

National Public Health Emergency Team - Coronavirus

Covid -19 Subgroup – Behavioural Change

Meeting 8

Note of Meeting

Meeting Date: Thursday 30th of April 2020

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

Apologies: Orla Muldoon

1. Welcome

The Chairperson welcomed the members to the Subgroup meeting and noted the apologies of Orla Muldoon.

2. Conflict of Interest Declarations

None declared

3. Meeting Note – Meeting 23rd of April 2020

The meeting note of the 23rd of April 2020 was agreed

4. Update from NPHET – Kate O’Flaherty

The Chair updated the Subgroup on the work of the NPHET. The primary focus of the NPHET at present is the future planning of measures, and there has been a lot of focus on the upcoming milestone of 5th May. Given the focus of the NPHET no update from the Subgroup was provided this week. However, the insights from the group are being considered as part of communications planning on an ongoing basis.

5. Weekly Consolidated Research Report -Rob Mooney

A report was circulated to the Subgroup prior to the meeting for consideration. Questions on the handwashing poster had been included in the tracker survey, and there were tentative indications that the posters have had a positive impact with 50% respondents saying they received the poster and 50% of those saying they noticed a positive change in handwashing behaviours; this project was acknowledged as an example of the behavioural science approach coming full circle.

The importance of ongoing communications around handwashing, cough/sneeze etiquette and symptom identification/self-isolation in the context of easing restrictions was also discussed

6. ESRI BRU Update – Pete Lunn

The latest results from the BRU was presented to the Subgroup. The study was conducted online with a sample of 800 individuals and tested attitudes and expectations around future easing of restrictions. The study included viewing of hypothetical announcements of adjusting current measures, to test for comprehension and perceptions of fairness, feasibility and acceptability.

The findings from the research were largely in line with those from the tracker survey in that the majority of people tested would expect and prefer gradual lifting of restrictions, starting with least risky measures. There appeared to be a “silent majority” trading off progress against reassurance, and there was significant nervousness about future phases and worry about second surge. Some of the findings may be helpful to the communication of future changes in measures. The findings were discussed by the Subgroup.

The importance of clear communication of the future ‘goals’ was discussed, and the need to keep messaging of measures simple.

It was noted that there may be value in characterising the minority (10-15%) who may find it more difficult to comply or who disagree with the majority views on measures and timelines, in order to support consideration of a more targeted approach in communicating with these groups.

The group discussed potential risk of behavioural fatigue if measures had to be re-introduced at any stage, and the need to support mental flexibility and resilience as we move through future phases. It was noted that there may also be evidence to suggest that re-introduction of measures may be easier and more effective due to learned responses and people’s confidence from previous experience. There is some evidence that some countries in Asia have been successful to react to Covid because of their previous experience of SARS, for example.

7. Update on Survey for Business Capability to Implement Measures – Karl Purcell

It was reported that the DBEI stakeholder representative bodies have responded with feedback and edits for the survey which have been incorporated, and it is planned to pilot the survey on a small sample of businesses through the representative bodies. Following this testing the survey will be distributed by representative bodies to their members. Logistics for wider

distribution of the survey will be arranged with DBEI, and subgroup members may be able to advise on the practicalities of that if needed.

8. Hand Sanitiser Stations

The group discussed the potential to provide insights and evidence to feed into the development and implementation of guidance on the use and placement of hand sanitiser stations. It was agreed this could be derived from the hand hygiene paper that has already been produced from the group, and that a summary would be drawn up.

9. Day Reconstruction Study – Liam Delaney

The high-level findings of the second Day Reconstruction Study was shared with the Subgroup. Overall, the findings were similar to the first study carried out in March. Overall reported life satisfaction is presently 5/10, with the younger cohort reporting between 4 and 5, akin to living with chronic illness, and compared with a typical level reported pre-Covid of 8/10. A more detailed paper of the findings will be circulated to the Subgroup for further consideration.

10. Mental Health and Wellbeing

Standing item, the subgroup agreed that this was covered under previous agenda items.

11. COVID Tracker App – Rob Mooney

It was reported that the input of the Subgroup has been collated and sent to the App design team, this will now be tested with the BRU. The Subgroup were thanked for their input.

12. A.O.B

None

12. Date and Time of Next Meeting

Next meeting:

2pm – Thursday 7th of May 2020