Title: Agenda Item 6 - Communications Update

Author: Deirdre Watters & Fidelma Browne
Organisation: Dept of Health & HSE
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Action required:
☐ For noting
☐ For discussion
☐ For decision

Approved for future publication: YES
Quantitative Tracker
The nationally representative sample of 2,200 people conducted on behalf of the Department of Health on 1 Mar, available here reveals:

- The level of worry at 6.3/10, has fallen back to October levels, as public concern about health system overload falls back. However, the level of worry over prolonged restrictions has risen to a peak, at 3.6, now at the same level as worry over the health of family and friends, and the economy remain high.
- 47% of the population do not want further restrictions, 40% do. A third of the population now think that Ireland is too slow in “returning to normal,” the highest level yet.
- People are disengaging from Covid related news

Social Activity Measure
The Social Activity Measure (ESRI/Department of the Taoiseach) published fortnightly and available here, gives insight into how people are coping with the prolonged period of restrictions:

- While people are finding it tough going, the large majority (79%) believe that preventing the spread of Covid-19 is more important than the burden of restrictions.
- The data also show systematic misperceptions about socially activity. Presently, half the adult population does not meet up with anyone outside their household over a 48-hour period, with less than one quarter meeting up with three or more. Yet these more socially active people believe that they are meeting fewer people than average.

Quantitative Tracker – vaccine module
- 56% of the population know someone in their immediate social circle who has had COVID-19
- 89% (72% definite, 17% probable) say they will get the COVID vaccine when it is offered to them
- 35% 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 (51%)

Qualitative Tracker
Feedback from the qualitative tracker, for the week commencing 15 Feb, reveals:

- Citizens remain despondent with the toll of restrictions, yet there is light emerging given the vaccine news. Managing vaccine communication – so it is not seen as an OFF / ON switch – is an important part of managing the country’s expectations
- Young Adults exist in a social media space governed by controversy and entertainment. COVID communication must enter this realm to be relevant to YAs
At the heart of communication: a simple explanation of the both virus and vaccine, myth-busting information regarding why vaccine worries are unfounded, and a simple path of benefits of YAs to see why the vaccine is relevant to them

Deprived communities feel trodden on and often condescended to. Communication to these communities must be tailored, and ‘doing the right thing’ (e.g. “vaccinating near me” when appropriate) is key. Progress is best made collaboratively in this space, engaging with community leaders to assure that communication will resonate

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