

Karen Villabona

Expert Witness
Occupational Therapist

Surrey



Professional Background

Karen Villabona is a highly experienced Occupational Therapist, Case Manager, and Expert Witness with two decades of diverse clinical practice across acute, community, and rehabilitation settings. Her expertise spans neurological rehabilitation, orthopaedics, respiratory care, elderly care, chronic disease management, vocational rehabilitation, and palliative care. She combines this with significant leadership experience and advanced clinical training, including Bobath neurological techniques, vocational therapy, specialist seating, and psychotherapeutic approaches.

Karen currently works as a Respiratory Clinical Specialist at the Royal Surrey County Hospital, where she manages a complex caseload of clients with chronic lung disease. She has played a pivotal role in establishing and leading the occupational therapy provision within a consultant-led, integrated care team. Her responsibilities include supervising qualified therapists, training junior doctors and occupational therapists, and liaising with statutory and non-statutory services to ensure high-quality care delivery. She has also contributed to research, serving as a facilitator on the TANDEM clinical trial and, in 2024, co-developed the OneVoiceILD national Integrated Care Pathway, and sits on the advisory group for a NIHR study on COPD and Assistive Technology.

Earlier in her career, Karen held senior clinical roles across inpatient rehabilitation, neurology, and stroke units, gaining extensive experience in discharge planning, complex care coordination, and environmental and equipment assessments. As a vocational rehabilitation specialist, she developed bespoke return-to-work programmes for clients with acquired brain injuries and degenerative neurological conditions, combining workplace assessment, psychological insight, and multidisciplinary coordination.

Karen has been working as an Expert Witness since 2013. She is fully trained in the Civil Procedure Rules, including all relevant updates. She prepares Care, Occupational Therapy and Loss of Services reports and is experienced in delivering comprehensive, balanced, and impartial evidence for use in litigation. Her reports are underpinned by rigorous clinical analysis and a deep understanding of functional recovery, disability impact, and long-term rehabilitation planning. Karen actively maintains her continuing professional development via a range of training opportunities. She accepts instructions from both Claimant and Defendant solicitors.

Specialisms

- Brain Injury
- Neurological Conditions
- Orthopaedics
- Elderly Care
- Chronic Disease
- Respiratory Care
- Vocational Rehabilitation
- Oncology and Palliative Care
- Stroke
- Heart Failure
- Loss of Services
- Spanish speaker

Age group

- Adults



Career history

- Respiratory Clinical Specialist 2019 – Present
Royal Surrey County Hospital
- Respiratory Clinical Specialist 2012 – 2019
Virgin Care, Surrey
 - Established the occupational therapy service within a consultant-led integrated care team.
 - Managed a complex caseload of respiratory patients within community and acute settings.
 - Supervises qualified physiotherapists, undertakes teaching to junior doctors locally and occupational therapists nationally through the RCOT.
 - Supervises occupational therapists at Sussex Community NHS Foundation Trust
 - Undertakes joint working with statutory and non-statutory services, makes recommendations for care packages highlighting any changes in need, and provides education and training to family members and carers to enhance client outcomes.
 - In 2024, she co-developed the national OneVoiceILD Integrated Care Pathway. From 2023, Karen is a member of the advisory group for the NIHR study on COPD and Assistive Technology.
- Senior Occupational Therapist 2011 - 2012
Milford Hospital
 - Provided cognitive and physical rehabilitation and managed complex discharges for clients with multi-pathology, including heart failure, cancer, stroke and rheumatic conditions.
- Specialist Practitioner (Vocational Rehabilitation) 2008 - 2011
Central London Community Healthcare NHS Trust (CLCH)
 - Managed a caseload of adults with traumatic brain injury and degenerative neurological conditions, and provided bespoke vocational rehabilitation on a one-to-one basis.
 - Designed rehabilitation programme for clients with physical, cognitive and psychological difficulties, conducting worksite assessments, managing graded return-to-work, and conducting equipment needs assessments. Developed the service via implementing standardised assessments and outcome measures.
 - Joint working with speech and language therapists to assess and support patients to achieve optimal independence through provision of augmentative and alternative communication aids.
- Senior Occupational Therapist 2007 - 2008
Farm Lane Rehabilitation Unit, CLCH
- Occupational Therapist 2005 - 2007
(Acute Respiratory, Neurological Rehabilitation & Acute Stroke Unit)
Ashford & St Peter's Hospitals

Qualifications

- Postgraduate Diploma in Occupational Therapy
- BA (Hons) Spanish
- Postgraduate Modules in Bobath
- MBBA Buteyko Breathing teacher
- CPCAB Level 2 and 3 Counselling

Professional Memberships

- Health & Care Professions Council
- RCOT
- British Association of Occupational Therapists
- Buteyko Breathing Association
- CMSUK

