

Quarantine measures needed to contain virus spread in Hong Kong

Your article on Hong Kong's quarantine centres draws on a few snippets of information to provide an overly negative view of this crucial public health measure to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in our community. We are disappointed the Guardian has taken such an approach.

The Hong Kong SAR Government makes no apologies for implementing stringent measures to prevent COVID-19 taking hold in the community. This has included 14-day quarantine for close contacts of confirmed cases and people returning from affected areas. Close contacts who are asymptomatic are quarantined because they are considered at higher risk of infection and, by extension, may unwittingly spread the virus in the community if they are not quarantined. They are indeed quarantined for the sake of their own health as well as that of their family, friends and the wider community.

All who require quarantine are contacted by phone to have the procedures explained and receive another briefing at the quarantine centre. Transport is arranged by the Government, which implements infection control measures such as taking of temperature, wearing a surgical mask and alternate seating on the bus.

Those staying at quarantine centres are provided with meals and daily personal necessities, as well as equipment such as tablet computers and newspapers. Wi-fi cards for Internet connection can be provided if necessary.

There is no doubt that those under quarantine face massive inconvenience and upheaval to their daily lives. We fully acknowledge that dissatisfaction of some individuals is inevitable about certain arrangements. The Department of Health takes all these concerns seriously and works with centre operators to address such issues and make improvements as far as practicable.

While we are grateful to all workers who deliver the services, we thank all who have stayed in quarantine centres for their patience, understanding and civic mindedness at this critical juncture in the fight against COVID-19.

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