# Brian Buckle’s battle exposes failings in UK wrongful conviction compensation



An innocent man's harrowing journey through the justice system underscores the profound inadequacies of the current compensation framework for wrongful convictions in the UK. Brian Buckle, who spent five years behind bars after being wrongly convicted of child rape, has vocally challenged what he describes as an “unfair and draconian” compensation system. His case highlights not only the personal toll of a miscarriage of justice but also the labyrinthine legal hurdles faced by those seeking redress.

Buckle’s nightmare began in 2017 when he was convicted of rape and sexual assault—charges he steadfastly denied. After a lengthy legal campaign, his conviction was deemed unsafe by the Court of Appeal. The subsequent retrial, bolstered by fresh forensic evidence and witnesses, resulted in a jury acquitting him within an hour. Despite this, the Ministry of Justice acknowledged his innocence but insisted that he must “prove it beyond reasonable doubt” to qualify for compensation. This shift in legal standards stems from a significant law change in 2014, which now requires individuals to demonstrate unequivocal innocence to receive any redress for miscarriages of justice.

Buckle expressed his outrage to The Independent, saying, “I'm disgusted by it really, that they can take you away from your family for five and a half years and totally disregard what's happened.” This sense of frustration is compounded by the financial strain his family endured while fighting to clear his name, reportedly spending over £500,000 on legal fees, inheritance money, and loans. The emotional cost has also been staggering, as Buckle now grapples with PTSD and the lasting scars of separation from his family during the most formative years of his children’s lives.

His story parallels that of Peter Sullivan, who had recently been released after spending 38 years wrongfully imprisoned for the murder of florist Diane Sindall. Sullivan, like Buckle, protested his innocence throughout his incarceration, and new forensic evidence eventually proved the jury's original verdict wrong. His case exemplifies the long-standing flaws in the criminal justice system, where even with overwhelming evidence of innocence, the path to compensation remains fraught with obstacles.

The emotional toll of such miscarriages of justice is staggering. Buckle reflected on the adjustments he faces in rebuilding his life, stating, “I’ve got to have people with me that I trust all the time.” His experience has led him to advocate for change, warning that anyone could fall victim to a wrongful conviction. The compensation scheme's current structure compounds these injustices, creating a system that essentially penalises the already victimised.

The Ministry of Justice has acknowledged the grave impact of wrongful convictions and claims to be committed to helping those affected rebuild their lives. However, as Buckle’s and Sullivan’s situations illustrate, many exonerees face substantial barriers to obtaining the compensation they desperately need. Critics argue that the current approach towards compensating miscarriages of justice in England and Wales does not adequately reflect the damage caused by wrongful imprisonment or the deep flaws that led to such outcomes in the first place.

This ongoing struggle for justice has amplified calls for a reform of the compensation system, as the legal landscape remains unsatisfactory for many who have been wrongfully convicted. With a history of failed cases and insufficient support structures for exonerees, the need for comprehensive reform has never been more urgent. Buckle's story serves as a stark reminder of the human cost behind statistics and the urgent need for a system that not only recognises innocence but actively supports the recovery of those who have suffered unimaginable injustices.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraph 1: [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/brian-buckle-conviction-peter-sullivan-compensation-b2751580.html), [[2]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/brian-buckle-conviction-peter-sullivan-compensation-b2751580.html)
2. Paragraph 2: [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/brian-buckle-conviction-peter-sullivan-compensation-b2751580.html), [[3]](https://www.businessinsider.com/wrongly-convicted-man-years-in-prison-paid-600k-prove-innocence-2023-10)
3. Paragraph 3: [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/brian-buckle-conviction-peter-sullivan-compensation-b2751580.html), [[2]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/brian-buckle-conviction-peter-sullivan-compensation-b2751580.html)
4. Paragraph 4: [[2]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/brian-buckle-conviction-peter-sullivan-compensation-b2751580.html), [[4]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-66928735.amp)
5. Paragraph 5: [[2]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/brian-buckle-conviction-peter-sullivan-compensation-b2751580.html), [[3]](https://www.businessinsider.com/wrongly-convicted-man-years-in-prison-paid-600k-prove-innocence-2023-10), [[4]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-66928735.amp)
6. Paragraph 6: [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/brian-buckle-conviction-peter-sullivan-compensation-b2751580.html), [[2]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/brian-buckle-conviction-peter-sullivan-compensation-b2751580.html), [[5]](https://www.newsweek.com/man-wrongly-spent-decades-jail-murder-awarded-13-million-1992429)
7. Paragraph 7: [[5]](https://www.newsweek.com/man-wrongly-spent-decades-jail-murder-awarded-13-million-1992429), [[6]](https://www.tspr.org/illinois-public-radio/2024/02/29/his-conviction-was-overturned-after-35-years-wrongfully-served-state-law-caps-his-compensation-at-14-years)
8. Paragraph 8: [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/brian-buckle-conviction-peter-sullivan-compensation-b2751580.html), [[4]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-66928735.amp), [[7]](https://www.ksat.com/news/2025/03/15/compensating-people-who-are-wrongfully-convicted-is-a-hard-sell-in-some-states/)
9. Paragraph 9: [[2]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/brian-buckle-conviction-peter-sullivan-compensation-b2751580.html), [[6]](https://www.tspr.org/illinois-public-radio/2024/02/29/his-conviction-was-overturned-after-35-years-wrongfully-served-state-law-caps-his-compensation-at-14-years), [[7]](https://www.ksat.com/news/2025/03/15/compensating-people-who-are-wrongfully-convicted-is-a-hard-sell-in-some-states/)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/brian-buckle-conviction-peter-sullivan-compensation-b2751580.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/brian-buckle-conviction-peter-sullivan-compensation-b2751580.html> - An innocent man who spent five years behind bars after being wrongly convicted of rape has hit out at the 'unfair and draconian' compensation system, warning a miscarriage of justice could happen to anyone. In 2017, Brian Buckle’s life was upended after he was found guilty of raping and sexually assaulting a child, charges which he had denied. After a lengthy legal battle, his conviction was found unsafe by the Court of Appeal, and a retrial with fresh forensic evidence and witnesses saw the jury clear him of all counts within less than an hour. Despite this, he was rejected compensation from the Ministry of Justice, who acknowledged his innocence but said he must 'prove it beyond reasonable doubt'.
3. <https://www.businessinsider.com/wrongly-convicted-man-years-in-prison-paid-600k-prove-innocence-2023-10> - Brian Buckle and his family spent the next five and a half years contesting the conviction, using inheritance money, donations from relatives, loans, and crowdsourcing to cover the costs of private investigators and forensic experts. Their efforts finally paid off when a forensic expert retested a diary that was said to be stained with Buckle's semen and found it had traces of lubricant used in condoms. In a Court of Appeal hearing held in 2022, Buckle's attorney argued that the semen originated from a used condom and that the samples may have been planted. Citing the new DNA evidence, the judges overturned all 16 guilty verdicts and immediately released Buckle. However, his ordeal didn't end there, as the Crown Prosecution Service sought a retrial in May 2023. The complainant then admitted in court that she had been abused two years before meeting Buckle, and he was acquitted. However, his family ended up spending more than £500,000, about $600,000, in legal fees to prove his innocence, and have not been able to reclaim the costs.
4. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-66928735.amp> - Brian Buckle was acquitted after DNA evidence used against him at his original trial was found to be flawed. Each year, thousands of people in England and Wales are accused of crimes for which they are later acquitted. While their names may be cleared, they are often left emotionally and financially devastated. Brian Buckle, who was wrongfully convicted of sexually abusing a child, discovered this first-hand. After spending five and a half years in prison, his convictions were overturned, but the cost to him and his family was over £500,000. As well as having to pay for his legal team, Brian had lost his job as a construction manager. 'I've lost my pension. All our savings are gone,' he says.
5. <https://www.newsweek.com/man-wrongly-spent-decades-jail-murder-awarded-13-million-1992429> - Peter Sullivan, who was wrongfully convicted of murder and spent decades in prison, was awarded $13 million in compensation. DNA testing cleared Sullivan, leading to his release after 35 years. Despite the exoneration, Sullivan's life was forever changed, and he continues to adjust to a world that had dramatically changed during his incarceration.
6. <https://www.tspr.org/illinois-public-radio/2024/02/29/his-conviction-was-overturned-after-35-years-wrongfully-served-state-law-caps-his-compensation-at-14-years> - In Illinois, a man who was wrongfully convicted and served 35 years in prison had his conviction overturned. However, state law caps compensation for wrongful convictions at 14 years, limiting the amount he could receive. This situation highlights the challenges faced by exonerees in seeking fair compensation for the time they were wrongfully incarcerated.
7. <https://www.ksat.com/news/2025/03/15/compensating-people-who-are-wrongfully-convicted-is-a-hard-sell-in-some-states/> - Compensating individuals who have been wrongfully convicted is a complex issue in some states. While some states have compensation laws, the process can be challenging, and not all exonerees receive compensation. This situation underscores the difficulties faced by those who have been wrongfully convicted in seeking justice and financial redress.