Title: Agenda Item 6 - Communications Update

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

Approved for future publication: YES
Quantitative Tracker
The nationally representative sample of 2,000 people conducted on behalf of the Department of Health by Amarach Research on 14 Jun 2021 published here has revealed:

- The level of worry is at 5.2/10, the lowest levels seen in the pandemic.
- Concern for the economy is now the highest source of worry, followed by concern for the health system and the health of family and friends.
- The majority, 67% now believe the worst of the pandemic is behind us, 9% believe it is happening now and 9% believe it is ahead of us.
- 52% think Ireland is returning to normal at about the right pace, 26% think it is too quick and 22% too slowly.
- People are disengaging from Covid related news.

Vaccine Quantitative Tracker
- 53% of the population know someone in their immediate social circle who has had COVID-19.
- Of those remaining to be vaccinated, 80% (64% definite, 16% probable) say they will get the COVID vaccine when it is offered to them.
- Of those remaining to be vaccinated, 50% say they have concerns around the vaccine - 36% are worried about side effects of the vaccine, 32% 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 (56%), Dept of Health (51%) and Pharmacists (46%)

Social Activity Measure
The Social Activity Measure (ESRI/Department of the Taoiseach), available here for week beginning Jun 4 reveals:

- There have been significant increases in visits to the workplace, people’s homes, and other indoor locations (mainly churches) over the past week. There was more inter county travel (142%) and visits to non-essential retail increased but low – with less than 17% of people said that they had visited a non-essential shop or business over the previous week.
- People who are fully vaccinated are more socially active than others
- Worry remains the strongest predictor of having a close contact, having a social visit, and meeting more people.
- The numbers of people intending to take the vaccine has increased to 80% and satisfaction with the rollout has increased.
Qualitative Tracker
Feedback from the qualitative tracker for the week commencing 6 June reveals that:

- Fear of the virus is persistent, especially in vulnerable populations and even when they have been fully vaccinated. People need to build confidence in order to cast aside that fear and live again. Public Health communication is an important means of achieving this.
- Citizens are concerned about the backlog in health services.
- Teenagers have felt unstimulated in their lives and ignored by the larger systems which control their lives. They year to return to full life, and have discovered the hidden value in school as the core locomotive of social interaction. Let to their own devices (they will not be), teens will readily take the vaccine as they simply want full life back again.
- Young adult females are only now engaging with vaccination as the programme approaches their cohort. Vaccine concerns are building momentum, chiefly because their own health is largely unthreatened by COVID. Key in vaccine communication is to assure that it remains positive. Where issues such as ‘fertility and vaccine’ need to be addressed, this should be done in a targeted manner.

Campaigns underway

- HSE – We can do this (updated protective behaviours)
- HSE Campaigns
  - #For Us All vaccine campaign
  - Online registration by age group
  - Pharmacy campaign
  - Dose 2 AstraZeneca on social
  - Vaccine booklet in distribution
- Sci Comm Collective – group of young science communicators to communicate the virus and the vaccine to their peers via social media.