

# £100,000 for the airline masseuse who hurt herself pampering the rich and famous

By Jo Willey

A MASSEUSE caring for the rich and famous on Virgin Atlantic flights has been awarded almost £110,000 in compensation after contracting repetitive strain injury.

Beauty therapist Elizabeth King, 28, got the payout after she claimed she was forced to quit the job she loved because of tennis elbow and golfer's elbow in her joints.

Miss King told a court she was made to carry out a forceful type of massage on seated first class customers as she stood over them in an incorrect posture and was often carrying out more than double the expected number of massages in a shift.

Virgin Atlantic admitted it was at fault for failing to assess the dangers involved in making Miss King carry out a treatment known as "full back up" on wealthy flyers.

This involved a "forceful" Shiatsu back and shoulder massage carried out on seated, fully-clothed passengers when it is usually performed on undressed people while they are lying down, using massage oils.

Miss King, from Portsmouth, Hants, told Winchester Crown Court she had to quit her job at the airline and change career.

Mr Justice Tugendhat said the airline must pay Miss King £109,252.53: £60,203 for loss of future earnings, £12,000 for pain and suffering, £9,000 for being unable to do the work she loved and sundries for loss of past earnings, expenses and interest.

Miss King, now a customer service adviser at a call centre, said she was "over the moon" with the payout.

The court was told that Miss King developed symptoms in the lead-up to Christmas 2000



HANDS-ON: A Virgin Atlantic massage and, right, Elizabeth yesterday

when an increase in passengers and staff shortages increased her workload.

The court heard Virgin expected its beauty therapists to do six massages per shift on average but that they regularly did 12.

After having to take a desk job at Virgin's headquarters in Crawley, West Sussex, Miss King took voluntary redundancy in November 2001.

She told the court: "I was no longer doing the job I was qualified for and loved doing," and added that she had even tried to become a hairdresser "but I found my arms were burning,

that I couldn't do more than one treatment without pain setting in."

Miss King, who has worked as a make-up artist for Estee Lauder, said she could no longer work as a beauty therapist and had taken a significant pay cut in her new job.

She has had a steroid injection in her right elbow and physiotherapy sessions.

The court was earlier told that Virgin Atlantic had previously paid £26,000 to Emily Rimmer, another injured therapist, in an out of court settlement.

An airline spokeswoman said: "We wish Elizabeth well."

