



Choosing an Aviation Lawyer: Singapore Airlines Flight SQ-321

Five key questions when choosing an aviation lawyer are:

1. Does the law firm have a strong reputation for these types of cases?

Instructing a law firm with an outstanding reputation for this type of work is critical. You can check whether lawyers and law firms are recognised by looking at independent legal directories such as [Chambers and Partners](#) and [The Legal 500](#). Equally, you should always ensure that you are dealing with the actual law firm you intend to instruct and not a claims management company or other intermediary.

Stewarts is the only law firm ranked in band 1 for Aviation: Claimant law in Chambers and Partners and band 1 for Travel law in The Legal 500. Our partners are the only band 1 recognised lawyers in Chambers and Partners, and our legal director is recognised as a star associate.

2. Does the law firm have experience of turbulence cases and cases where an airline seeks to limit its liability?

This was a turbulence event like few others, and it comes with additional legal challenges for passengers with more serious injuries. This is because the legal framework gives airlines the opportunity to challenge paying full compensation for higher value claims where airlines might be able to argue that there was nothing they could have done. This claim doesn't just need experience of dealing with mid-air upsets, which Stewarts has in abundance. It also requires experience of arguing with an airline about their processes, planning, piloting, weather information, the practices of other airlines and risk assessments, something Stewarts has gained extensive experience of over many years and several aviation claims.

No legal case has been before the courts anywhere in the world on a turbulence event where an airline has sought to limit its liability. However, Stewarts is currently running another case to trial on those very facts, where our client suffered a serious spinal cord injury in a turbulence event on a helicopter, and the operator is seeking to argue the compensation should be limited. We go to trial in July

“Stewarts are widely regarded as the go-to firm for claimants in aviation litigation”.

Chambers and Partners 2024

2025. Similarly, we have succeeded in arguing this same point where airlines have sought to limit their liability on Malaysia Airlines Flight MH17 (shot down over Ukraine) and are in the process of doing so on Ukraine International Airlines Flight 752 (shot down in Iran).

3. Does the law firm have experience of serious spinal cord and brain injury cases?

For passengers who have suffered serious, life-changing injuries, particularly those with spinal cord and brain injuries, obtaining full compensation requires the law firm to have experience of running cases of this nature to ensure that all possible losses that flow from their injuries are captured. You should check how many of these types of cases the lawyers you seek to instruct have run in the past five years.

As a firm, Stewarts has conducted more spinal cord and brain injury cases than any other firm in the UK or Europe, recovering close to £1 billion in the past six years in compensation for clients who have suffered spinal cord and brain injuries. In that period we have run 320 cases involving serious spinal cord and brain injuries including 6 resulting from aviation accidents, more than any other claimant aviation team in the UK or Europe.

4. Do the lawyers have relevant legal aviation qualifications and experience?

This is a case which will turn on a legal argument about interpretation of an international aviation treaties. You should ask what legal aviation qualifications and experience the lawyers you seek to instruct have obtained.

Our lawyers have master's degrees in advanced air law, and both of our partners are recognised as leaders in the field, and lecture at leading universities on matters of air law ([Sarah Stewart](#) at Cranfield University and [Peter Neenan](#) at Leiden Institute of Air and Space Law, Netherlands).

Unlike many aviation claims, this case is not about understanding how an aircraft is piloted or how the systems function. It will not involve litigation against product manufacturers around world. The technical issues relate solely to how an airline is run, including the processes, risk assessments, weather analysis and planning at an operational level. For this we instruct expert airline captains with experience on the same aircraft, flying the same route.

5. Who will take the lead role in my case, an experienced partner or a more junior member? How are they supported?

It is important to understand who will do the main proportion of work on your case and what their experience is in this type of work. You should understand what the support network is around that person, particularly in cases where a single law firm may have a number of cases arising from the same aviation accident.

Aviation claims are run by [Sarah Stewart](#) (partner), [Peter Neenan](#) (partner), [Rebecca Smith](#) (legal director) and [Alex Riley](#) (associate), with support from three aviation-dedicated paralegals and a trainee. We have experience of running mass aviation claims, including representing over 110 passengers in a claim against Boeing arising from an exploding engine on takeoff.

Additional support is provided by the broader aviation and international injury department including [Julian Chamberlayne](#) (partner), [Chris Deacon](#) (partner), [Scott Rigby](#) (partner), [Becky Huxford](#) (senior associate) and [James Griffin](#) (associate), supported by four paralegals. On claims that include spinal cord and brain injury, the team also has the support of Stewarts' leading personal injury team, comprising [14 additional partners](#) and [10 additional legal directors/associates](#).

For further information on the Aviation team, see: <https://www.stewartslaw.com/expertise/aviation/> or contact us at: aviation@stewartslaw.com

"I honestly couldn't ask for more and feel incredibly grateful to be working with such a bright and incredible team"

Legal 500 2024

STEWARTS
THE LITIGATION SPECIALISTS

London
5 New Street Square London EC4A 3BF
T +44 (0)20 7822 8000

Leeds
9 Bond Court Leeds LS1 2JZ
T +44 (0)113 222 0022

stewartslaw.com
