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 17 Jan 2022 published here has revealed:

Amarach Tracker
- The level of worry is down slightly to 5.5, similar to levels seen in May last year
- 65% do not want more restrictions, 23% do
- 55% of the population think government reaction to the current outbreak is appropriate, 20% think it insufficient, 21% think it too extreme
- 25% visited hospitality last week. They report COVID passes checked by sector to be: 85% in cafés, 87% in restaurants, 78% in pubs.
- Of those asked for a Covid Certificate, approx. a third were also asked for photo ID: 31% in cafés, 48% in restaurants, 39% in pubs.

Antigen
- 13% of adults had symptoms they thought might be Covid-19 in the last week.
  - 27% of all those with symptoms arranged PCR test
  - 50% of all those with symptoms self-isolated
- 35% of all adults took an antigen test for Covid-19 last week (vs 56% on 3 Jan); 5% were positive, 95% negative
- New question this week – of the 5% who took an antigen test and got a detected/positive result, 1 in 5 (22%) registered their positive result on the HSE Portal (warning – low base)
- 88% of people with symptoms took an antigen test (14% were positive), 27% without symptoms also took an antigen test (1% were positive)
- Of those with symptoms who took an antigen test and received a negative result, 20% arranged a PCR test
- Of those with symptoms who took an antigen test and received a negative result: 42% self-isolated

Qualitative Data (based on Focus Groups on 10 Jan)
- 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
- Despite relatively low hospitalisations, citizens are somewhat bleak regarding Covid, and feel ‘we have been here before’. They fear that another variant will bring us ‘back to square one’
- The focus of communication desired by citizens is in the long-term ‘living with covid’ strategy. Key to such a strategy is the exploration of scenarios, the ability to respond rapidly to changed circumstances, and the reassurance that we have moved beyond Lockdown as a ‘quick fix’ response to Covid
- Young Adults and adolescents continue to feel the pressure of confinement that comes with Covid restrictions. The pandemic is the thief of time, experiences and potential. Parents speak repeatedly of their concern for the mental health of young people and the paucity of rapid support to intervene when needed
- The complexity of the issues in paediatric vaccinations must be acknowledged. The HSE has an important role as a balanced provider of information to parents in making this decision.
actual experience of HSE information is positive, even if the expectation of those who have not visited the website is that the information given will lack balance

- As the country moves towards a lifting of restrictions and better control of Covid, the articulation of how we ‘live with covid’ should emphasise personal responsibility, delivered with a tone of informed optimism

**Campaigns currently on air**
1. HSE: Symptoms & testing
2. HSE: COVID-19 Vaccines and booster invitations