



DoH COVID-19 Qual Research:

Waves 5-8 (27 July – 24 August 2020):

Monthly Debrief

Confidential

CONTENTS

Project Process

Opening Commentary

Learning By Cohort: life-stage

Learning By Cohort: vulnerable

Learning By Cohort: unfolding interest

Summary Conclusions

Project Process

- Each of four waves consists of 2 x qualitative focus groups (1.5 hours) and 2 x tele-depths qualitative conversations (1 hour)
- Recruitment (overleaf) is carried out professionally, and participants given an incentive to join
- Across four waves (one month) we cover a balance of cohorts, geography, social class
- Focus groups are carried out via Zoom, recruiting 7 respondents for 6 to show
- All Zoom groups are recorded, and verbatim notes are taken across all groups, for analysis
- For each Weekly Wave, fieldwork happens Monday / Tuesday, followed by Top-line Findings on Wednesday, and a weekly debrief Friday



Waves 5-8: who we spoke to

MONTH TWO	Wave 5 w/c 27 July	Wave 6 w/c 3 Aug	Wave 7 w/c 10 Aug	Wave 8 w/c 17 Aug
Focus Group 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working Mums & Dads working from home, of younger kids less than 12 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Older family parent (kids aged 13-25 yrs, living at home); Spread of gender & family size Mix of pvt healthcare and no private healthcare 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> General population Interest in mental health Gender balanced Age 25 – 55 All to have pvt healthcare 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rural adults Mix of gender (age mix 25-50) & geography None to have private healthcare
Focus Group 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Male & female young adults YOUNGER 19-24yrs Spread of ages, locations and social class 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Male & female young adults OLDER - 25-32yrs Spread of ages, locations and social class Living away from home 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Underlying conditions (respiratory, cardio vascular, diabetes, organ transplant, imuno-deficiency disorders) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low paid workers (less than €25 per hour) Actually working right now (e.g. service jobs, factory jobs, labour jobs) Aged 20-40: mixed gender Ideally with some non-nationals as well
Depth Interview 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Person who has come through Covid: had Covid, was ill but recovered (more serious) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Health worker non-national (frontline: support staff in nursing home) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Small business owner whose business has been negatively impacted by Covid (i.e. service industry) - DUBLIN 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young Person who has come through Covid (less than 35) – tested positive
Depth Interview 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Person who has come through Covid: had Covid, was ill but recovered (less serious) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Health worker (frontline: mature nurse – over 15 years experience - in a busy hospital – gender neutral) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Person who has recently lost their job or furloughed directly because of Covid 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bereaved person: someone who has lost a direct family member during Covid

Timeline of Month's Events: *important from respondents' pov*



CONTENTS

Project Process

Opening Commentary

Learning By Cohort: life-stage

Learning By Cohort: vulnerable

Learning By Cohort: unfolding interest

Summary Conclusions

The Covid Context

- **Covid Is An Assault On Community** – the very backbone of Irish society. It is an existential threat to how we live, work and die. Few are infected by Covid, everyone is *affected*
- **There Are No Easy Answers.** We are entering a phase of risk management and course correction. The big challenge is to keep citizens on-board. This is done through leadership: addressing contradictions, offering explanations and storytelling
- **Adapting Is Helped By Lived Experience.** Seeing good behaviour is more powerful than *talking about it*. e.g. school-kids will bring good practices home; the more restaurants open, the more ‘re-training’ of diners. Opening the economy accelerates new ways of behaving
- **Healthcare Is Top Of Citizens’ Minds.** The DOH has people’s attention. Covid has shown us that the system can change fast. It is a unique opportunity to make radical, positive change to healthcare



CONTENTS

Project Process

Opening Commentary

Learning By Cohort: life-stage

Learning By Cohort: vulnerable

Learning By Cohort: unfolding interest

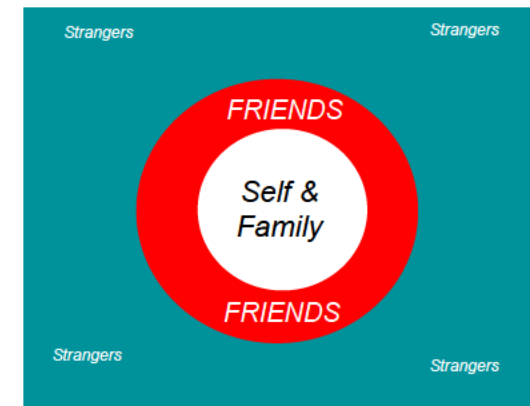
Summary Conclusions

Young Adults: *learning*

- Young lives have been disrupted, and put on hold: Young Adults have time on their hands (often unemployed, furloughed) and they need to fill it: which means they come together with friends
- Anxiety around Covid is present, but often externalised: concern for family, for the economy, and for the time lost. Not for themselves
- Those managing best have often been creative: returned to simpler things, got fit, learnt a skill. This self-efficacy may be disproportionately female
- For Young Adults, the rules break down when among friends, aka *'group drift'*. The group is always less responsible than the individuals who compose it. **Friends are Young Adults' biggest danger**
- Strong peer pressure to ignore risky Covid behaviour enables the group to drift. [By a failure to speak up and say how the group should behave, the group 'tells' each individual how to behave]
- These young people are turned off by statistics, which are robbed of humanity. Engaging them requires telling emotional, relatable stories

"Things drift. A month ago we were waving. Now we're fist pumping..."

FRIENDS ARE YA's BIGGEST DANGER



"It takes two to Social Distance. I alone can't make it work"

Young Adults: *three actionable themes*

1.

TACKLE 'GROUP DRIFT'

*When a friendship group gets together it drifts into bad Covid behaviour.
Friends are the most likely means of getting virus, not strangers / public*

Implications:

- Talk about it; acknowledge it! (e.g. guest lectures in college)
- Friend groups of 8 or less are easier to manage: advise limiting the size of groups
- Develop skills to shape safe group behaviour
- No scorn, no blame. Just care

2.

MANAGING MENTAL HEALTH

*The burden of anxiety is widespread and cumulative.
Boredom is the trigger for negativity & pessimism*

Implications:

- Talk about it, especially amongst guys (who tend to talk less)
- Support in peer-to-peer solution finding e.g. fitness / new skills / filling your time

3.

FROM STATS TO STORIES

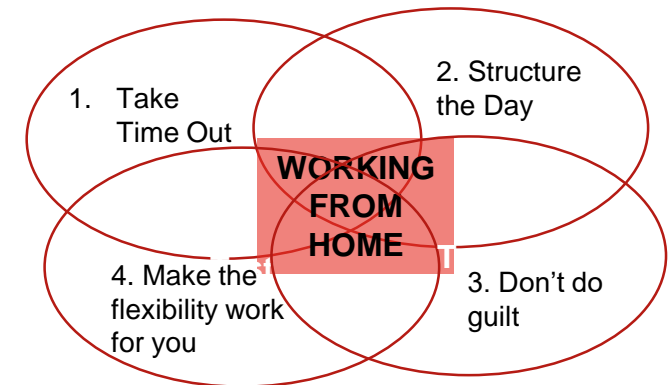
Numbers numb. Young Adults need relatable stories of coping / respecting living with the virus (not fear about death)

Implications:

- Similar to teens – find peer-to-peer storytellers
- Tell the story of a friendship cluster, and the havoc it created

Parents Working From Home: *learning*

- Working from home is finding its new rhythm. There's more flexibility in breaking up the day: you can multi-task, putting on a wash while you take a call...
- Parents want full clarity on back-to-school. Clarity is lacking
 - Back-to-school is in sights, and has parents nervous. School and crèche plans need to be clarified. A lot hangs in the balance: mental health, stable home life, continuity for their kids, safety of all
 - The key focus of parents is not on health issues, but on their desire to get the home and work-life back on track. More home-schooling would be devastating to some
 - Some consider schools as a 'house of cards' – volatile institutions that can be closed down at a moment's notice by a cluster
- There is some concern that a Covid vaccine might be rushed through. Some talk about 'holding back'. And yet, the same people are more open to the winter flu vaccine! In short, vaccines must be communicated bearing in mind the emotion and the functional benefits they bring



Some four months in, many are creating workable solutions at home, finding upside as well as stress in the new arrangement

Parents Working From Home: *actionable themes*

1.

WINTER

As dark nights draw in, many of the healthy outdoorsy practices will be impossible. How to fill this gap?

Implications:

- Focus on winter preparedness: support needed in coping with Covid, not just avoiding Covid

2.

FINEST HOUR

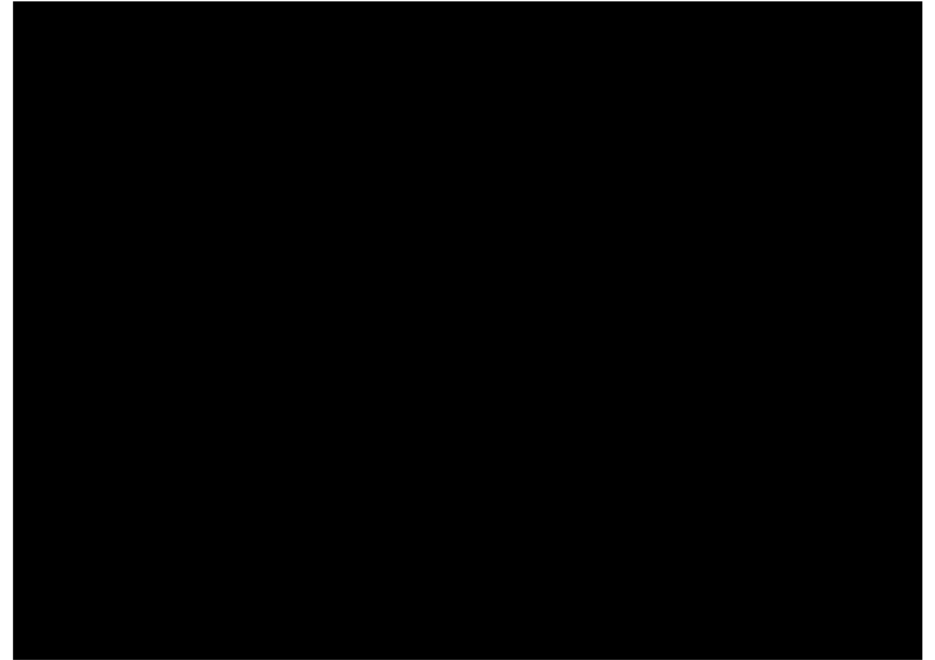
Covid was the HSE's finest hour. When the chips were down, it rose to its very best.

Implications:

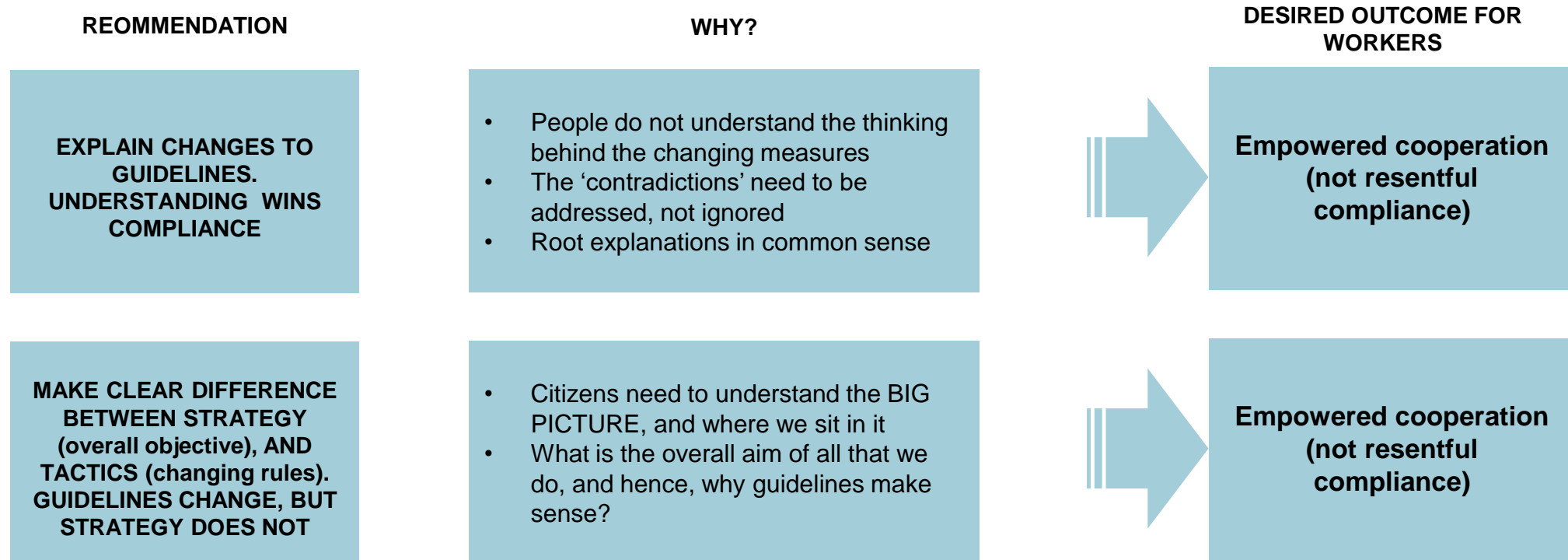
- Respect for HSE is high
- HSE has shown resolve, flexibility and imagination – and perhaps this can become part of its DNA / modus operandi
- Just like NHS was born out of WWII, a new HSE can be born out of Covid

Adults In Rural Areas: *learning*

- Working from home is no easy ride. People feel they have to demonstrate more effort and results, to guarantee their job in this precarious time. This is the price of uncertainty
- If there are no kids at home to force a work cut-off, work life and home-life bleed into one. This needs discipline
- Covid has caused the systems in our lives falter. Systems deliver routine and certainty. Individual responsibility and government leadership must fill the gap
- Anger and lack of confidence in leadership is bubbling. Especially around the lack of clarity of rules. Citizens do not understand the logic of government / NEPHET decisions
- Some believe that politics and spin are at work: they want a return to expertise, clarity, and us all *knuckling down and getting the job done*
- Many instances of making personal decisions to remain responsible (turning down invitations; postponing weddings)



Adults In Rural Areas: *actionable themes*



CONTENTS

Project Process

Opening Commentary

Learning By Cohort: life-stage

Learning By Cohort: vulnerable

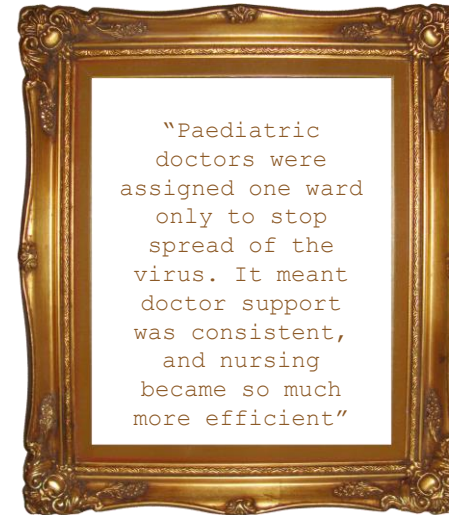
Learning By Cohort: unfolding interest

Summary Conclusions

Frontline Staff: *learning*

- In nursing, professionalism rules. Whether one is from Ireland, the EU, or beyond, respect on the ward is based on competence and experience [note: the non-national spoken to was an EU citizen; we will explore non-EU experiences at a later date]
- Covid has shown the power of flexibility in the health service. By changing things up (and fast) professionals have internalised the positives in changing roles, instigating simpler procedures, firmly changing well-worn habits...
- Nurses in a Nursing Home environment are more exposed, and often head the team. This means they more quickly feel isolation and responsibility, unlike a hospital environment where colleagues are more senior and plentiful
- In the west of Ireland, a small but consistent sense of suspicion (driven by social media?) that Covid may not be fully real i.e. a conspiracy of power. This should not be ridiculed, as the doubters are sincere: *there are so few cases, and so much disruption. Who benefits from all of this?*

COVID's HALL OF FLEXIBILITY FAME



Frontline Staff: *actionable themes*

1.

ENGAGE FRONTLINE STAFF ON FLEXIBILITY

Frontline staff have witnessed unprecedented flexibility. Work with them to use the learning

Implications:

- Flexibility created enormous professional benefit
- Strike while the iron is hot: work with frontline staff to identify the specifics and principles of flexibility, to be leveraged in the future Sláintecare initiatives

2.

GO 'ALL OUT' ON WINTER FLU VACCINE

Winter flu vaccine is critical given risk of a Covid peak. Staff need to know the DOH are going all out to get it used

Implications:

- Appeal to people of Ireland to take the vaccine across the board
- Demonstrate to staff that there is a major campaign of awareness and action - to alleviate stress in the system

Adults Recovered From COVID-19: *learning*

- It is a shocking thing to know you have Covid-19, and to get to the other side of it. This virus leaves a trace (physical, emotional)
- Having Covid means often being cut off from support network
- Survivors have a tendency to distance themselves from responsibility in contracting Covid – perhaps a reflection of the ‘good citizen’ being instilled in the Irish people through comms and media
- Earlier Covid experiences (contracted on March 16th 2020) were chaotic, confusing and frustrating. Mostly, this revolved around systems (needing to fight twice for testing; waiting for results)
- Later Covid experience (contracted early April) was smoother – indeed an insight into a slick, efficient, focused HSE
- Survivors have learnings they feel should be shared:
 - *Reminding others that anyone can get it*
 - *Explaining to use your GP safely*
 - *Inspiring courage to advocate for what you need*
 - *Encouragement to stay the course of recovery, to day #14*
 - *How to communicate to others & protect others*

“The HSE solved the age-old problems over night. There’s got to be lessons learnt”



“I feel better about the health services than I did before”

Adults Recovered From COVID-19: *actionable themes*

1.

EXPAND TELLING OF PERSONAL COVID STORIES

Covid marks you. It teaches you. Those who have been through it can best tell its story

Implications:

- Platform Covid experiences from a wide number of people – bringing focus also to the less dramatic, more frequent cases
- Focus messaging around advice / Covid wisdom: why avoiding it is smart, no matter who you are

2.

HSE's FINEST HOUR

Covid was the HSE's finest hour. When the chips were down, it rose to its very best

Implications:

- Respect for HSE is high
- HSE has shown resolve, flexibility and imagination – perhaps this can become part of its DNA / *modus operandi*?
- Just like NHS was born out of WWII, a new HSE can be born out of Covid...

CONTENTS

Project Process

Opening Commentary

Learning By Cohort: life-stage

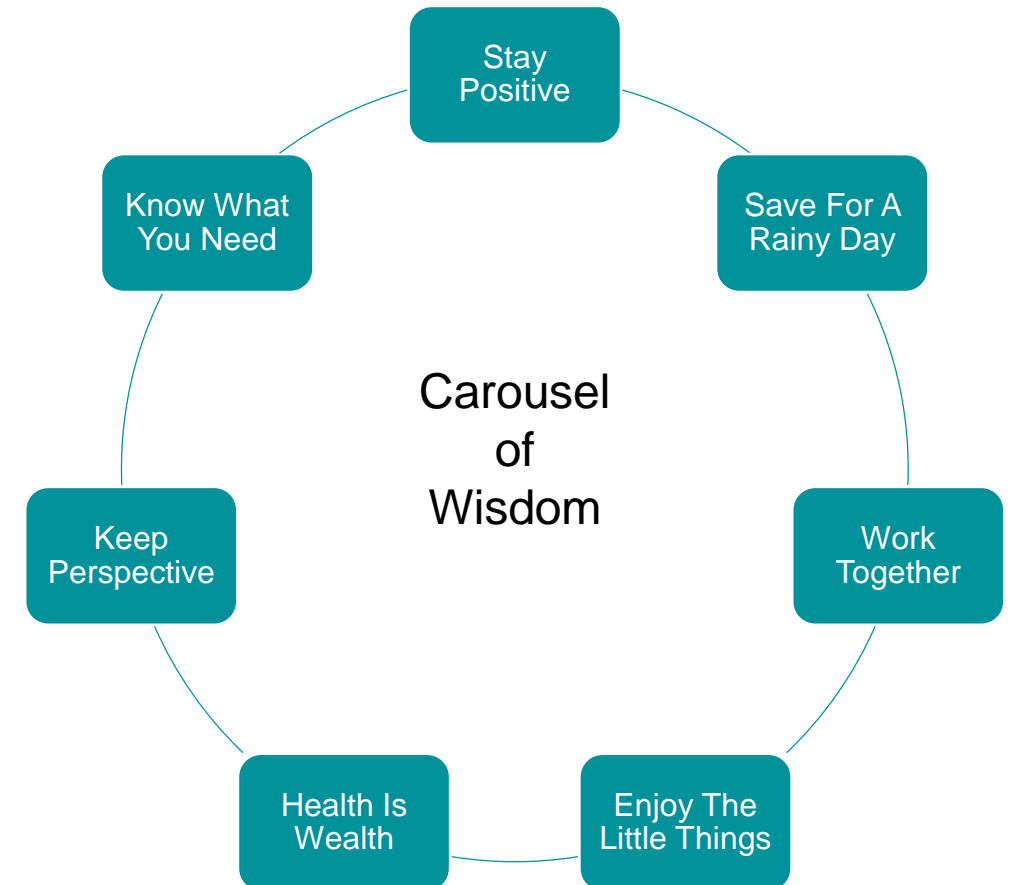
Learning By Cohort: vulnerable

Learning By Cohort: unfolding interest

Summary Conclusions

Low-wage Workers: *learning*

- Low-wage workers are used to operating on a tight budget. Most can afford to lose a day's wages. Their big focus is in keeping their jobs
- The stigma of having Covid symptoms is silencing
- Low-wage workers work mostly in teams, and encounter:
 - *Fellow-workers who may hide symptoms because of the stigma of declaring symptoms*
 - *Fellow-workers who discount risks and symptoms, and take a chance on it because of casual complacency*
- At the heart of low-wage workers' Covid experience is the attitude of the employer and supervisor. It is their role to make doing the right thing easy: proper PPE, proper procedures, proper support if a worker presents with symptoms
- Living with Covid is a new world: the service industry is 'retraining' its customers (the public) on the new measures. It takes time to sink in



Low-wage Workers: *actionable themes*

DOH COMMUNICATIONS RECOMMENDATION

**WORKERS DEPEND ON
EMPLOYERS SETTING UP
EMPLOYEES FOR SUCCESS**

WHY?

- Good Covid discipline is about workers and employers cooperating together
- Great employers:
 - Reduce risk in workplace
 - Support proactive calling out of worker symptoms

DESIRED OUTCOME FOR WORKERS

**Empowered: knowing
you'll be met half-way by
your employer**

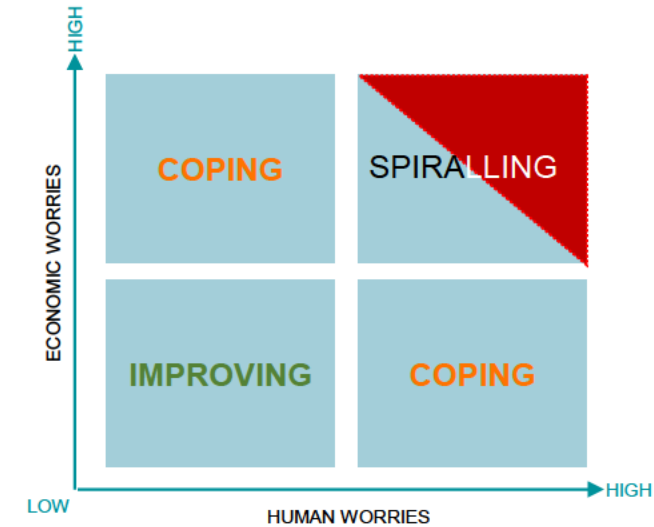
**WORKERS DEPEND ON
EACH OTHER. IT'S ABOUT
ACTING TO PROTECT THE
COLLECTIVE / THE
BUSINESS**

- It's about we, not me: self-interest is collective interest
- It's about vigilance, not 'chancing it'
- When we protect against Covid together, we keep the business running

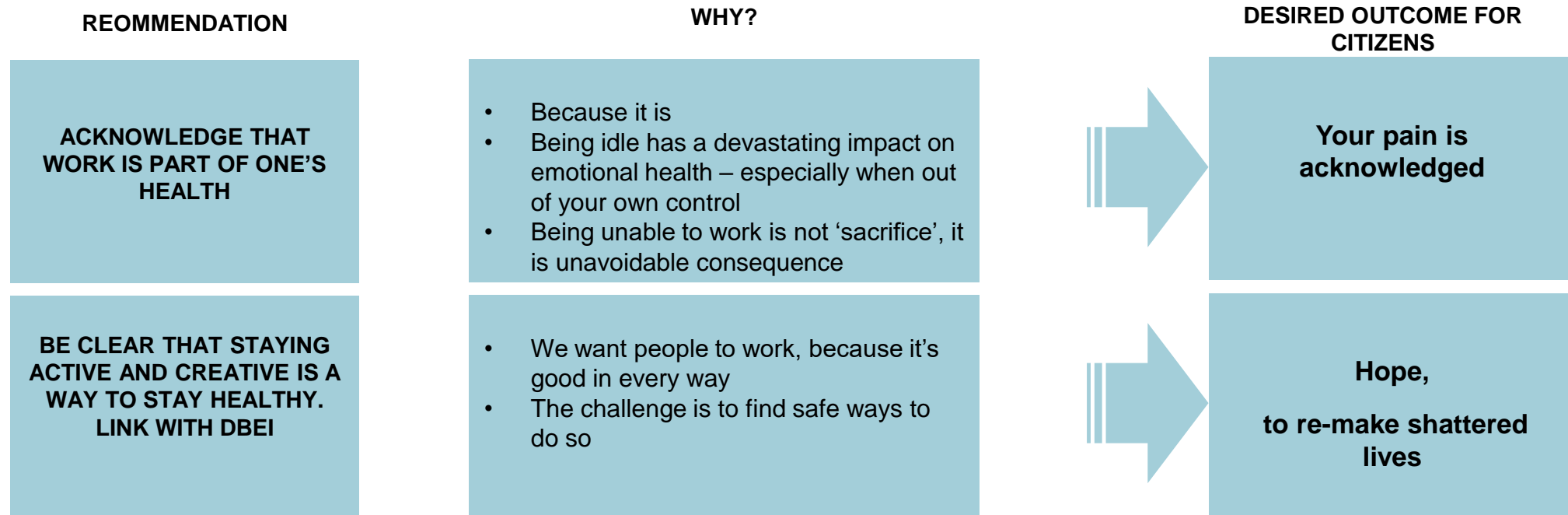
**Working together means
looking out for each
other. Good personal
decisions benefit
everyone**

Workers Economically Affected by Covid: *learning*

- It is devastating to lose one's livelihood
- The pandemic has hit careers in a random fashion, through no fault of those affected economically: this leaves a sense of grievance and unfairness which is palpable
- The cash economy has almost entirely gone because of tapping. Almost all transactions are transparent. There is no wriggle room in the service economy; nowhere to turn...
- Those affected by restrictions are the most demanding of clear explanations / reasoning. They need to understand why their businesses / livelihoods are being sacrificed. This case must be made, or the disaffection will grow
- Resourcefulness and imagination are skills that can be taught: this is what is needed most. People furloughed or unemployed want to find solutions, but the shock has been deeply traumatic. They need support and inspiration

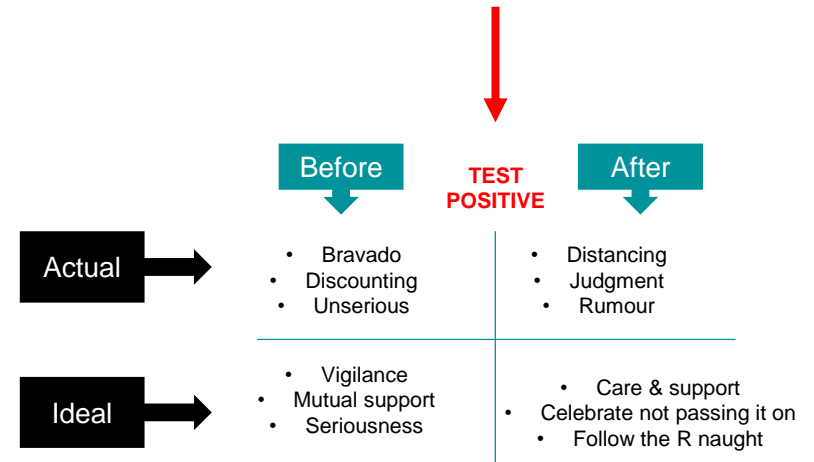


Workers Economically Affected by Covid: *actionable themes*



Lives Shaken By Covid: *learning*

- It may be that Covid's most far-reaching cost is measured not in deaths, but in depriving our citizens from dying well, and their loved ones from mourning well
- Once you have tested positive for Covid, support of people recoils. It is an isolating experience. This is true in hospitals too, where some healthcare is 'precautionary theatre', poorly experienced in dealing with positive cases
- Society's judgement is mis-placed: judgment is focused on fall-out after positive test, rather than on steps to prevent infection
- Covid is not taken seriously enough by the young, discounted as 'just a cold'. Importantly, people find reason to distance themselves from others who have Covid. i.e. this may have happened to you, but will not happen to me



"People are so judgey if you test positive"

Lives Shaken By Covid : *actionable themes*

DOH COMMUNICATIONS RECOMMENDATION

EXPERIENCES, WHEN SHARED, SHOULD BE RELATABLE AND FROM THE HEART

WHY?

- Distancing from others' experience is a coping mechanism
- Testimony should be direct, and not spare any punches

DESIRED OUTCOME FOR CITIZENS

There but of the grace of god...

BRING 'JUDGMENT' AND FOCUS TO PREVENTION MEASURES (NOT TO THOSE UNFORTUNATE ENOUGH TO TEST POSITIVE)

- People (especially young) tend to minimize Covid until it comes to their door, then they demonise it
- We need to take prevention seriously, consistently

Judge prevention measures, not Covid victims

CONTENTS

Project Process

Opening Commentary

Learning By Cohort: life-stage

Learning By Cohort: vulnerable

Learning By Cohort: unfolding interest

Summary Conclusions

Summary Conclusions

Principles

- Self-interest is the strongest motivator, and the root of behaviour change. As a result, those with vulnerabilities are most attuned to guidance
- Stress is a function of coping today, and worrying for tomorrow. The latter weighs heavily. Citizens benefit from structure, routine and the ability to plan
- Looking out for each other (care, kindness) is at the centre of how we get through Covid. The system has its part to play, in tandem
- Resilience is the reward for our efforts so far. Everyone (individual, system) has had the opportunity to learn and adjust. Make it count
- Stats and stories should live together: numbers numb; stories help deliver emotional empathy, relatability and arc

Insight

- Citizens now accept that Covid is here for some time. Marathons are defined by pace. Every day can't be a crisis. People need calm, order
- Anger is bubbling, especially when Covid affects livelihood. Guidelines must make common sense; clarity and decisiveness are valued
- Schools returning should be celebrated. Kids need their education, parents need their freedom, the country needs its routine
- Winter brings new challenges: cumulative fatigue, winter flu, mental health. Every individual needs to have a proactive plan
- Young adults have had their lives put on hold. Isolation is against instinct and health. They need support to remain connected in a safe manner