

## Update from Subgroup on Behavioural Change for NPHE meeting 18/06/2020

- The Subgroup is meeting weekly and last met on Friday 12<sup>th</sup> June 2020.
- A **stocktake exercise** was undertaken at the meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> June, as part of the overall review of structures and operation of NPHE. Overall the group had largely positive feedback on the arrangements and work undertaken to date. The group also acknowledged feedback from international colleagues that the process in Ireland to utilise behavioural expertise is viewed to be comparably successful and useful to the national response to Covid-19. The detailed feedback from the group will be fed into the overall discussion at NPHE.
- Over the last two meetings, the Subgroup has been exploring **what behavioural issues may be relevant as we move into the next phases** of the response to Covid. These included the behavioural impact of any mandatory measures, future adherence to the re-introduction of restrictions in the event of a resurgence of Covid, changes in risk perceptions and behavioural/message fatigue as people begin to disengage from Covid-related news. The importance of the necessary 'choice architecture' being in place to enable people to apply the appropriate behaviours was re-iterated. The high levels of awareness and compliance to date with key behaviours was also recognised as a positive in terms of applying measures for any resurgence, though the group also surmised that some strategies for a '2<sup>nd</sup> wave' may be different, and thus need additional insights to support effective implementation and adherence. The group will continue to engage with emerging international insights in this regard.
- **Potential challenges** were discussed in getting some population cohorts to sustain compliance or to comply with re-introduction of stringent measures. These include **younger people** who may have ongoing adverse impact in terms of overall wellbeing and/or perceive risk to their own cohort as lower than others, as well as **cohorts who have more limited capability** to comply because of social and other factors.

- The importance of **clarity and consistency in communications** was re-emphasised by the Subgroup, particularly when it comes to newer and more complex issues, such as advice around face-coverings, or any guidance around travel. The group also noted some potential disjunction between the public sentiment emerging through the research, and the recent public discourse, particularly in relation to risks and trade-offs, and the longer-term, and re-emphasised the importance of maintaining trust and credibility with the public to ensure sustained adherence and engagement with guidance and advice.
- The Behavioural Research Unit in the ESRI is to conduct a '**diagnostic**' **study on current risk perceptions**, to better understand how people are judging the risk of contracting Covid-19 in different contexts, and what factors are influencing judgements of risk. The study will also aim to check whether social desirability is inflating self-reporting of key behaviours.
- The Subgroup has also been advising on the design of the **Covid App**, and reviewed preliminary data from a behavioural study as part of the pre-testing, which included looking at understanding on data collection, privacy issues and the purpose of the App. These findings and insights from the Subgroup are being fed into the App development group.
- The findings from the **business capability survey** have been presented to officials in DBEI, and these are being circulated to stakeholders and feeding into the processes to support businesses re-open safely.