

National Public Health Emergency Team - Coronavirus

Covid -19 Subgroup – Behavioural Change

Meeting 7

Note of Meeting

Meeting Date: Thursday 23rd 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

1. Welcome

The Chairperson welcomed the members to the Subgroup meeting.

2. Conflict of Interest Declarations

None declared

3. Meeting Note – Meeting 16th of April 2020

The meeting note of the 16th of April 2020 was agreed

4. Update from NPHET – Kate O’Flaherty

The Chair updated the Subgroup on the work of the NPHET. Among the issues of current focus is the supports into long term care residential settings, updated guidance on the wearing of masks by healthcare workers, and consideration for easing of restrictions in future phases.

5. Weekly Consolidated Research Report -Rob Mooney

A report was circulated to the Subgroup prior to the meeting for consideration. The main points emerging during the week were:

- Public trust, awareness and compliance with public health advice remains high – however, there are recent signs, emerging from social media analysis, that there is some perception of erosion of trust and fraying of compliance. The Subgroup discussed factors that may be contributing to the emerging dissonance, insights provided by the Subgroup included that there is a degree of divisive commentary and there is a need to shift emphasis back to collective messaging, such as “no one is safe until everyone is safe”. It was also suggested that the majority of the population are doing the right thing most of the time, which is borne out in the research, and that often there is a tendency to focus on visible non-compliance. Additionally, if risk perceptions may be in decline despite higher numbers of cases, this requires an emphasis on emotional messaging. This may also be emerging as attention remains on nursing homes and the high median age of those at risk, this draws risk perception away from the individual. There was a suggestion that communication should come from a collective safeguarding perspective, and continued emphasis on the ‘why’ for various measures.
- A weekly infographic summarising the findings of the week will be produced and a planning tool to guide the work of the Subgroup with communications has been proposed.

6. ESRI BRU Update – Pete Lunn

A rapid online behavioural study to test expectations and attitudes around lifting of restrictions is presently in the field, including testing hypothetical announcements of adjusting the current measures for compliance and comprehension, as well as perceptions of fairness, feasibility and acceptability. Findings will help inform communications approaches to future announcements.

7. Survey on SME Capability with DBEI – Karl Purcell

A preliminary set of survey questions was shared with the Subgroup over the weekend. A discussion with the Subgroup was held to determine the best mode of delivery for the survey, it was recommended by the group to use a mixture of direct survey invitation through interest groups and to use an agency to achieve a large sample across the state.

8. Evidence Reviews and Research Priorities

The high-level research priorities of the Subgroup have been submitted to NPHET. The Subgroup discussed the need to continue horizon scanning and the emergence of work from other countries providing Behavioural Insights to the Covid response. The Subgroup discussed the recently formed OECD/WHO Behavioural Insights platform and the meeting to be held on Tuesday the 28th of April.

9. Cross-Government Planning for Future Phases

The role of the Subgroup in the process of planning for future phases of Covid measures was discussed, it was clarified that the Subgroup feed evidence, insight and information into these processes, via the Chair and updates to NPHET.

10. Mental Health and Wellbeing

The recognised decline in mental wellbeing in the population was discussed in mental health of the population, Liam Delaney agreed to circulate a short paper on this. A second day reconstruction study would be conducted. There was a discussion about the need to look at the

impact of cumulative strain on mental health, especially with vulnerable groups. Data is now becoming available from mental health support services on the levels and trends in people accessing services. The Chair informed the group of the cross-Government campaign “In This Together” which is due to be launched shortly by the Taoiseach.

11. A.O.B

- Robert Mooney advised that the focus group data and design for the coming week would be shared for input.
- The group would be invited again to participate in the next phase of pre-testing and development of the COVID Tracker App.

12. Date and Time of Next Meeting

Next meeting:

2pm – Thursday 30th of April 2020