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 1,600 people conducted on behalf of the Department of Health by Amarach Research on 29 Nov 2021 published here has revealed:

Amarach Tracker (as at 29 Nov)
- The level of worry has increased to 5.8, similar to levels seen in April this year
- The majority (50%) now want more restrictions (35% don’t)
- 46% of the population think government reaction the current outbreak is appropriate, 43% think it insufficient
- Slight decrease in the proportion of people visiting hospitality, from 44% in Nov to 38% last weekend, 74% people visiting pubs had their Covid passes checked vs 77% last week

Antigen
- 21% of adults have taken an antigen test for Covid-19 in the last week
- 62% of people with symptoms took an antigen test
- Of those with symptoms who took an antigen test and received a negative result, 26% arranged a PCR test
- Of those with symptoms who took an antigen test and received a negative result: 39% self-isolated

Christmas
- 6 in 10 people (60%) say they are happier to have “a much quieter Christmas than usual this year”
- 63% say they will “avoid some meetings with friends and family this year, even if others go ahead and meet”

Qualitative Data (debrief 22 Nov)
- Citizens have difficulty in understanding where Ireland is on its pandemic journey. Do these high case numbers mean we are back to Square One? Does Omicron mean we are worse than Square One? The country needs help to orientate itself as to where we stand, with regard to our national pandemic journey.
- The hospitality sector is bleak - cancellations are around 70% - with an expectation of being fully closed down before Christmas 2021. The biggest contribution to controlled safe trading is in reimagining enforcement. This needs to shift from side-line issues (e.g. collection of contact tracing) to a focus on capacity. Many outlets are famously ‘packing them in’
- Young adults sit in the perfect storm of vaccine hesitancy:
  - They are least affected by symptoms of Covid
  - They are most vulnerable to any long-term vaccine risks
  - They are least engaged in the national pandemic discourse
  At the centre of this challenge is vaccine myth busting

SAM data (16 – 23 Nov)
Latest data not yet published, but interim analysis reports no significant decrease in social activity, but an increase in mitigating behaviours (masks, distance, cleaning hands) when meeting others.
Campaigns currently on Air
1. HSE: Thank you – stay at home if you have symptoms
2. HSE: Heads Up - Keep protecting yourself and others from COVID-19
3. HSE: COVID-19 Vaccines and booster invitations

Campaigns in Development
- DoH: Young Adults – reduce your contacts
- DoH/GIS: Antigen campaign