

**National Public Health Emergency Team - Coronavirus**

**Covid -19 Subgroup – Behavioural Change**

**Meeting 11**

**Note of Meeting**

**Meeting Date:** Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> of May 2020

**Time:** 14:00

**Location:** Video Conference

**In attendance:**

Department of Health:

Kate O’Flaherty (Chair), Health and Wellbeing

Robert Mooney, Communications

Greg Straton, Health and Wellbeing (Secretariat)

ESRI: Pete Lunn

UCD: Liam Delaney

SEAI: Karl Purcell

Safefood: Aileen McGloin

UL: Orla Muldoon

Apologies:

DoH: Robert Murphy

NUIG: Molly Byrne

**1. Welcome**

The Chairperson welcomed the members to the Subgroup meeting; the apologies of Molly Byrne and Robert Murphy were noted.

**2. Conflict of Interest Declarations**

None declared

**3. Meeting Note – Meeting 14<sup>th</sup> of May 2020**

The meeting note of the 14<sup>th</sup> of May was approved.

**4. Update from NPHET – Kate O’Flaherty**

The review of the next phase of easing restrictions will be a focus of the upcoming NPHET meetings. A stocktake process review will be undertaken by NPHET to ensure a sustainable approach in place to support the ongoing response.

## **5. Insights from the Week -Rob Mooney**

A report was circulated to the Subgroup prior to the meeting for consideration. Key insights from the weekly online survey data is showing a continued high self-reported compliance rate, increase in people wearing face coverings, continued high level of trust in public health guidance and communications and support for restrictions. There is also an increase in positive emotions such as enjoyment, with a slight decrease in worry and anxiety. The Subgroup discussed that there may be significance in the reduction of worry and possible adherence to measures, especially if risk perceptions lower.

The group discussed the overall picture of adherence to public health guidance provided from the ongoing reports from the various data sources. The analysis was that the majority of the population were on board in general and motivation was high. It was noted that the high level of self-reported compliance with key behaviours may represent an over-estimation of compliance, of “doing this all the time”. The perception of the compliance of others and the use of day reconstruction methods, asking “what did you do yesterday?” may be more accurate measures of compliance rather than self-reported given the strong social cues around these behaviours. The importance of supporting and communicating to groups who may be more marginalised or vulnerable, or who may find it more difficult to comply or access information was re-iterated.

The high levels of awareness and motivation were noted as positive factors in moving towards sustaining and embedding key behaviours into everyday life as we move through the phases. The importance of the physical environment was recognised as key to supporting this, as compliance with social distancing in the most restricted phases was greatly facilitated by the measures put in place in settings which were open such as supermarkets, and the physical environment will be equally important to support compliance when people resume normal activities and have to rely more on taking personal responsibility and making judgements about risk and behaviour.

The possibility of further exploration of risk perceptions, to understand what is driving decisions to mitigate risks and how this may be related to level of worry or anxiety, to help inform communications approaches was discussed.

The group also discussed what might be potential KPIs to measure overall compliance into the future, noting that the data on traffic and movement had been useful for the earlier phases but this type of indicator may be less important as more general movement and activity increases.

## **6. DBEI Survey – Karl Purcell**

The results of the business capability surveys were circulated prior to the meeting and the details of the convenience sample study presented in more detail at the meeting. Differences in sample characteristics between this survey, the related B&A survey and recent CSO surveys were noted and that while it was noted that the sample may not be representative of the complete business population, it was acknowledged that the response from a range of sectors had been good.

Some key points arising from the survey include:

- The HSE are the most popular source of information on Covid among businesses who responded to each of the surveys
- Many businesses have already implemented a range of measures and are willing to implement measures if they know what is required of them and it is affordable. The measures that businesses were most likely to state they have not implemented include physical barriers (e.g. plexi-glass) to limit customer and staff interaction, physical barriers (e.g. rope barriers) to enable social distancing, introducing the use of PPE, putting up posters and prompts in the bathroom to cue hand washing, and putting up posters to promote social distancing. It is important to note that businesses had the option to mark each of these measures as “not applicable” to their business.
- There was strong interest in supports such as clear, easy-to-use, tailored/sector-specific guidance, as well as grants to support implementation of more expensive measures.
- Physical limitations, such as premises size, is a significant barrier to the implementation of social distancing measures, especially for smaller businesses, restaurants, and bars.
- Other barriers to implementing measures include cost, the potential for a negative impact on sales, a lack of staff resources, a lack of knowledge within the business and the inability of staff to fulfil duties from home.
- Supports requested include implementation support and information service; package of signage, stickers, posters etc to be sent by post; information on potential providers/suppliers, e.g. for PPE; simple sector specific guidance; and online training.

Some of the key insights from the survey findings, which might help inform how implementation of supports and overcoming barriers and challenges, were discussed. These include managing the “information overload” that many businesses, particularly small businesses, are likely experiencing and trying to deal with the uncertainty of how different measures apply to their own business. Small frictions such as not knowing who to contact for key supplies may reduce the implementation of measures, and could be addressed through having accessible, ‘one stop shop’ type resources for common queries and challenges. Providing simple checklists and guidance, along with supplies (posters, stickers etc.), by post to businesses before they re-open may lead to greater numbers of protective measures being implemented.

The finalised findings, along with the initial feedback from the group, will be shared with DBEI to support the ongoing work by that Department and its agencies in supporting resumption of business activity under the Government roadmap.

## **7. BRU Update – Pete Lunn**

A draft paper arising from the study on self-isolation had been circulated to the group for any comments or feedback, and ESRI planning to publish in the coming week.

The proposed BRU further study on self-isolation was discussed by the Subgroup, and further comments and inputs into the study design were invited.

## **8. Impact on Children and Young People – Orla Muldoon**

Findings from the Co-Space study which is tracking the mental health of school-aged children and young people aged 4-18 years throughout the COVID-19 crisis, and in which University

of Limerick is leading the Irish research, was shared with the Subgroup. The study aims to help identify key factors in child and family resilience and is linked in the Department of Children and Youth Affairs.

#### **10. A.O.B**

Invitation to participate in an upcoming OECD behavioural insights webinar was noted and the Department will follow up to clarify re presentations. The recent European research call on Covid which includes a call for research on ‘behavioural, social and economic impacts of the outbreak response’ was also noted.

#### **12. Date and Time of Next Meeting**

Next meeting:

2pm – Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> of May 2020