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 Oct 2021

Quantitative Tracker
The nationally representative sample of 1,600 people conducted on behalf of the Department of Health by Amarach Research on 8 Nov 2021 published here has revealed:

• The level of worry now stands at 5.2/10, slowly returning to levels last seen in June this year.
• The majority, 46% believe the worst of the pandemic is behind us, 19% believe it is happening now, with 15% believing it is ahead of us.
• There has been a significant increase in the percentage that think Ireland is returning to normal too quickly, now at 41%, versus 43% believing we are moving at about the right pace. 37% believe there should be more restrictions.

Qualitative Tracker
Feedback from the qualitative for the week ending 6 Sept reveals that:
• The public are concerned and watching the rise in cases carefully. Many do not understand why this should be, given our high rate of vaccination.
• There is a marked return to focus on the vulnerable people in our lives. The Irish people want to live in a society that gives protection to those with specific need in times of danger
• Masks and Covid Cert compliance help set the tone and telegraph the level of co-operation with the public health advice. The public assume that where masks are dominant, so too is Covid co-operation. Mask ‘enforcement’ should get disproportionate attention across all sectors – as they invite other precautions as well.

Evolving our Covid Communications
• Government has been running the “Covid yellow” public health advice for the last 18 months.
• While this identity has undoubtedly become a source of trusted information to the public, there is a need to refresh and reinvigorate
• As we enter winter, it is imperative to understand that there is no silver bullet to keep us protected from COVID-19. Instead, we all must continue to adopt the full range of behaviours to keep safe
• Layer Up is a cross-Government campaign to amplify these protective behaviours
HSE Winter Communications
The focus of the HSE’s winter communications programme is to support the public health response to COVID-19, support the ongoing rollout of vaccination, and provide people with practical health service and self-care advice over the winter months.

COVID-19 Protection
Our new COVID-19 campaigns are informed by research on public attitudes and behaviours around COVID-19 and in-depth qualitative research.

Some of the main insights from people who took part are that there is a general sense of cautious positivity about the coming months and people are looking forward to meeting people and being social. Most people know that we are still and will be living with COVID-19 into the future and are prepared to do that. There is some confusion around how bad symptoms need to be before they need to be acted on and there is room for a change of pace and tone from the messaging we have been running.

Our new campaigns cover two themes:
1. Thank you – stay at home if you have symptoms
   We aim to strengthen people’s response when they’re sick. To keep others safe, we ask you to stay at home when sick, and act quickly on symptoms and get a COVID-19 test.

2. Heads Up - Keep protecting yourself and others from COVID-19
   New visuals and advertising on keeping hands clean, masks, leaving space, staying at home if you’re sick. This campaign also introduces a new ‘risk meter’ visual, which we’ll use for this and other protective behaviours over the coming weeks and months.

You will see these campaigns on TV and radio throughout winter, along with digital OOH advertising, digital marketing on all social media platforms, search and websites, and cinema
advertising during Nov and Dec.

**COVID-19 Vaccine**
The HSE’s COVID-19 vaccine communications programme has supported people in Ireland to be informed about and feel confidence in the vaccine and the protection it offers for us all. The current phases of the campaign aim to reach people due for their booster dose and people in areas, groups or communities of lower uptake.

Messages and themes of the current campaign:
- COVID is still spreading. Vaccination is your best protection.
- There are now even more ways to get your vaccine - details of extra pharmacy and walk-in vaccine clinics in your area
- Advice in various languages on social media, audio platforms and HSE website
- Facts and advice from experts in vaccines, pregnancy and fertility

You will see the vaccine campaign on news media through national and regional media relations and interviews, press advertising (national, regional and foreign language), radio (national and regional stations, translated radio ads across platforms like Spotify). We also have Out of home in areas of lower uptake, digital marketing on all social media platforms (various languages), search and websites, and videos and information materials in multiple languages and formats.

**Health Services and Self-care**
Our winter communications programme also includes ongoing updates and messaging from our health services, including practical advice on self-care for common winter illnesses, advice for people with chronic illness on being winter-ready, and information on how to access the care you need when you need it. This will be supported by a programme of news media interviews, social media and other public and staff communications over the coming weeks and months.