# Peter Sullivan freed after 38 years as DNA evidence overturns wrongful murder conviction



Peter Sullivan, a man wrongfully imprisoned for nearly 38 years, was finally released last night after judges quashed his conviction for the 1986 murder of florist Diane Sindall. Now 68 years old, Sullivan is set to receive a compensation package of up to £1 million from the Ministry of Justice, a stark reminder of the toll that miscarriages of justice can take on individuals and their families.

Sullivan was convicted largely on circumstantial evidence, which prosecutors argued linked him to the brutal murder. At his trial, the narrative presented painted him as a petty criminal with limited intelligence who had a history of drinking and violence. However, his claims of innocence persisted throughout his incarceration, leading him to maintain that he had been coerced into making false confessions under duress from the police.

The case took a significant turn when recent advancements in DNA analysis identified an unknown male profile, not matching Sullivan, suggesting another individual could be responsible for the crime. This new evidence prompted the Criminal Cases Review Commission to refer the case back to the Court of Appeal, where the judges confirmed that had this DNA evidence been available during Sullivan's original trial, it would have raised doubts sufficient to overturn his conviction. Lord Justice Holroyde remarked that “the evidence as a whole would have been regarded as insufficient,” reflecting how the landscape of forensic science changed the understanding of Sullivan's guilt.

Despite the joy of his release, Sullivan expressed no bitterness regarding his ordeal. In a heartfelt statement conveyed through his solicitor, Sarah Myatt, he remarked, “As God is my witness, it is said the truth shall set you free. It is unfortunate that it does not give a timescale.” This sentiment underscores the emotional complexity of his situation; while he is finally free, the shadow of his wrongful conviction looms large, not just over his life but over the lives of Sindall's family, who are still grieving their loss.

The implications of Sullivan's exoneration extend far beyond the individual level. They highlight systemic issues within the criminal justice system regarding wrongful convictions, particularly in cases heavily reliant on circumstantial evidence. The Ministry of Justice has acknowledged the gravity of Sullivan's situation, stating that they would investigate how such a miscarriage of justice could have occurred, seeking accountability and assurance that similar errors are not repeated in future.

Sullivan's case is not isolated. The challenges faced by individuals wrongfully convicted can vary significantly, as demonstrated by the experience of another wrongfully accused individual, Michael Sullivan from Massachusetts. After spending nearly three decades in prison, he was awarded $13 million in compensation, ultimately facing the stark reality that his home state’s laws limited the amount he could receive. With the legal framework often inadequate in addressing the suffering caused by wrongful imprisonment, many advocates argue that the compensation offered—like the £1 million Sullivan is set to receive—falls woefully short of what is just.

Upon his release, Sullivan's family expressed hope and determination to rebuild their lives around him, acknowledging the profound impacts of nearly four decades lost. His sister, Kim Smith, reflected not just on their long-awaited reunion but also extended sympathy to Sindall's family, reminding reporters that both families have endured enduring pain and loss.

As Sullivan begins to navigate his newfound freedom, the society that detained him for so long is left questioning how such failures in the justice system continue to occur. It remains to be seen how efforts to reform these systemic issues will unfold in the wake of his release, and whether any advancements will be made to support victims of similar injustices in the future.

**Reference Map:**- Paragraph 1: [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14709215/peter-sullivan-compensation-murder-conviction-quashed.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)- Paragraph 2: [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14709215/peter-sullivan-compensation-murder-conviction-quashed.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)- Paragraph 3: [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14709215/peter-sullivan-compensation-murder-conviction-quashed.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)- Paragraph 4: [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14709215/peter-sullivan-compensation-murder-conviction-quashed.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)- Paragraph 5: [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14709215/peter-sullivan-compensation-murder-conviction-quashed.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)- Paragraph 6: [[2]](https://www.ctpost.com/news/article/massachusetts-man-who-spent-decades-in-prison-for-19945407.php), [[4]](https://www.newsweek.com/man-wrongly-spent-decades-jail-murder-awarded-13-million-1992429)- Paragraph 7: [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14709215/peter-sullivan-compensation-murder-conviction-quashed.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)- Paragraph 8: [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14709215/peter-sullivan-compensation-murder-conviction-quashed.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)- Paragraph 9: [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14709215/peter-sullivan-compensation-murder-conviction-quashed.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)- Paragraph 10: [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14709215/peter-sullivan-compensation-murder-conviction-quashed.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)

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1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14709215/peter-sullivan-compensation-murder-conviction-quashed.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.ctpost.com/news/article/massachusetts-man-who-spent-decades-in-prison-for-19945407.php> - Michael Sullivan, wrongfully convicted of murder in 1986, was awarded $13 million in compensation after spending nearly three decades in prison. DNA testing revealed no blood or DNA from the victim on his clothing, leading to his exoneration. Despite the substantial award, state laws limit compensation for wrongful convictions to $1 million. Sullivan plans to use the funds to support his family, particularly his nieces and nephews, and to purchase a new truck. He continues to adjust to life outside prison, facing challenges in reintegrating into society.
3. <https://www.ctinsider.com/news/article/massachusetts-man-who-spent-decades-in-prison-for-19945407.php> - Michael Sullivan, wrongfully convicted of murder in 1986, was awarded $13 million in compensation after spending nearly three decades in prison. DNA testing revealed no blood or DNA from the victim on his clothing, leading to his exoneration. Despite the substantial award, state laws limit compensation for wrongful convictions to $1 million. Sullivan plans to use the funds to support his family, particularly his nieces and nephews, and to purchase a new truck. He continues to adjust to life outside prison, facing challenges in reintegrating into society.
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7. <https://www.ctvnews.ca/world/a-massachusetts-man-wrongfully-convicted-of-murder-was-awarded-13-million-he-won-t-get-all-of-it-1.7125356> - Michael Sullivan, wrongfully convicted of murder in 1986, was awarded $13 million in compensation after spending nearly three decades in prison. DNA testing revealed no blood or DNA from the victim on his clothing, leading to his exoneration. Despite the substantial award, state laws limit compensation for wrongful convictions to $1 million. Sullivan plans to use the funds to support his family, particularly his nieces and nephews, and to purchase a new truck. He continues to adjust to life outside prison, facing challenges in reintegrating into society.