Title: Agenda Item 6 - Communications Update

Author: Deirdre Watters & Fidelma Browne
Organisation: Dept of Health & HSE
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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 3 Jan 2022 published here has revealed:

Amarach Tracker (as at 3 Jan)
- The level of worry remains at 5.8, similar to levels seen in March & April this year
- 45% do not want more restrictions, 42% do
- 45% of the population think government reaction to the current outbreak is appropriate, 40% think it insufficient, 15% think it too extreme
- 26% visited hospitality last week. They report Covid passes checked by sector to be: 80% in cafés, 92% in restaurants, 75% in pubs.

Antigen
- 56% of adults took an antigen test for Covid-19 last week (vs 27% on 20 Dec)
  - 87% of people with symptoms took an antigen test, 43% without symptoms also took an antigen test
  - 13% were positive, 87% negative
- 29% of adults had symptoms they thought might be Covid-19 in the last week.
  - 31% of all those with symptoms arranged PCR test, 60% self-isolated
  - 87% with symptoms took an antigen test, 28% of these were positive and 97% of these isolated
  - 13% with symptoms did not take an antigen test and 33% of them isolated
- Of those with symptoms who took an antigen test and received a negative result, 18% arranged a PCR test, 51% self-isolated

Qualitative Data (based on Focus Groups on 20 & 27 Dec)
- The virus is everywhere. It has arrived into people’s homes and their friends homes. Its ubiquity changes its meaning: Covid is increasingly less feared and more seen as an inconvenience
- Omicron has not yet declared its colours regarding its severity. People’s default position is to flatten the curve in order to protect ICU beds. They rather expect that it is about delaying when Omicron comes to them: when, not if
- Boosters and antigen testing are getting a lot of focus over Christmas. The former is visibly working in people’s lives, leading to less sickness. The latter brings some control and decision making into the hands of citizens. Antigen tests have been the main trigger for behaviour change in December 2021
- Young adults, especially older teens, feel blamed and ignored by authorities. Children when Covid began, they are emerging into uncertain adulthood and want support to bring clarity to exams and education, so they can get their life off to the best start possible
- Unvaccinated people we spoke to are unvaccinated by deliberate choice. They report considerable social and societal pressure to get vaccinated and a strong backlash from their friends, difficulty in living normal life
• The public are looking for a roadmap for 2022, bringing clarity to their role at this stage in the pandemic (to get booster, reduce contacts, use control tools such as masks, ventilation, antigen testing etc)

Campaigns currently on air
1. HSE: Symptoms & testing
2. HSE: COVID-19 Vaccines and booster invitations
3. DoH: Young Adults – reduce your contacts
4. GIS: Asses your risk – Risk, Venue, Symptoms & People