Title: Agenda Item 6 - Communications Update

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Action required:
☐ For noting
☐ For discussion
☐ For decision

Approved for future publication: YES
Vaccine Quantitative Tracker
The nationally representative sample of 2,400 people conducted on behalf of the Department of Health by Amarach Research on 12 April 2021 has revealed:

- 51% of the population know someone in their immediate social circle who has had COVID-19.
- 86% (70% definite, 16% probable) say they will get the COVID vaccine when it is offered to them.
- 42% say they have concerns around the vaccine - 33% are worried about side effects of the vaccine, 21% worried about the long-term effects on health.
- GPs are the most trusted source of information on the vaccine for 75% of the population, followed by the HSE (50%), Dept of Health (48%) and Pharmacists (42%)

Quantitative Tracker

- The level of worry at 5.8/10, which has fallen for the third week in a row.
- Concern for the health of family and friends, the economy, health system overload and prolonged restrictions now the highest source of worry.
- The majority, 57% (an increase from 44% the following week) now believe the worst of the pandemic is behind us, 19% believe it is happening now and 9% believe it is ahead of us.
- 36% think Ireland is returning to normal too slowly, 43% think it’s at about the right pace. 21% think it is too quick.
- People are disengaging from Covid related news.

Social Activity Measure
The latest Social Activity Measure (ESRI/Department of the Taoiseach) for the week commencing 9 April and available here, reveals:

- Mobility remains relatively stable, but there has been an increase in visits to workplaces. There was a small but significant increase in workplace attendance in March compared with February - 33% of all respondents had visited their workplace the previous week, up from 30%.
- The number of people met from other households continues to increase, and almost 1 in 5 people have a close contact interaction on any given day.
- Fewer precautions are being taken during household visits. Despite a general decline in overall household visits, visits for social reasons have remained stable. 1 in 10 people report hosting visitors or visiting another household the previous day. Risk factors associated with transmission of Covid-19 during these visits are becoming more prevalent.
- People who are more worried and people who judge preventing the spread of Covid-19 to be more important than the burden of restrictions meet fewer people from other households and are less likely to have a close contact. Although a large majority remain
worried and favour preventing the spread of the virus, both variables continue to decline since January.

Qualitative Tracker
Feedback from the qualitative tracker, for the week ending 28 March and 4 April, focus groups amongst young farmers, working parents, and young adults 19 – 35 years old. As well as two in depth interviews with a new mum and a district nurse working for the HSE revealed:

- Stagnation is rife. People have a deep need for a path out of Covid, and need leadership and positivity in the communication of that path
- Young Adults (YA) are more open and available to the Covid conversation, simply because they need a solution to get their lives back on track. Vaccination is the route to freedom, and YAs want to see action. They are available to be part of the solution, as it is in their self-interests.
- A quiet rural crisis is underway in rural communities and especially among farmers. Covid’s isolation amplifies a life which is already less connected. Mental health concerns, alive across the country, are particularly keenly felt among farmers. Many are on the brink.
- Guideline restrictions are not adding up for regular people. It is not clear that the Lockdown has produced results – and if that is the case, there seems little need to follow the guidelines. Sacrifices must have meaning – and a scientifically based case to justify the Guidelines is urgently needed.
- Vaccination is the route to freedom. Action is the watchword – the country wants to see demonstrable progress., brought to life in a simple and fresh manner by communicators which move beyond the ‘grey suits’ which are perceived to have lost connection with regular people. The job of Government and the system is to display urgency, competence and resolve in solving the biggest national emergency in living memory.

Campaigns underway
- HSE – We can do this (updated protective behaviours)
- HSE Vaccine Campaign calling for online registration by age group

Campaigns in Development
- SciComm Collective to launch w/c 19 Apr – group of young science communicators to communicate the virus and the vaccine to their peers via social media
- Vaccine Booklet to include how to self isolate/restrict movements