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<th>Title:</th>
<th>Agenda Item 6 - Communications Update</th>
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<tr>
<td>Author:</td>
<td>Deirdre Watters &amp; David Leach</td>
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<td>Organisation:</td>
<td>Dept of Health &amp; HSE</td>
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<td>Date:</td>
<td>7 Jan 2021</td>
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<td>Action required:</td>
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Quantitative Tracker
The nationally representative sample of 1,600 people conducted on behalf of the Department of Health on 4 Jan, available here reveals

- The level of worry is now at 7.0/10, back to the levels seen in March 2020, with worry and anxiety being the dominant emotions reported. 88% say they are staying at home.
- The major sources of worry are health system overload (4.2/5.0) and health of family and friends (3.9/5.0)
- 52% of people believe the worst of the pandemic is happening now, 39% believe that it is ahead of us, with 4% believing the worst of the pandemic is behind us.
- 55% believe Government reaction to the pandemic is insufficient and 66% think there should be more restrictions.

Quantitative Tracker – vaccine module
- 82% (62% definite, 20% probable) say they will get the COVID vaccine when it is offered to them, up from 73% in Nov (45% definite, 28% probable)
- 74% are worried about side effects of the vaccine, 65% worried about the long term effects on health.
- GPs are the most trusted source of information on the vaccine for 61% of the population, followed by the HSE (54%) and health experts (49%)

HSE Open Source Vaccine Survey
- 28,000 respondents, including 10,000 HCW.
- 80% HCW extremely, very or quite likely to get a COVID vaccine
- 81% HCW extremely, very or quite likely to recommend COVID vaccine to a friend
- Motivations for getting a COVID-19 vaccine are:
  1. To help prevent the spread of COVID-19
  2. To protect family, friends and colleagues
  3. To protect myself
- Information gaps - People are most interested in
  - Who, when where and how to get a vaccine
  - Immunity after the vaccine, when it kicks in and how long it lasts
  - Benefits of a COVID-19 vaccine
  - Long term side effects of the vaccine
  - Safety, evidence of safety
  - Vaccine effectiveness

Qualitative Tracker
Feedback from the qualitative tracker, for the two-weeks ending 28 Dec 2020, with focus groups across the spectrum reveals:

- There is a need for morale-boosting leadership and positivity as we enter 2021. Now is a moment for our leaders (health and political) to be front-and-centre, advocating for the solution (restrictions, vaccine-readiness) and boosting public morale. Longer-term optimism must endure during these difficult first weeks of 2021
- The hardships of Covid are being felt, especially among Young Adults who report elevated mental health issues in their immediate circle. Proactive acknowledgment and action in mental
health services is urgently needed

- Restrictions are perennially undermined by a perception that they lack sense and coherence. This corrosive view suggests citizens do not appreciate the wider strategy for managing Covid: a managing down of many complex risks.
- People are tracking the vaccine roll-out with great attention. They expect urgency (time saves lives) and competence (smart saves lives and livelihoods). Urgency and competence should be explicitly demonstrated, following a published, clear and transparent vaccine roll-out plan for the country
- Health experts should advocate for the vaccine on a medical and scientific basis, but not frame it as an inducement to return to normalcy.
- Vaccine communication needs to be adapted ‘by cohort’, driven by relevant benefits and an honest handling of the issues / unknowns. This is the way to slowly build national confidence.

Campaigns underway now
- COVID signs & symptoms
- Winter campaign for older people
- Young adults social campaign
- YourMentalHealth.ie
- Vaccine ad (radio, press, social & search)