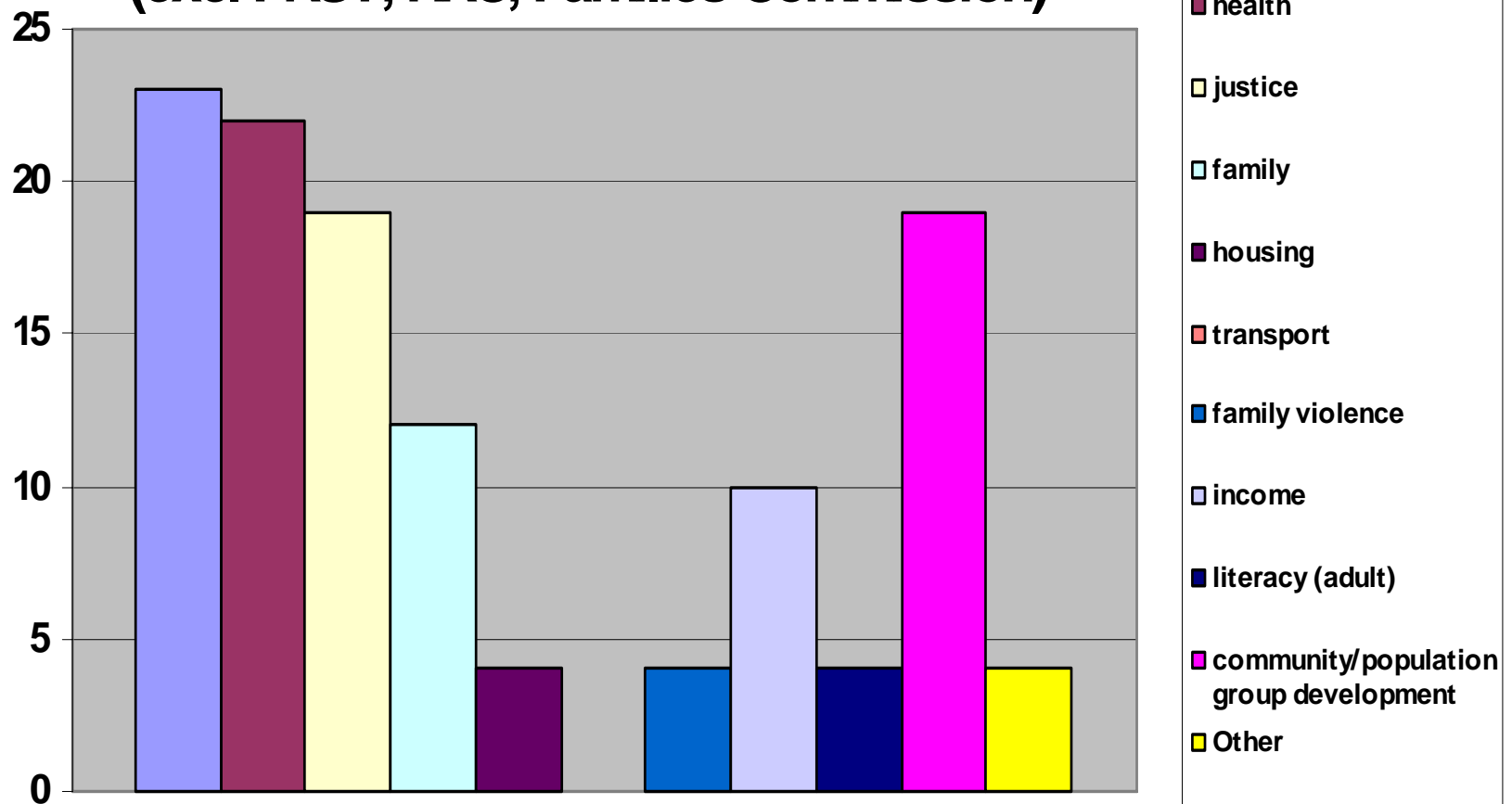
- Mapping of **318** projects then underway in SPEaR agencies (excl HRC & FRST) showed that: **121** government agency projects are clearly focused on an aspect of disadvantage
- Of **61** FRST (social) projects funded in 2003/2004, **17** clearly focus on an aspect of disadvantage

There are projects of relevance to aspects of persistent disadvantage in all agency work programmes

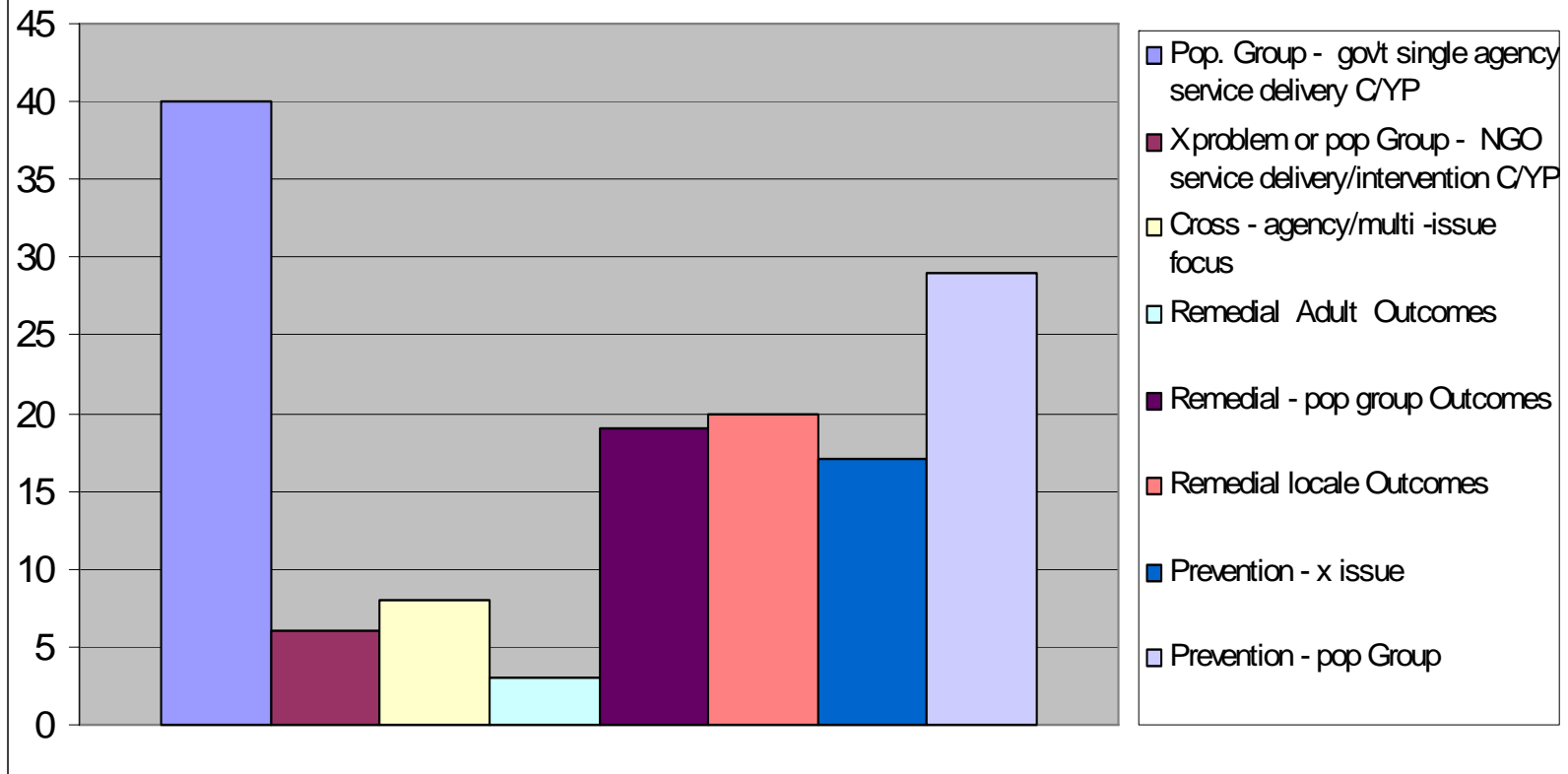
Government Agencies & FRST 2003/2004



2003/2004 Disadvantage Projects (121) coded by Disadvantage Fields (excl FRST, HRC, Families Commission)



2003/2004 Disadvantage Projects (121) Alternative Fields (excl FRST, HRC, Families Commission)



Note: Numbers add to 142 due to some multi-coding

A scan of 2001/2002, 2002/2003, 2004/2005 and 2005/2006 data shows similarities to the year 2003/2004 with approx a third of projects covering an aspect of disadvantage

No projects look at multiple fields of disadvantage – either as a snapshot or over time

190/318 2003/2004 Government agency projects have a primary Key Knowledge Question (KQ4) **Analysing what works to change variation in social outcomes including the design, delivery and impact of policy**

Note: the Key Knowledge Questions (KKQ's) and Key Theme Areas (KTA's) are a high level Coding Framework that reflect government goals and R&E priorities. The full list can be read at:

<http://www.msd.govt.nz/publications/e-i.html>

Improving the knowledge base for social policy: strategic knowledge needs Bev Hong, Ministry of Social Development, 2001

Next steps

- 15 March Workshop participants continue adding to 'state of knowledge' 15 March to Mid May 2007
- SPRE conference session 4 April
- SPEaR Member agencies and others add to 'state of knowledge' draft 15 March to mid May
- Identification of gaps and prioritisation of actions
(SPEaR Priorities Subcommittee) April/May/June/July
- Progress report part of 2007 report on Improving the Knowledge Base (IKB) to Cabinet
(SPEaR Priorities Subcommittee) July/August
- Implementation of actions
SPEaR agencies July onwards

The WHAT and WHO ??'s

Currently available information suggests that for each of the disadvantage factors there is a persistent 'tail'

Estimates of the size of the 'tail' vary – by factor/issue/problem and definitions, with estimates and advocacy ranging around 1-15% of the population with some clustering about 5%

Past 'silo' approaches (R&E, Implementation) mean we cannot readily quantify whether the individuals/groups in the 'tail' for one factor appear in 'other tails'

We cannot readily quantify how any aspect combinations may occur across the 'silo's', and over time

We cannot readily quantify effective interventions

Projects involving multiple information sources in a cross agency manner are beginning (research findings (numbers and words), administrative information and implementation experience)

There are privacy issues, capacity and capability constraints, ethical issues, intellectual property concerns and technology innovations in the mix

The SPEaR Data Saving & Sharing Working Party was formed in late 2004 - to bring together a range of agencies - government, tertiary & private sector - to improve understanding and work on 'across' aspects

Martin Tolich (ethics expertise) was contracted late 2006 to produce a discussion paper on real and apparent constraints and exemplar initiatives which could be adopted - to enable some desirable 'silo' bridging developments

Information Access – Data Saving & Sharing

Data Saving and Data Sharing

Existing Practice-Hoarding

International Exemplars

NIH, ESRC

New Zealand

Alexander Turnbull Library, HRC

Potential Problems/Solutions

Qualitative Research

- Can context rich data ever be shared?

Sharing Administrative Data

- Disclosure Review Boards (quasi ethics committees)
- Data enclaves
- Case by case oversight

Low risk anonymous surveys

Cases not people

WW Lowrance Learning from experience: privacy and the secondary use of data in health research

Monitoring the Way Forward

MOH Observational Studies Guidelines

[http://www.neac.health.govt.nz/moh.nsf/pagescm/520/\\$File/ethicalguidelines.pdf](http://www.neac.health.govt.nz/moh.nsf/pagescm/520/$File/ethicalguidelines.pdf)

Broad Consent-for sharing data for future unspecified research

<http://www.moh.govt.nz/moh.nsf/indexmh/guidelines-use-of-human-tissue>

Research

- Qualitative Research Data
- Anonymous Research Data
- Administrative Data

Picking off the ducks

- SPEaR has been building a knowledge base on Government agency investment in social research and evaluation since 2001
- This knowledge base is now being utilised, via the mapping programme, to identify gaps in that investment, as these can be assessed with reference to the KKQ's and KTA's that have been used to define the IKB project
- Through greater understanding of the potentials for data sharing, SPEaR is now leveraging the knowledge base with a view to contributing to addressing enduring social challenges such as persistent disadvantage
- SPEaR's activities have moved to a new level following the establishment of a firm foundation of best practice guidelines for R&E, a cross-agency database detailing investment in R&E, and a deeper appreciation of the value of data saving and sharing

