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FROM: CHRIS McNABB
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DATE: 9 July 2020

TO: FIRST MINISTER AND DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER

SUBJECT: SECOND PUBLIC POLLING ON COVID-19

Issue: EIS commissioned Social Market Research (SMR) to undertake public opinion polling on the Executive response to Covid-19. The findings of the second report show a consistent positive level of support for the actions taken by the Executive in dealing with the current crisis.

Timing: Routine.

Presentational issues: Results would be of significant media interest

FOI: Parts of this submission could be released.

Financial implications: None. EIS has the budget to undertake three rounds of polling.

Recommendation: That Ministers:

- Note the contents of this submission and the report at Annex A.

Background:

1. Ministers agreed to a proposal from EIS to undertake polling on Covid-19 to test public opinion of the performance of the NI Executive in dealing with the pandemic.
2. EIS appointed Social Market Research (SMR) to conduct three surveys over a nine week period with the results being available to Ministers in advance of each statutory review of the Coronavirus regulations.

3. The survey is based on 500 interviews with the Northern Ireland general public aged 16 and over.
4. Ministers received the first opinion polling results on June 17. The results from the second poll, conducted between 23-30 June, continue to show positive support for the actions taken by the Executive in dealing with the Covid-19 crisis.
5. The opinion poll was conducted with a sample size of 500 and were representative of the adult population in terms of key factors such as age, gender and social class. The survey has a margin of error of plus/minus 4.4% at most. The sample size for the third and final poll has been increased to 1,000.
6. The key findings of the survey include:
 - 76% believe that the Northern Ireland Executive is performing either very well or quite well in dealing with the Coronavirus pandemic [survey 1, 73% very well or well - change not statistically significant]
 - 75% believe that the First Minister is performing either very well or quite well in dealing with the Coronavirus pandemic [survey 1, 67% very well or well - change is statistically significant]
 - 66% believe that the deputy First Minister is performing either very well or quite well in dealing with the Coronavirus pandemic [survey 1, 62% very well or well - change not statistically significant]
 - 72% believe that the NI Executive is putting in place the right measures in response to Coronavirus [survey 1, 72%, change not statistically significant]
 - 76% believe they are getting the information they need from the NI Executive [survey 1, 74%, change not statistically significant]
 - 69% believe the information they are getting from the NI Executive is accurate [survey 1, 71%, change not statistically significant]
 - 66% trust the information they are getting from the NI Executive [survey 1, 68%, change not significant]
 - 70% are confident the NI Executive has a clear plan to ease the lockdown and get the country back to normal [survey 1, 69%, change not statistically significant]
 - 45% are content with the relaxation measures the NI Executive have put in place (40% believe the Executive have relaxed the restrictions too quickly and 10% believe that the Executive have been too slow in relaxing measures) [survey 1, content, 43%: too quickly, 36%: too

slowly, 15%, change not statistically significant]

- 87% say they have strictly followed social distancing rules for the last week [survey 1, 91%, change not statistically significant]
- 59% are confident that businesses and public services will be given the tools and resources they need to get the country back to normal safely [survey 1, 63%, change not statistically significant]
- 48% believe that the NI Executive have the right balance between protecting the economy and healthcare (16% believe there should be more emphasis on protecting the economy and 24% feel there should be more emphasis on healthcare) [survey 1, right balance, 49%: favour economy, 20%; favour healthcare, 19%, change not statistically significant]
- 64% are confident that the Northern Ireland Executive is putting in place the right measures to support the economy [survey 1, 62%]
- 84% are confident that the health service in Northern Ireland is able to cope with the outbreak [survey 1, 83%, change not statistically significant]
- 67% are confident that the Northern Ireland Executive put the right measures in place to deal with coronavirus in the health and social care service [survey 1, 69%, change not statistically significant]
- 44% believe that the NI Executive is doing enough to provide Personal Protective Equipment (or PPE) for health staff (32% do not and 24% are undecided) [survey 1, doing enough, 45%: not doing enough, 34%: unsure, 21%, change not statistically significant]
- 35% believe that the NI Executive is putting enough resources into testing (42% said they are not and 23% are undecided) [survey 1, yes 39%: no, 38%: unsure, 23%, change not statistically significant]
- 45% of respondents said they would download an app for contact tracing (35% would not and 20% were undecided) [survey 1, yes 46%: no, 32%: unsure, 22%, change not statistically significant]
- Using an importance scale of 0-10 (0=not at all important: 10=very important), respondents scored the importance of opening a range of services relatively low, with the highest average importance score recorded for churches (4.7 out of 10) and the lowest recorded for bars (3.9 out of 10) [note that the 'opening' importance scores for all services were significantly higher in survey 2]
- 13% said they are likely to take a flight before September of this year, with 83% saying they are unlikely to do so [survey 1, 17% likely to take a flight - change not statistically significant]

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- 42% said they will holiday at home this year, 11% abroad, 3% at home and abroad, and 37% said they will not holiday at all this year [survey 1, 35% at home: 12% abroad: 4% home and abroad: 41% will not holiday this year - change not statistically significant]
 - 35% of employees said they have been furloughed by their employer [survey 1, 36%, change not statistically significant]
 - Among furloughed employees with school-aged children, and with childminding needs, 60% have childminding arrangements in place should they need to return to work, with 40% saying they do not have childminding arrangements in place [survey 1, 54% had childminding arrangements in place and 46% had not - change not statistically significant]
 - 52% of non-furloughed employees said they have been able to work from home during the pandemic [survey 1, 60%, change not statistically significant]
 - 73% of those able to work from home said they would like to continue to be able to work from home (19% said they would not and 8% were unsure) [survey 1, 76% would like to continue to work from home: 20% would not: 5% unsure - change not statistically significant]
7. This first opinion poll has found significant public support for the performance and the range of actions taken by the Executive in dealing with Covid-19. This second poll reinforces those findings. See full report attached at Annex A.
8. It is recommended that Ministers:
- Note the contents of this submission and the report at Annex A

Personal Data

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Names Redacted