

SLAPPs and abusive litigation

What are we trying to do

Solicitors should not get involved in abusive litigation on behalf of their clients - including strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs). We want those who believe they have been a target of a SLAPP to report it to us.

Who needs to know

Any firm or individual we regulate who conducts litigation and who gives dispute resolution and pre-action advice and those who might be the target of such action.

What's going on

There is public concern - and we are concerned too - that solicitors and law firms are pursuing a type of abusive litigation known as strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs) on behalf of their clients.

The key aim of a SLAPP is to prevent publication on matters of public importance such as academic research, whistleblowing, campaigning or investigative journalism. They are a threat to the rule of law, free speech and a free press.

It is important that claimants can bring legitimate claims and for solicitors to act fearlessly in their interest. It is not in the public interest for false or misleading information to be needlessly published, and lawyers can have a legitimate role in encouraging journalists and others to make sure that what is published is legal and accurate.

Yet this should never extend to abusing the litigation process, bringing meritless claims or threatening individuals with legal action with the sole objective of discouraging free speech.

We have published guidance and warnings to the profession about abusive litigation and SLAPPs.

We are currently investigating a number of cases where law firms might have been involved in abusive litigation, including SLAPPs.

Report a solicitor

If you think you might have been targeted by potential abusive litigation you should read our advice

[<https://www.sra.org.uk/link/cf3d22e27a73419a816518ffd787959f.aspx>] on this. You can

report the solicitor to us

[<https://www.sra.org.uk/link/846b9a10f45541a2afc918cd5c6dff4e.aspx>] so we can investigate.

Want to know more

We have published a warning notice on SLAPPs

[<https://www.sra.org.uk/link/ffb9b8c09c4b4847b5dc4f4f0646f36d.aspx>] .

We have produced guidance on conduct in disputes

[<https://www.sra.org.uk/link/e1183bb5bcbe4c5f926e9773b36020f7.aspx>] , as well as making sure the profession is aware of the impacts of Russian sanctions.
[<https://www.sra.org.uk/link/0b829b77a3594ca5b76a3d2ea9cb4aea.aspx>]

Further issues about litigation of this type are explored in our Risk Outlook report [<https://www.sra.org.uk/link/5c371fb027004041b04ee9b46ad28924.aspx>] .

We have also produced advice for those who might be targeted by SLAPPs

[<https://www.sra.org.uk/link/cf3d22e27a73419a816518ffd787959f.aspx>] so they can recognise typical tactics.