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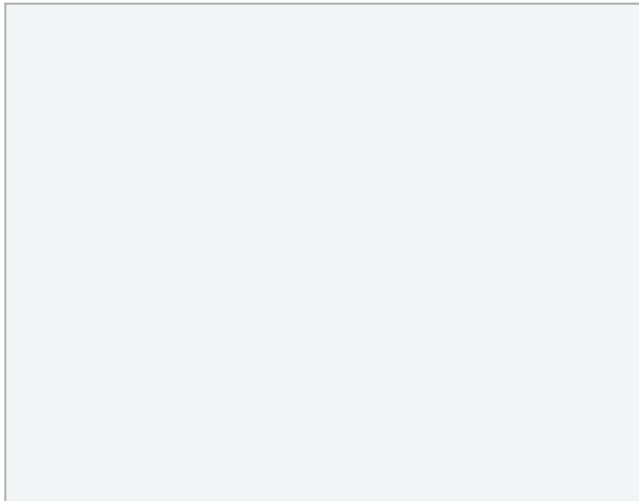


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# delay June 21 unlocking

Nick Gutteridge

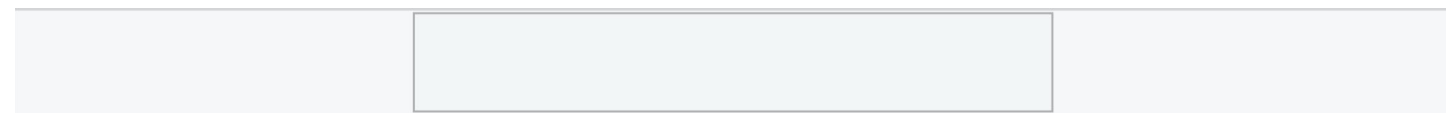
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**BORIS Johnson has been warned to not let vaccine refuseniks threaten our freedom amid fears the Indian variant could delay June 21's unlocking.**

Former minister Conor Burns is among politicians that have said Brits have endured restrictions and it "wouldn't be right" to keep them in place for [people who refuse to get jabbed.](#)

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**Lockdown shouldn't be extended to protect those who have refused the job, a Tory MP says** Credit: AFP



**Ministers have slammed the idea that June 21 may be delayed because of people who aren't getting the job**

Credit: Getty



## People testing for Covid in Clapham, south London

Credit: AFP

He said: "As a nation we have tolerated with generally good humour the most profound curtailment of our freedoms in peacetime for the greater good.

"It wouldn't be right to do it again for those who have been offered a vaccine and have freely chosen not to take it - fully aware of the risks."

The Bournemouth West MP's remarks come amid a heated debate within the Cabinet over how to deal with people who have rejected the jab.

Business Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng yesterday insisted he's "absolutely confident" there won't be any delay to the PM's roadmap.

But privately senior ministers have described vaccine rejection as "the absolute principal threat to the June 21" reopening.

A senior minister told Politico: "The risk is that a small number of idiots ruin it for everyone else.

As a nation we have tolerated with generally good humour the most profound curtailment of our

freedoms in peacetime  
wouldn't be right to do

been offered a vaccine and have freely chosen not to take it - fully aware of the risks

– Conor Burns (@ConorBurnsUK) [May 17, 2021](#)

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"If even quite a small number of people don't take the vaccine, a variant with high transmissibility can easily cause a lot of deaths."

Mark Harper, chairman of the 70-strong Covid Recovery Group of Tory MPs, said: "It is concerning to hear the Government is entertaining the delay of the June 21 unlocking – causing massive problems for many people's livelihoods – because some people won't have a job.

"Wider society's fate can't be sealed by the actions of a small group of people."

Simon Clarke, another former minister, said: "It's vital people take the vaccine when offered. Our wider society should not be held back from recovering our freedoms by those who choose not to protect themselves and others."

Tory Marcus Fysh said: "It is not reasonable to delay complete release from restrictions domestically on

June 21.

"The vast majority are vaccinated, the vaccines work, and the rest now have a vanishingly small risk of harm.

"If people don't want to be vaccinated it is not up to society to shield them."

One Cabinet minister even warned that missing the June 21 milestone could become Mr Johnson's 'Theresa May moment' – in a hark back to her failed Brexit negotiations and deadline.



### **Members of the public queue to receive a Covid vaccine at a temporary vaccination centre at the Essa academy in Bolton** Credit: AFP

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There is a debate raging within the Government between lockdown doves, who back more restrictions, and hawks who want to see them lifted.

According to the website there has been a swing towards those who believe the roadmap should go ahead as planned.

But there is concern that many Brits who have refused to take the jab come from ethnic minority communities.

One minister said: "It is a dual problem because if it rips through unvaccinated minorities then the health inequalities at the end of all this will be stark.

"But if the majority is kept locked up because of the actions of a small minority, it is a very nasty sentiment"

majority of those

Matt Hancock said yesterday the "vast majority" those hospitalised in Bolton had been offered the vaccine but didn't take it.

He warned the Indian variant could "spread like wildfire among the unvaccinated groups" and urged people to come forward for the jab.

The Lancashire town is one of around a dozen hotspots across the country where Covid is spreading rapidly.



### **Authorities in Bolton are rolling out vaccines to try and stop the spread of the Indian variant** Credit: AFP

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As a result the health secretary said ministers can't rule out having to reimpose local lockdown restrictions.

And he also said there is now a "high degree of confidence" among scientists that the jab is effective against the new strain.

Officials in Bolton have started giving out jabs to youngsters - including teenagers - as they try to head off the threat of new restrictions.

Mr Kwarteng insisted he's "confident" the nationwide lockdown will end on June 21 and said he's seen "no

reason" why it should

But he urged people to show "caution" as pubs reopen inside and hugging is allowed again since yesterday to make sure the virus is kept in check.

Ministers and scientists were worried the emergence of the Indian variant could cause a surge in cases and 1,000 hospitalisations a day this summer.

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But pressed on the June 21 date, Mr Kwarteng said: "I think it's very likely to happen. I think the vaccines are working against the Indian variant.

"There's nothing I've seen, and there's nothing the PM has seen up to now that suggests we're going to delay that 21 June date.

"There are risks in this and we can't guarantee everything will be fine. What we can do is look at the data and make judgments according to the data.

"So far so good. I'm confident we'll be able to get to June 21 and open up normally but I can't guarantee that now."



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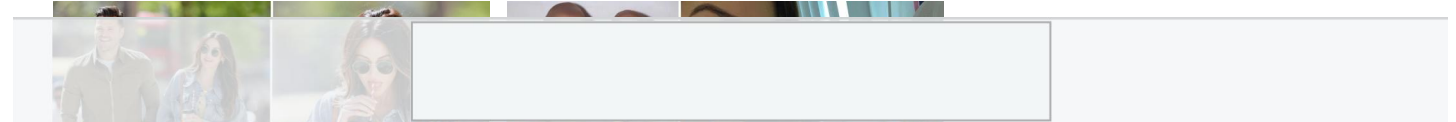
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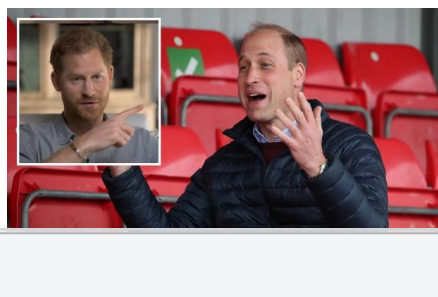
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