

**Title:** **Agenda Item 6 - Communications Update**

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Action required:

For noting

For discussion

For decision

Approved for future publication: YES

## **NPHET – Communications Update**

### **11 Mar 2021**

#### **Quantitative Tracker**

The nationally representative sample of 2,000 people conducted on behalf of the Department of Health on 8 Mar, available [here](#) reveals:

- The level of worry at 6.0/10, has fallen back to levels last seen in early Dec, with concern for the health of family and friends now the highest source of worry.
- The majority, 48%, now believe the worst of the pandemic is behind us, 30% believe it is happening now and 8% believe it is ahead of us
- 43% think Ireland is returning to normal at about the right pace or too quick (26%). 32% think the pace too slow.
- People are disengaging from Covid related news

#### **Social Activity Measure**

The latest Social Activity Measure (ESRI/Department of the Taoiseach) for the week commencing 8 Feb and available [here](#), reveals:

- There was a small increase in mobility without an increase in social activity, possibly linked to an improvement in weather.
- Similar to two weeks previously, nearly 1 in 5 had “close contact” with a person from outside their household during the previous day. A majority of these close contact interactions in workplaces were attributable to essential workers (86%) but some were in non-essential workplaces (14%)
- Parents with children under the age of 18 were more likely to meet others from outside the household and to have had close contacts

#### **Quantitative Tracker – vaccine module**

- 51% of the population know someone in their immediate social circle who has had COVID-19
- 87% (72% definite, 15% probable) say they will get the COVID vaccine when it is offered to them
- 33% say they have concerns around the vaccine - 25% are worried about side effects of the vaccine, 20% worried about the long-term effects on health.
- GPs are the most trusted source of information on the vaccine for 76% of the population, followed by the HSE (55%) and Dept of Health (52%)

#### **Qualitative Tracker**

Feedback from the qualitative tracker, conducted among people aged 25 – 35 and leaving cert students, the week commencing 1 Mar, reveals:

- Anger is palpable, and points in several directions. Citizens express frustration at protesters railing against restrictions; but they also rail against a ‘Police State such as ours’ in which elderly parents can’t be visited while ports remain open

- Although support for restrictions is the default of most citizens, it is becoming frayed, confused and dissipated – chiefly because restrictions are open-ended
- There is deep appetite for a clear, cogent plan: endgame and milestones delivered with clarity with the understanding that the plan can always change (ref. vaccine supply, variants...)
- People expect that opening up will be cautious, principally because they do not want us to return to lockdown. Key is to establish what the data parameters are for re-opening society – so citizens know what we are aiming at.
- Leaving Cert students feel treated unfairly, with an absence of clarity and urgency in the decisions which affect them in the most important juncture of their young lives. The result is a stressed student population which feels its future is jeopardised
- Many young adults (YA) have quit 'traditional' news sources and absorb news of the pandemic via social media. The result is that they feel government is keeping them in the dark. A programme targeting such young adults with crisp, clear, credible information which directly affects their lives is required. The vaccination roll-out is poorly understood by YAs, perhaps because it does not yet concern them directly.
- There is appetite to begin the conversation of our post-Covid society. This is an opportunity for leadership and positive vision by Government and a narrative which itself signifies hope

### **Campaigns underway**

- Living with COVID - protective actions.
- COVID-19 Vaccines – HSE & GIS
- Young Adults campaign
  - Act like you've got it
  - #Antiviral
  - 7 seconds #NoVirusInvolvedInTheMakingOfThis

### **Campaigns in Development**

- Updating protective behaviours
- Young Adult Science Communicators
- Booklets
  - How to self isolate/restrict movements
  - Vaccine