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 1,900 people conducted on behalf of the Department of Health by Amarach Research on 28 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, 65% now believe the worst of the pandemic is behind us, 10% believe it is happening now and 9% believe it is ahead of us.
- 48% think Ireland is returning to normal at about the right pace, 23% think it is too quick and 30% too slowly.
- People have disengaged from Covid related news.

Vaccine Quantitative Tracker
- 52% of the population know someone in their immediate social circle who has had COVID-19.
- Of those remaining to be vaccinated, 77% (66% definite, 11% probable) say they will get the COVID vaccine when it is offered to them.
- Of those remaining to be vaccinated, 42% say they have concerns around the vaccine - 36% are worried about side effects of the vaccine, 31% worried about the long-term effects on health.
- GPs are the most trusted source of information on the vaccine for 72% of the population, followed by the HSE (56%), Dept of Health (50%) and Pharmacists (43%)

Qualitative Tracker
Feedback from the qualitative tracker for the week commencing 28 Jun reveals that:
- People are finding the pandemic overwhelming; many continue to quit mainstream news for their mental health
- While people have appetite for solution-based communication (vaccine), it is more challenging to get their attention on new threats (Delta) or restrictions
- Young Adults are no longer afraid of the virus but have increasing frustration with their lack of freedom. Most desperately want the vaccine to get back to their lives
- The specifics of the Delta variant have not landed with Young Adults. News of the transmission rates (+60% vs Alpha) and the likelihood of hospital admission (twice that of Alpha) has not broken through.
- Grandparents, meanwhile, are still nervous, despite being vaccinated. A year later, they have lost their independence. They need specific encouragement to resume their former lives.
Feedback from the Covid-19 Communications and Behavioural Advisory Group

- People need to believe that their concerns are being taken on board. Communication on COVID public health measures and vaccines lands best when it is clear, consistent, coherent and logical.

- Ongoing monitoring of vaccine intention among younger cohorts and addressing any concerns to continue. Emphasise the effectiveness of the vaccines, alongside how safe they are.

- Vaccine apathy among younger cohorts can be addressed by minimising physical barriers to vaccination, for example, make vaccines available withing walking distance and out of normal working hours. Employers should be encouraged to facilitate vaccination appointments for their staff.

- Consider prioritising third level students for vaccination over the summer months to ensure safe return to on-campus learning, and optimise their educational and social development.

- Unvaccinated people to be encouraged to comply with the public health advice while awaiting vaccination: continue to meet outside, manage contacts and avoid crowds. Public health communication to continue to use examples of outbreaks to show how the virus spreads.

Updating public health advice
People are unsure of the guidelines. Targeted communication by vaccinated and unvaccinated cohorts is required; elaborating on the vaccine bonus for vaccinated and reminding on the risks associated with indoor & outdoor socialising and travel for unvaccinated.

Campaigns on air now
- HSE Campaigns
  - We can do this (updated protective behaviours)
  - #For Us All vaccine campaign
  - Online registration by age group
  - Pharmacy campaign

- Sci Comm Collective – group of young science communicators communicating the virus and the vaccine to their peers via social media on Instagram and on TikTok.