



West Ham co-owner, nicknamed "Sultan of Sleaze", banned from being alone with women and girls

## Description

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David Sullivan, Joint-Chair of West Ham United, in attendance prior to the Premier League match between

*Content warning: This article contains descriptions of sexual abuse and harrasment*

The billionaire co-owner of West Ham [Football Club](#) David Sullivan, resigned on Saturday ahead of a joint *BBC* and *Times* investigation alleging he's a sexual predator.

The [Panorama documentary](#) broadcasts allegations made by several women that Sullivan abused his position of power and influence to prey on women for sex.

Since 2023, officials have banned Sullivan from being alone with members of the women's and youth teams. An investigation uncovered concerns serious enough to prompt safeguarding restrictions around female players.

The porn tycoon has insisted this was not a [disciplinary ban](#) but it's increasingly evident that it was a preventative ban to protect women and girls from harm.

However, like most sexually abusive men, Sullivan refutes the allegations as having "never happened".

His resignation letter from West Ham read:

After a lifetime spent building businesses in the adult industry, in which I have met thousands of women, it is sadly inevitable that a small number of improper conduct claims are being made against me.

As a result, we find ourselves wondering how many women may have endured such abuse in their youth but stayed silent over fears theyâ??d be disbelieved due to Sullivanâ??s [status](#)

David Sullivan was branded the â??Sultan of Sleazeâ?? after building an empire of 150 sex shops and cornering the adult entertainment market before taking joint control of West Ham United in January 2010.

â??I am not embarrassed by what I have done,â?? Sullivan told The Times in 2007.â??  
[pic.twitter.com/scPpQDGd4K](https://pic.twitter.com/scPpQDGd4K)

â?? The Athletic | Football (@TheAthleticFC) [June 9, 2026](#)

## West Ham co-owner always been a sexual predator

The *BBC* and *Times* investigations into Sullivanâ??s alleged abuses unearthed allegations made by eight women. Each had spoken to the police about Sullivanâ??s inappropriate behaviour, but [no charges have been levelled](#) against the billionaire.

However, it isnâ??t hard to see merit in the victimsâ?? claims. Sullivanâ??s resignation before the documentary aired arguably signals a guilty conscience and once again, an attempt by an abusive man to [slink into the background](#) to evade consequences for his lurid behaviour.

Once branded the [â??Sultan of Sleazeâ??](#), Sullivan grew his wealth through sex shops and pornography before becoming co-owner of West Ham in 2010.

The sexual misconduct allegations span decades, coming from women who were in their late teens and early 20s. They were aspiring young models seeking opportunities in the adult entertainment industry.

People, especially men, will undoubtedly try to blame the women for seeking work in an industry many view as exploitative and harmful. I disagree. Women cannot be blamed for pursuing opportunities to earn money.

Itâ??s also incredibly hypocritical of men when they built, shaped and continue to [profit from these industries](#)

## West Ham and FA have some explaining to do

The former minister for victims and violence against women and girls, Alex Davies-Jones, expressed her horror at the allegations, while saying she wasnâ??t surprised by them.

The Labour MP also called for a review of how police handled disclosures made by potential victims of sexual abuse, raising fresh questions about whether authorities took those claims seriously enough.

Culture secretary, Lisa Nandy, joined this call.

She said:

If it is the case that an investigation concluded that there were sufficiently serious allegations to warrant a ban on contact with the youth and women's teams, then the FA must explain this decision and why no further action was taken.

I expect a full and urgent explanation from the FA and West Ham as to how these incredibly serious allegations have been handled.

Apparently David Sullivan was known as "blowjob or no job".

Wayne Couzens was known as "The Rapist".

Peter Mandelson was known as "The Prince of Darkness".

Maybe when someone says they are via a "nickname" you believe them.

Alex Davies-Jones MP (@AlexDaviesJones) [June 9, 2026](#)

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## Survivor recalls frightening "audition"

An ex-model described the terror she felt during an "audition" when she realised she was locked in the room with Sullivan.

He lured her with promises of securing national press, but said she would need to be "one of his special friends".

She told the [BBC](#):

[To Sullivan] If you think I'm going to sleep with you to get in the paper, you've got another thing coming. He looked very shocked as I said that. And then said, "What, not even a blowjob?"

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I go to the door and realise it's locked. At that point, I was like, "Open the fucking door, open the fucking door now".

This horrifying story will undoubtedly trigger traumatic experiences for [many women and girls](#). It also reiterates the importance of a serious conversation about why society places the burden of safety on women and girls and "preventative measures", rather than holding abusive men accountable.

## The failing of the football industry

The FA and West Ham believed introducing preventative measures were sufficient but can they honestly say they went far enough?

After all, Sullivan said:

I saw it as a meaningless restriction, as it didn't impact on my work in any way, therefore I accepted it for a quiet life.

Some men are now attempting to make out that Sullivan, the alleged perpetrator, is a victim of defamation.

The [@BBC](#) would face serious legal action if they repeat disgraceful lies about David Sullivan. He is a brilliant self-made entrepreneur who has done a wonderful job for West Ham & does huge unsung work in the community. You have to question the motivation of any defamatory smears. [pic.twitter.com/sWfQhHtXVC](https://pic.twitter.com/sWfQhHtXVC)

William Storey (@richenergy) June 6, 2026

## It's time rich, powerful men face accountability

Back in 2008, this wannabe-Playboy billionaire [lauded his behaviour](#)

I have given an awful lot of people a lot of pleasure and I have never hurt anyone.

Needless to say, plenty of the people named in the [Epstein files](#) would no doubt offer the same defence of their behaviour. But that's part of the problem: powerful men always seem to have a ready-made excuse.

What accountability have these men actually faced? A few bad headlines? Some uncomfortable interviews? Maybe an angry opinion piece or two. Beyond that, very little. No serious consequences. No meaningful punishment.

The men responsible carry on with little disruption to their lives while women bear the consequences. Too often, those responsible evade accountability while survivors bear the consequences for years to come. When that pattern repeats itself time and again, talk of justice begins to ring hollow for many female victims.

Therefore, we hope to see greater pressure placed on the police. Authorities must start to intently listen to [victims of sexual abuse](#) and take their allegations seriously. For too long, there has been a reluctance to confront perpetrators head-on, often out of fear of causing offence or attracting controversy.

Victims deserve better than that. They deserve to be heard and they deserve a genuine effort to deliver [justice](#)

Featured image via [Justin Setterfield/ Getty Images](#)

By [Maddison Wheeldon](#)

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