

Supply delays could hit February target to get 15 million vaccinated, minister admits



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Delays in delivering [Covid-19 vaccine](#) supplies could hit the goal to offer the jabs to nearly 15 million high-priority people by mid-February, a Cabinet minister admitted today.

More than 4.2 million people have already had the jabs in the UK but the daily number being administered fell to 204,076 first doses on Monday, down from 324,233 last Friday.

Asked on Times Radio whether Pfizer's reduction in its deliveries over upcoming weeks would make "huge inroads" into the goal to vaccinate the four top priority groups in less than a month, Home Secretary [Priti Patel](#) said: "It could do but I genuinely do not want to speculate on that right now because obviously if they are bolstering their manufacturing capacity they will also be able to produce much more vaccine and get a lot more vaccine out."

The Government's chief scientific adviser [Sir Patrick Vallance](#) told Sky News that more than 70 per cent of the population would have to be vaccinated to achieve "herd" immunity.

He warned the current roll-out of vaccines would not take effect quickly enough to bring the UK pandemic under control.

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Mask-wearing, social distancing and obeying the lockdown were the only way to bring the virus to heel, due to the 10-day gap between receiving a jab and immunity developing, Sir Patrick said.

He added that it was "quite likely" that jabs would have to be given every one or two years to maintain immunity.

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He disputed claims from Israel that the first jab of the Pfizer vaccine only provided 33 per cent protection, saying it was likely to be far closer to the 89 per cent recorded in clinical trials.

It came as London fell further behind the rest of the country in the vaccine roll-out, and amid chaos at one overcrowded east London GP surgery with vulnerable patients fearing they may have caught covid while queueing for jabs.

GPs in Walthamstow were forced to apologise when patients complained about days of overcrowding at the Forest Road Medical Centre.

Patients told the Standard that they were forced to queue and pass other elderly patients on a narrow stairway and wait for long periods in unventilated rooms containing up to 40 people.

One patient said she and her partner had been shielding for the last 10 months but now feared they could have contracted covid. "It's left me worrying for the next 10 days," she said. "It was scarily busy. We will probably feel some joy next week [from receiving the jab] if we have not got covid."

Another patient said the surgery – which continued to treat other patients at the same time – should be closed immediately as a vaccination centre.

"It was completely crazy in the waiting room," she said. "I was number 25 in the queue. By the time I was called it was number 45."

Waltham Forest clinical commission group said the problem was caused when it was "offered extra vaccines which we were not anticipating".