

National Public Health Emergency Team - Coronavirus

Covid -19 Subgroup – Behavioural Change

Meeting 6

Note of Meeting and Actions Arising

Meeting Date: Thursday 16th of April

Time: 14:00

Location: Video Conference

In attendance:

Department of Health:

Kate O’Flaherty (Chair), Health and Wellbeing

Robert Mooney, Communications

Robert Murphy, Research Services and Policy

Greg Straton, Health and Wellbeing (Secretariat)

ESRI: Pete Lunn

UCD: Liam Delaney

SEAI: Karl Purcell

Safefood: Aileen McGloin

NUIG: Molly Byrne

UL: Orla Muldoon

NUI Maynooth: Philip Hyland (Guest Presentation – Item 8)

1. Welcome

The Chairperson welcomed the members to the Subgroup meeting.

2. Conflict of Interest Declarations

None declared

3. Meeting Note – Meeting 9th of April 2020

The meeting note of the 9th of April 2020 was agreed

4. Update from NPHE – Kate O’Flaherty

The Chair updated the Subgroup on the work of the NPHE, including an update on the modelling work, and that consideration started, in line with international advice, on planning for future adjustments in social distancing and other public health measures. Behavioural insights will be important to feed into that ongoing planning by NPHE and wider Government.

The Chair informed the Subgroup that the research subgroup of the NPHET Expert Advisory Group are preparing a paper for NPHET on research priorities and have requested input from other groups into that.

5. Weekly Consolidated Research Report -Rob Mooney

A report was circulated to the Subgroup prior to the meeting for consideration.

- It was reported that a poster to promote handwashing in the home had been distributed to all households. There was a discussion that impact would be measured in the coming surveys.
- The design for a self-isolation decision tree and planning tools are being finalised
- Cough and sneeze hygiene and etiquette was considered by the group as an important behaviour for consideration for continued reminders, especially in coming phases. The group also discussed the usefulness in getting a baseline indication of current wearing of masks by the public.
- There was a discussion about moving survey questions to “how many times yesterday” type questions given that people may not readily admit that they are not following key behaviours to slow transmission given strong social disapproval.
- The concern around reduced non-Covid healthcare utilisation was discussed, and the possible inputs that behavioural insights could provide for communications or other solutions.
- The focus group questions for the following week will be shared with the group for input.
- The group may also consider the issue of scientific literacy amongst population, especially being able to discern information that can be trusted and to identify false information.

6. ESRI BRU Update – Pete Lunn

A paper outlining a proposal for a third study was circulated prior to the meeting for the consideration of the subgroup. The proposed study will test hypothetical announcements on lifting restrictions for emotional response, perceived fairness, acceptability and feasibility, as well as testing current expectations, to ascertain comprehension and willingness to comply. This may include testing the impact of likely timeframes, sunk cost and framing of messages.

7. Update on Rapid Evidence Reviews

- Subgroup members were invited to submit material on rapid reviews for publication on the Subgroup website on gov.ie.
- There was a discussion around the shifting focus of measures, from the initial phase to something that was more complex from a behavioural perspective.
- Liam Delaney committed to starting a process on having a more systematic approach to support the ongoing literature reviews and to facilitate the group to identify behavioural research priorities and emerging issues for the next phase of the pandemic.

8. Input on Mental Health Survey – Philip Hyland

Philip Hyland, NUI Maynooth Psychology Department, presented findings from the first wave of a psychological survey conducted by Maynooth University and Trinity College, a similar survey is being run in the UK. Initial results suggest that mental health problems are common; and described some risk factors contributing to higher levels of Covid-related anxiety and depression. It is expected to conduct a further wave of the survey to assess the impact of prolonged quarantine and physical distancing measures on mental health.

11. A.O.B

- Karl Purcell updated the group on ongoing collaboration with the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation. A survey to understanding business capability to comply with measures is under development. In addition, the adaptation of existing National Standards Authority of Ireland guidance.
- Liam Delaney mentioned that the Dublin Airport Authority may have some interesting work using behavioural insights that could be brought to the group.
- A joint meeting with a similar subgroup in Northern Ireland was discussed.

12. Date and Time of Next Meeting

Next meeting:

2pm – Thursday 23rd of April 2020