

SRA Update

Issue 112 - February 2023

- [General updates \[#tab_fc9f1\]](#)
- [Compliance updates \[#tab_fc9f2\]](#)

Welcome to the latest issue of SRA Update. Anyone following recent coverage in the national media or events in Parliament will have seen there continues to be significant concerns raised about the use of strategic litigation against public participation – SLAPPs. We take this issue very seriously. SLAPPs are a threat to the rule of law and free speech. Although it is important that claimants can bring legitimate claims and for solicitors to act fearlessly in their interest, that should never extend to abusing the litigation process with the sole objective of discouraging free speech. In this edition, we remind you of all the information we have published in this area. The actions of a few can undermine trust in the profession – all solicitors must meet the high standards the public expects. Also this month, find out about the opportunities – and risks – presented by the new wave of technologies that are transforming legal services. And have your say on minor rule changes to our Standards and Regulations.

Paul Philip

Chief Executive

[Abusive litigation and SLAPPs](https://rules.sra.org.uk/home/hot-topics/slapps-abusive-litigation/)

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With the issue of the potential misuse of litigation in the spotlight, it is vital that you fully understand your obligations in this area. While you should act fearlessly in your client's interest, you must not abuse the litigation process, for instance, by bringing meritless claims. We have pulled together all relevant information setting out our expectations, including guidance and our recent warning notice.

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[Digital ledger technology - are you blockchain ready?](https://rules.sra.org.uk/sra/news/press/2023-press-releases/risk-outlook-digital-ledger/)

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Is your firm ready for the blockchain revolution? Some firms are already taking advantage of new technologies, while other developments might soon become commonplace in legal services. Our latest Risk Outlook report lays out the challenges and opportunities you might face.

[Read more about: Digital ledger technology - are you blockchain ready?](https://rules.sra.org.uk/sra/news/press/2023-press-releases/risk-outlook-digital-ledger/)
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Joint referral arrangements with SDT agreed [<https://rules.sra.org.uk/sra/news/sra-sdt-statement-2023/>]

The recent increase in our fining powers means that we will be able to deal - more quickly and efficiently - with some cases that would have previously been sent to the Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal (SDT). We have therefore set out, in a joint statement with the SDT, our overall approach to referring cases to the Tribunal.

[Read more about: Joint referral arrangements with SDT agreed](https://rules.sra.org.uk/sra/news/sra-sdt-statement-2023/)
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Continuing competence - our response to the LSB statement

[<https://rules.sra.org.uk/sra/news/press/2023-press-releases/lbs-continuing-competence-response/>]

We have submitted our response to the Legal Services Board's (LSB) statement of policy on ongoing competence. Our response explains how we will meet the LSB's expectations in full - and continue to make sure the profession is meeting those expectations - by the LSB's 31 January 2024 deadline.

[Read more about: Continuing competence - our response to the LSB statement](https://rules.sra.org.uk/sra/news/press/2023-press-releases/lbs-continuing-competence-response/) [<https://rules.sra.org.uk/sra/news/press/2023-press-releases/lbs-continuing-competence-response/>]

Standards and Regulations - minor amends to our rules

[<https://rules.sra.org.uk/sra/news/press/2022-press-releases/standards-regulations-amends-consultation/>]

We are consulting on a series of minor amendments to our Standards and Regulations to clarify our rules. This comes after feedback from stakeholders suggested the new rules had either had unintended knock-on consequences or needed to be clearer on specific issues.



[Read more about: Standards and Regulations - minor amends to our rules](https://rules.sra.org.uk/sra/news/press/2022-press-releases/standards-regulations-amends-consultation/) [https://rules.sra.org.uk/sra/news/press/2022-press-releases/standards-regulations-amends-consultation/]

Webinar - immigration services thematic review and guidance

[<https://events.sra.org.uk/sra/626/home>]

Do you offer immigration services? Join our free webinar on 22 February. You will be able to learn about the good - and not-so-good - practice we found during our recent thematic review. We will also share tips and useful resources, discuss our newly published guidance, and hear from the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner.

[Read more about: Webinar - immigration services thematic review and guidance](https://events.sra.org.uk/sra/626/home) [https://events.sra.org.uk/sra/626/home]

SQE virtual conference - get all the latest updates

[<https://events.sra.org.uk/sra/629/home>]

Our virtual SQE Conference on Thursday 23 March will talk about the latest updates on this route to becoming a solicitor. This includes insights from the first annual reports, findings from our perception survey, and information on qualifying work experience opportunities. The event is free and targeted towards education and training providers and organisations offering qualifying work experience.

[Read more about: SQE virtual conference - get all the latest updates](https://events.sra.org.uk/sra/629/home) [https://events.sra.org.uk/sra/629/home]

Showcase your continuing competence approach

[<https://rules.sra.org.uk/sra/news/sra-update-112-continuing-competence-examples/>]

How is your firm helping its solicitors remain competent to practise? We want to help the wider profession by showcasing your best practice and new ways of working in this crucial area.

[Read more about: Showcase your continuing competence approach](https://rules.sra.org.uk/sra/news/sra-update-112-continuing-competence-examples/) [https://rules.sra.org.uk/sra/news/sra-update-112-continuing-competence-examples/]

Will new ombudsman rules affect you?

[<https://rules.sra.org.uk/sra/news/sra-update-109-leo-rules/>]

The Legal Ombudsman (LeO) has consulted on a number of changes to its scheme rules, which come into effect on 1 April 2023. Look at what's

being proposed to find out what it means and how it might affect you.

[Read more about: Will new ombudsman rules affect you?](https://rules.sra.org.uk/sra/news/sra-update-109-leo-rules/)
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Social housing clients can contact their ombudsman directly [<https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/>]

If you have clients complaining about their social housing landlord, the Housing Ombudsman can now take complaints directly, rather than having to contact their MP. Further information on the complaints procedure is on the Housing Ombudsman's website.

[Read more about: Social housing clients can contact their ombudsman directly](https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/) [<https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/>]

Your health, your career [<https://rules.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources-archived/your-health-your-career/>]

Are you worried about your health affecting your work? Life as a solicitor can be challenging and the demands and pressures can easily build up. We can signpost you to sources of help and make adjustments for you if you are in difficulty.

[Read more about: Your health, your career](https://rules.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources-archived/your-health-your-career/)
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Paul Philip

Chief Executive

Abusive litigation and SLAPPs

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Keep up to date with the financial sanctions regime

[\[https://rules.sra.org.uk/sra/news/press/2022-press-releases/russian-sanctions-bans-trusts/\]](https://rules.sra.org.uk/sra/news/press/2022-press-releases/russian-sanctions-bans-trusts/)

We have published guidance to help you understand your obligations under the Government's financial sanctions regime. This situation is fast-changing – the regulations changed just before Christmas to include a ban on providing trust services to those connected with Russia. Our guidance should help you keep up to date.

[Read more about: Keep up to date with the financial sanctions regime](https://rules.sra.org.uk/sra/news/press/2022-press-releases/russian-sanctions-bans-trusts/)

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Help with immigration work is at hand

[\[https://rules.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources-archived/immigration-services/\]](https://rules.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources-archived/immigration-services/)

We have created a new section of our website to bring together all the guidance and support we have for those involved in immigration services. This section outlines what you need to be doing, such as proper authorisation to deliver the work, information for clients and supervision of staff.

[Read more about: Help with immigration work is at hand](https://rules.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources-archived/immigration-services/)

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Keep cyber safe with essentials programme

[\[https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/information/funded-cyber-essentials-programme\]](https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/information/funded-cyber-essentials-programme)

The National Cyber Security Council has launched a new programme aimed at helping smaller firms have basic protections in place to guard against cybercrime. Support is offered to help you get certification from the council, which helps keep you and your clients safe.

[Read more about: Keep cyber safe with essentials programme](https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/information/funded-cyber-essentials-programme)
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