

Public services to resume in a safe and orderly manner while we fight the virus together

A Government spokesman announced today (February 27) that, upon the instruction of the Steering Committee cum Command Centre in relation to the COVID-19 virus, the Government will implement targeted measures to reduce social contact and infection control measures and gradually resume more public services from March 2 in an orderly manner.

"Since the implementation of the special work arrangement for government employees on January 29, government departments have been monitoring their operations closely and making adjustments having regard to the situation on the ground. The objective is to continue to provide essential, emergency and limited-scale public services to members of the public while fighting the virus," the spokesman said.

"While fighting the epidemic remains the top priority of the Government, taking into account the need for the functioning of the society, bureaux/departments should implement targeted measures to reduce social contact and infection control measures, and provide more public services from March 2 onwards. The Government's ultimate goal is to resume full public services when conditions permit.

"Bureaux/departments will implement targeted measures to reduce social contact, for instance, introducing flexible working hours to reduce staff using public transport during peak hours, and adopting a roster system to reduce the number of staff working in an office at any one time. The frequency, duration and mode of meetings will also be adjusted to reduce social contact.

"In addition, bureaux/departments may also restrict the number of visitors at any one time by making use of measures such as scheduled appointments, drop boxes, quota system, etc.

"The Government will, with regard to the situation on the ground, implement various infection control measures at government buildings and offices to reduce the risk of infection and the spread of the virus. These measures include enhancing the cleansing of public facilities, such as lifts and escalators, checking the body temperature of persons entering government buildings and offices, providing alcohol hand sanitiser and sanitizing mats, etc. In this connection, members of the public may need to line up to enter government buildings due to the need for body temperature check. Those with symptoms such as fever or cough will be advised to seek medical assistance and not to enter the building. They will also be advised to access the public services they need through other possible means such as electronic platforms or drop boxes.

"The Government will gradually resume public services after implementing targeted measures to reduce social contact and infection control measures to protect the health of their staff and members of the public. Some examples include:

- The Leisure and Cultural Services Department will reopen some of its outdoor sports facilities, such as tennis courts, lawn bowling greens and jogging tracks, subject to certain special arrangements. Taking the tennis courts at Victoria Park as an example, they will be reopened on March 3 and, to achieve social distancing and prevent crowds, each tennis court will be limited to four users. The spectator stands, changing rooms and shower facilities will remain closed temporarily to reduce the risk of the spread of the virus.
- The Transport Department will continue to increase the quotas for online appointments for renewal of full driving licences/vehicle licences or application for international driving permits at four Licensing Offices (Admiralty, Cheung Sha Wan, Kwun Tong and Sha Tin) so as to reduce the number of people in the waiting area at those offices. Walk-in counter services will continue to be suspended to reduce social contact.
- Apart from drop boxes, the Building Information Centre, receipt counters and general enquiry counters of the Buildings Department at North Tower, West Kowloon Government Offices will be reopened to provide services including inspection and copying services for private building records, receipt of documents and handling of enquiries from members of the public. The Department will limit the number of service users at any one time in order to reduce social contact.
- All public estate management offices under the Housing Authority (HA) will resume services to five days a week. Where necessary, staff of the estate management offices will control the flow of people and queuing order at the reception lobby to reduce the risk of the spread of the virus. Flat selection sessions of Home Ownership Scheme 2019 will be resumed on a limited scale. To better manage the flow of people and to allow more space between applicants, HA will suitably adjust the number of flat selection sessions per day as well as the number of people invited to those sessions.

"More public services will be resumed gradually starting from next Monday. If departments require more time to make necessary manpower deployment, procure supplies and put in place special arrangements, they will resume their services by phases. Bureaux/departments will make announcement

of their latest service arrangements.

"However, we must point out that, in order to prevent the spread of the virus more effectively, certain public facilities, such as public swimming pools, indoor sports facilities, etc. are not suitable for reopening at this stage. We hope members of the public will understand."