

Community testing centres expected to commence service in mid-November

The Government is setting up a community testing centre in each of the four regions of Hong Kong Island, Kowloon, New Territories East and New Territories West. With good progress being made in planning and preparation, the four community testing centres are expected to commence service in mid-November for an initial period of three months, which may be extended for three months depending on the situation. The preparation work is ongoing, and the Government will implement the programme as soon as possible and further announce operational details.

A Government spokesman said, "In mid-October, the Government set up temporary testing centres within a short period of time in locations related to recent small-scale community outbreak clusters to facilitate free testing of the public in order to identify cases and asymptomatic patients as early as possible so as to cut the transmission chains in the community. Having reviewed the operational experience obtained from the temporary testing centres and taking into account that schemes including travel bubbles and health codes are about to be rolled out, the Government has decided to set up longer-term testing centres in the community with a view to providing affordable self-paid COVID-19 testing services for travelling or other private purposes as well as to enable us to meet unexpected testing needs in a more efficient and flexible manner when the epidemic situation turns unsteady in a bid to strengthen disease prevention and control in Hong Kong."

The four community testing centres will be located at Quarry Bay Community Hall in Eastern District, Henry G Leong Yaumatei Community Centre, Lek Yuen Community Hall in Sha Tin and Yuen Long Town East Community Hall. The community testing centres mainly serve to address the demand for paid testing to serve general community uses such as cross-boundary travel. The Government will also stipulate a specified price capped at \$240 for self-paid testing services under the contract. If necessary, for example, in situations when there is a higher risk of community transmission, the Government will require the testing centres to provide free testing services for target groups, specified persons or other members of public on a needs basis. Separate announcements will be made at that time.

Having gone through a competitive procurement process, the contractors of the four testing centres are Prenetics (Quarry Bay Community Hall in Eastern District), Kingmed Diagnostics (Hong Kong) Limited (Henry G Leong Yaumatei Community Centre), Hong Kong Molecular Pathology Diagnostic Centre Limited (Lek Yuen Community Hall in Sha Tin) and BGI (Yuen Long Town East Community Hall). The four laboratories are in the "Local COVID-19 testing institutions recognised by the Hong Kong SAR Government" list maintained by the Department of Health (DH). The contractors have all passed the External Quality Assessment Programme for COVID-19 testing of the DH and possess relevant laboratory accreditation.

The community testing centres will be operated by personnel arranged by the contractors to carry out specimen collection and necessary work. The testing centres will be open daily from 8am to 1.30pm and from 2.30pm to 8pm. Deep cleaning and disinfection will be conducted when the centres close in the afternoon and at night.

The community testing centres will provide specimen collection services using combined nasal and throat swabs and testing services for COVID-19 to serve general community uses such as cross-boundary travel, excluding medical diagnosis and treatment. They aim to serve all asymptomatic individuals (excluding children under 6 years old and people not suitable for testing) holding valid Hong Kong identity cards, birth certificates or other valid identity documents (including Hong Kong residents and non-Hong Kong residents).

Booking and walk-in services will be available. Citizens who choose to book online only need to provide simple personal information (including their name, Hong Kong identity card number and phone number) to select the testing centre and time slot. Individuals may also visit the testing centres direct to conduct on-site registration and testing. Participants with a negative result will receive a test report for a COVID-19 nucleic acid test. Those who test positive will receive calls from the DH to arrange for isolation and treatment in public hospitals.

The personal data collected and used by the Government for the purpose of conducting tests at the community testing centres, including data provided by individuals who participate in the programme, will be encrypted and stored in servers in the Government Data Centre, and will only be used for purposes related to this testing arrangement or the overall anti-epidemic efforts by the DH or related departments. The arrangement complies with the requirements under the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance. Information of individual cases with positive results will be passed to the DH and the Hospital Authority (HA) for follow-up. The Government will ensure that the retention period of the personal data is not longer than the time required for the purposes for which the data is collected.

The contractors are responsible for handling necessary personal data collected from individuals participating in the self-paid testing services and will use the personal data collected for purposes related to testing, including issuance of relevant test reports for COVID-19 nucleic acid testing for cross-boundary travel purposes. Personal data collected will not be transferred outside Hong Kong without consent of the individuals receiving tests. The contractors are also subject to requirements under the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance. All testing will be conducted in Hong Kong. Specimens will not be transported outside Hong Kong and will be destroyed after testing.

After the testing centres are set up, if individuals feel they have a higher risk of exposure or are experiencing mild discomfort, they may continue to visit the HA's 46 general out-patient clinics to collect the deep

throat saliva specimen collection packs to undergo free testing. Persons feeling unwell, in need of medical diagnosis or treatment, unsuitable for testing at community testing centres or having other special medical needs may seek consultation at private or public clinics. They may also use free testing services provided by the Government depending on their needs.