

SLAPPs are abusive legal claims intended to prevent publication of information that is in the public interest.

The victims of SLAPPs most notably include investigative journalists, academic researchers and campaigners, but society as a whole is also a victim.

SLAPPs are the weapon of choice for very rich individuals and corporations who can hire expensive legal firms, “reputation management” firms and others willing to take lucrative fees to close down publication of information in the public interest.

The goal of a SLAPP is to put its target (e.g. investigative journalist) through such financial and emotional strain as it can to prevent publication, even where information is accurate, important and in the public interest to share.

Therefore many, probably most, SLAPPs never reach a court. SLAPPs are therefore said to have a chilling effect on freedom of expression, undermining a basic tenet of democracy.

SLAPPs can seek to use a range of laws to threaten their targets. They might seek to use threats under the guise of defamation law, or GDPR or other legal vehicles.

Because of this, campaigners for reform believe **we need a new anti-SLAPP law making it easier to dismiss threats at a very early stage** and to have those seeking to use SLAPPs made liable for any and all costs involved.