

Update from Subgroup on Behavioural Change for NPHET meeting 31/3/2020

- The Subgroup on Behavioural Change met for a second time on Friday 27th March 2020. Deirdre Watters, Head of Communications, was also in attendance.
- The Subgroup reviewed a consolidated report of the ongoing research undertaken for the Communications strategy and discussed insights provided by the various strands of research; these insights are being fed into the ongoing Communications planning and work.
- Pete Lunn, ESRI Behavioural Research Unit, presented initial results from a rapid online study conducted earlier in the week, which focussed on people's comprehension and adoption of key public health behaviours, perceptions of risk and levels of anxiety. While many of the findings mirrored those coming through in the existing surveys and focus groups and awareness was good, and trust in DH/Govt. messaging also high, the study findings suggested that messaging could be reinforced around a number of elements (reminder on handwashing when entering home/building, cough/sneeze hygiene, what to do if you have symptoms). The study also suggests that certain groups - older people, younger adults and males - may require additional or targeted communications approaches, and the Subgroup agreed that a greater understanding of the motivational factors for younger adults/males would be important, as well as moving to an increased focus on 'why' as well as 'how' in behaviour change messages. The Subgroup discussed possible further research questions for a second rapid study which will commence next week.
- Liam Delaney, UCD, presented preliminary findings from a 'day reconstruction study' undertaken earlier in the week to explore factors in daily activity and interaction and impact on wellbeing. A fuller report will be provided next week, but the preliminary findings suggest that the overall levels of stress in the population are high and that spending time outdoors has a significant calming/mood improvement effect. The further results from this study will be fed into the development of the 'wellbeing' communications campaign.
- The Subgroup received an update on the development of the Covid-19 App and will provide input into its development, in particular how uptake/usage can be maximised and sustained. Initial feedback discussed at the meeting included advice around timing/launch, providing a clear rationale/motivation to encourage uptake, simplicity and accessibility, and allaying data privacy fears. The Subgroup will also provide feedback on the current 'mock up' and will be invited to participate in the prototype testing.
- The Subgroup also discussed the importance of addressing the physical environment to support behavioural change (eg in homes, retail environments etc) as well as looking at the individual/personal behaviours.
- The Subgroup requested that if any other NPHET subgroup/work had suggestions of other data (in addition to the self-reported data coming through the various surveys and focus groups) to measure 'compliance' with public health advice, they would be happy to consider in their ongoing work.