



Australian Child Life Therapy Scope of Practice Framework

Version 1, 2014

Many thanks to Anne-Maree Leahy (RCH) and Anndrea Clear (Canberra Hospital), who worked to make this document possible

Child Life Therapy Scope of Practice Framework

One of the many agreed outcomes of ACLTA's Strategic Forum in June 2014 was the creation of a Scope of Practice document, which clearly outlines what an Australian child life therapist should be expected to do (or not do) in their role. There was agreement amongst Forum attendees that there were different expectations, dependent on the level of experience/training/role an individual therapist had.

This document has been created after an analysis of job descriptions from 11 Australian sites where child life therapists are employed – ranging from small sole practitioner services within general hospitals, to large teams based in metropolitan Children's Hospitals. Any consistent duties for assistant, practitioner, senior practitioner or manager levels are included here and defined.

This Framework should be used when creating or reviewing child life therapist position descriptions, or other role-related tasks and audits. By using this document, we work toward creating consistency in scope of practice across Australia. Should you have any questions about what you find here, please contact the ACLTA Executive via email at email@childlife.org.au

November 2014

NB In carrying out the duties defined here in the Scope of Practice, child life therapists who are members of ACLTA are expected to adhere to the ACLTA Code of Ethics. To download a copy of the code, visit www.childlife.org.au

Contents

Scope of Practice – Child Life Therapy Assistant	3
Scope of Practice – Child Life Therapist: Practitioner	5
Scope of Practice – Child Life Therapist: Senior Practitioner	8
Scope of Practice – Child Life Therapist: Head of Department/Manager	12

Scope of Practice – Child Life Therapy Assistant

Assistants in Child Life Therapy should have vocational qualifications (for example, a Cert III or IV in Allied Health Assistance or Child Care), that enables them to work under the supervision of a Child Life Therapist at practitioner level or above. Assistants support the daily workload of practitioners by providing basic play/recreation experiences and maintaining resources.

Area of Practice/Expertise	Examples
<i>Administrative Duties</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Attend to office and administrative duties as required - Where necessary, contribute to clinical notes and statistics data entry
<i>Communicate and collaborate with a multidisciplinary team</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Liaise with and work alongside a diverse range of healthcare workers: medical, nursing, allied health and others within the healthcare setting, to ensure comprehensive treatment for children/young people. Maintain a high level of communication and rapport with staff - Communicate effectively with, and participate as an active member of the relevant multidisciplinary teams, attending meetings as required
<i>Prepare, clean, store and maintain resources</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure maintenance and safety of resources, equipment and play/service areas. This includes compliance with Workplace Health & Safety, infection control guidelines, and general child safety - Cleaning resources to infection control standards - Discuss order needs with relevant staff members - Develop, prepare and 'finish' resources/activities as directed by child life therapists
<i>Provide and supervise developmental play opportunities for patients and siblings, under supervision of a CLT</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assist child life therapists to setup and supervise the playrooms on wards or other clinic/ward areas as directed to allow children access to play

	- Facilitate simple play experiences as directed by child life therapists
<i>Supervising and working alongside volunteers</i>	- Work in conjunction with volunteers in supervising play areas and cleaning resources, in accordance with facility policy
<i>Supporting families</i>	- Provide services with respect to patient diversities and in a non-discriminatory manner - Be considerate of the rights of patients and ensure confidentiality

Scope of Practice – Child Life Therapist: Practitioner (Level 1/2)

At the level of Practitioner (Level 1/2), Child Life Therapists are often working as a new graduate, or allocated to a ward. Many **sole practitioners** may also be employed at this level; however they may take on various tasks as listed at Senior Practitioner level from time to time in the course of their duties, as negotiated with their line manager.

At Practitioner level, Child Life Therapists should as a minimum requirement have a recommended undergraduate degree (see ACLTA Framework for Recommended Undergraduate Degrees for Child Life Therapists). They are competent in facilitating play for a wide range of children and young people; and have therapeutic/teaching skills that make them suitable to working with a varied caseload. They are also able to work confidently in a multidisciplinary team.

Area of Practice/Expertise	Examples
<i>Administrative Duties</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Attend to office and administrative duties as required - Create clear and timely entries to clinical notes/reports - Maintain statistics/data entry
<i>Clean and maintain resources and play areas</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure maintenance and safety of resources, equipment and play/service areas. This includes compliance with Workplace Health & Safety, infection control guidelines, and general child safety
<i>Communicate and collaborate with a multidisciplinary team</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Liaise with and work alongside a diverse range of healthcare workers: medical, nursing, allied health and others within the healthcare setting, to ensure comprehensive treatment for children/young people. Maintain a high level of communication and rapport with staff - Communicate effectively with, and participate as an active member of the relevant multidisciplinary teams, attending meetings as required
<i>Coordination of play spaces</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide group recreational/play activities to encourage socialisation for inpatients as appropriate, at bedsides and in shared playrooms/spaces

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Where applicable, maintain a non-threatening, child friendly, procedure-free area on allocated wards (often the playroom) - Contribute to planning for playrooms and shared activities for children and young people in healthcare facilities
<i>Distraction and teaching of positive coping skills</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide distraction and teach coping strategies to children/young people undergoing painful/invasive procedures, assisting them to manage their pain and their healthcare experience. This is done also in consultation with family members
<i>Education for healthcare workers and the community</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Represent their Service and the Child Life Therapy profession by preparing and providing in-services, training and education both within and external to hospital as required
<i>Facilitation of therapy sessions for children and young people - developmental, medical, preparation and/or therapeutic play</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Observe and assess a child/young person's emotional state and developmental abilities - Planning, implementing and evaluating age/developmentally appropriate play experiences play and leisure for children/young people, both individually and in groups. This may include experiences for patients, siblings and their families. These experiences may assist in normalising the healthcare environment - Support children through their medical interventions and assist in their ability to cope with illness, hospitalisation and ongoing health care experience. These experiences may include directed or non directed medical/preparation play, in liason with nursing/medical and other healthcare staff; or thearpeutic/development play tailored to multidisciplinary team treatment goals - Provide pre-admission education and/or tours, to alleviate fears and misconceptions associated with the unknown environment of a hospital - Effectively and efficiently manage an allocated client caseload and prioritise client needs

<p><i>Involvement in Quality improvement projects and research</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Child Life Therapy Practitioners may be involved in Identifying areas of clinical practice that could be developed and opportunities for clinical change; and have involvement in projects such as joint research, benchmarking etc
<p><i>Supervision of volunteers and students</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coordinate effective use of volunteers for preparation, cleaning and play opportunities for children/young people; provide supervision and orientation as appropriate - Supervise school-age and/or vocational education work experience students when requested; and have involvement with the placement of university students (usually in liaison with Senior Practitioner/Manager)
<p><i>Supporting families</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide information, referrals and education about hospital and community resources to children, young people and their families - Plan treatment with respect to patient diversities and provide a non-discriminatory service - Be considerate of the rights of patients, and ensure confidentiality
<p><i>Use and develop theoretical knowledge of child development, learning and the healthcare environment</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maintain and develop own set of clinical skills in line with current evidence-based practice - Participate in ongoing professional development, including ACLTA Accreditation - Engage in regular clinical supervision - Assist in the development of educational resources for health professionals, as well as for patients and families

Scope of Practice – Child Life Therapist: Senior Practitioner (Level 3/4)

At the level of Senior Practitioner (Level 3/4), Child Life Therapists are often employed as part of a larger Child Life Therapy service, or as a specialist for a particular caseload/service. They should, as a minimum requirement, have a recommended undergraduate degree (see ACLTA Framework for Recommended Undergraduate Degrees for Child Life Therapists); and extensive relevant experience. They are competent in facilitating therapeutic sessions for children and young people with complex needs. They are increasingly involved in promoting the service and profession; initiating quality improvement; and in some places assisting with team/service management.

Area of Practice/Expertise	Examples
<i>Administrative Duties</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Attend to office and administrative duties as required - Create clear and timely entries to clinical notes/reports - Maintain statistics/data entry
<i>Advising and supporting families</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide advice, information, referrals and education about healthcare and community resources to children, young people and their families - Plan treatment with respect to patient diversities and provide a non-discriminatory service - Be considerate of rights of patients, and ensure confidentiality
<i>Budgeting</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Senior Child Life Therapists may be involved in managing the supply and ordering of resources and/or overseeing a service budget (usually in liaison with a Head of Department/Manager)
<i>Clean, maintain and plan for resources/ play areas</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure maintenance and safety of resources, equipment and play/service areas. This includes compliance with Workplace Health & Safety, infection control guidelines, and general child safety - Appraise new resources/equipment and consumables to determine the suitability for use within the service - Liaise with teams to ensure appropriate play equipment and aids are provided

<p><i>Communicate and collaborate with a multidisciplinary team</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Liaise with and work alongside a diverse range of healthcare workers: medical, nursing, allied health and others within the hospital, to ensure comprehensive treatment for children/young people. Maintain a high level of communication and rapport with staff - Communicate effectively with, and participate as an active member of the relevant multidisciplinary teams, attending meetings as required - Consult with teams on regarding the progress of individual children, to ensure the continuity of care is maintained. Liaise and advocate within teams for specific patient psychosocial needs as appropriate
<p><i>Contribute to service planning and development</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Contribute to regular review of administrative processes, making recommendations where required for improvement - Develop and maintain service/local professional development and training programs for child life therapists - Maintain professional and collaborative relationships with colleagues at a local and national level - Contribute to the development of practice guidelines, protocols/audits and quality indicators - Contribute to the management of specific tasks or projects
<p><i>Coordination and development of play spaces</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide group recreational/play activities to encourage socialisation for inpatients as appropriate, at bedsides and in shared playrooms/spaces. These spaces should also take into consideration the specific developmental and therapeutic needs of individual children accessing the space - Where applicable, maintain a non-threatening, child friendly, procedure free area on allocated wards (often the playroom) - Facilitate planning for these playrooms and shared activities for children and young people in hospital

<p><i>Distraction and teaching of positive coping skills</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide distraction and teach coping strategies to children/young people undergoing complex/painful/invasive procedures, assisting them to manage their pain and the healthcare experience. This is done also in consultation with family members
<p><i>Education for, and consultation with, healthcare workers, external agencies and the community</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Represent their service and the Child Life Therapy profession by preparing and providing in-services, training and education both within the hospital/service and for external organisations - Act as a clinical resource and consultant to other departments, services and hospitals, on child life therapy, procedural support and play/leisure resources. This also may extend to providing education and guidance on a particular area of individual specialty in child life therapy - Present to/share with multidisciplinary colleagues on a regular basis (article reviews, current research, feedback etc)
<p><i>Facilitation of therapy sessions for children and young people - developmental, medical, preparation and/or therapeutic play</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Observe and assess a child/young person's emotional state and developmental abilities - Planning, implementing and evaluating age/developmentally appropriate play experiences play and leisure for children/young people, both individually and in groups. This may include experiences for patients, siblings and their families. These experiences may assist in normalising the healthcare environment - Support children through their medical interventions and assist in their ability to cope with illness, hospitalisation and ongoing health care experience. These experiences may include directed or non directed medical/preparation play, in liason with nursing/medical and other healthcare staff; or thearpeutic/development play tailored to multidisciplinary team treatment goals - Effectively and efficiently manage one or more allocated client caseloads (including specialties), and prioritise client needs - Provide pre-admission education and/or tours, to alleviate fears and misconceptions associated with the unknown environment of a hospital

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Demonstrate the application of specialised child life therapy knowledge when performing complex tasks. Undertake professional duties of an innovative, novel and/or critical nature without direction
<i>Quality improvement projects and research</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Child Life Therapist Senior Practitioners identify areas of clinical practice that could be developed and opportunities for clinical change. Initiate, lead, complete beneficial quality improvement or research activities
<i>Supervision and training of staff, volunteers and students</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide leadership, advice, guidance and assistance to other child life therapists, including facilitating the teaching of clinical techniques and service standards - Provide clinical supervision, support and guidance to other child life therapists in a sensitive and positive manner - Build knowledge and capacity within the team around clinical skills, and actively encourage the team to use you as a resource - Where applicable, assist Head of Department/Manager with recruitment process, induction and training of new staff - Coordinate effective use of volunteers for preparation, cleaning and play opportunities for children/young people; provide supervision and orientation as appropriate - Supervise and coordinate university placement students, and school-age work experience students
<i>Use and develop advanced theoretical knowledge of child development, learning and the healthcare environment</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maintain and develop own specialist skills in line with evidence-based practice - Participate in ongoing professional development, including ACLTA Accreditation - Engage in regular clinical supervision - Assist in the development of educational resources for health professionals, as well as for patients and families - Demonstrate advanced child life therapy reasoning skills that enhance the service's ability to manage more complex clients

Scope of Practice – Child Life Therapist: Head of Department/Manager

At the level of Head of Department/Manager, Child Life Therapists are employed to lead a Child Life Therapy or multidisciplinary service (often alongside Music Therapy and/or Art Therapy services). They should, as a minimum requirement, have a recommended undergraduate degree (see ACLTA Framework for Recommended Undergraduate Degrees for Child Life Therapists); extensive relevant experience; and potentially a postgraduate award/degree.

At Head of Department/Manager Level, Child Life Therapists have shown to be very competent in facilitating therapeutic sessions for children and young people with complex needs; however their overall ratio of clinical time is usually decreased due to managerial duties. This ratio varies widely between sites and may change often according to service needs.

As Head of Department/Manager, they are heavily involved in advocating for their service and profession at a local, regional and national level; are involved in quality improvement, research, committees and/or projects; and manage both the day-to-day and long-term needs of their team/service(s).

Area of Practice/Expertise	Examples
<i>Advising and supporting families</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide advice, information, referrals and education about hospital and community resources to children, young people and their families - Plan treatment with respect to patient diversities and provide a non-discriminatory service - Be considerate of the rights of patients and ensure confidentiality
<i>Budgeting and financial management</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Management of budgets and resource allocation, including responsibility for the acquisition of necessary equipment, goods and services required to adequately meet the clinical and administrative requirements of the service - Work alongside Hospital Foundations, Charities, and Public Relations Departments to complete submissions/grant proposals for funding, and around donations of goods in kind/equipment. Complete acquittal/other reports for funding received - Overall responsibility of submissions/requests for capital or minor works as applicable

<p><i>Clean, maintain and plan for resources/ play areas</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure maintenance and safety of resources, equipment and play/service areas. This includes compliance with Workplace Health & Safety, infection control guidelines, and general child safety - Appraise new resources/equipment and consumables to determine the suitability for use within the service - Liaise with teams to ensure appropriate play equipment and aids are provided
<p><i>Communicate and collaborate with a multidisciplinary team</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Liaise with and work alongside a diverse range of healthcare workers: medical, nursing, allied health and others within the healthcare setting, to ensure comprehensive treatment for children/young people. Maintain a high level of communication and rapport with staff - Communicate effectively with, and participate as an active member of the relevant multidisciplinary teams, attending meetings as required - Consult with teams on regarding the progress of individual children, to ensure the continuity of care is maintained. Liaise and advocate within teams for specific patient psychosocial needs as appropriate
<p><i>Coordinate service delivery to compliment other services available</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Liaise with and/or coordinate service delivery in partnership with other recreational/psychosocial support services within the healthcare setting, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hospital Recreational Facilities • Outpatient volunteer play programs • Clown Doctors • Animal companions and handlers • Gardens/Playgrounds • Starlight Foundation and Livewire • Hospital Schools • Social Workers, Occupational Therapists, Psychologists
<p><i>Coordination and development of play spaces</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide group recreational/play activities to encourage socialisation for inpatients as appropriate, at bedsides and in shared playrooms/spaces. These spaces should also take into consideration the specific developmental and therapeutic needs of individual children accessing the space - Where applicable, maintain a non-threatening, child friendly, procedure free area on allocated wards (often the playroom)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Facilitate planning for these playrooms and shared activities for children and young people in hospital
<i>Distraction and teaching of positive coping skills</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide distraction and teach coping strategies to children/young people undergoing complex/painful/invasive procedures, assisting them to manage their pain and their healthcare experience. This is done also in consultation with family members
<i>Education and Advocacy - consultation with healthcare workers, external agencies and the community</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Represent and advocate for their Service and the Child Life Therapy profession, by preparing and providing in-services, training and education both within the hospital/service and for external organizations - Provides a consultative resource as requested, including representation on relevant working parties and committees both internal and external to the health service - Advise other Departments and outreach hospitals/services on play and play equipment needs - Act as a clinical resource and consultant to other departments, services and hospitals, on child life therapy, procedural support and play/leisure resources. This also may extend to providing education and guidance on a particular area of individual specialty in child life therapy - Maintain professional and collaborative relationships with colleagues at a local, national and international level
<i>Facilitation of therapy sessions for children and young people - developmental, medical, preparation and/or therapeutic play</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Observe and assess a child/young person's emotional state and developmental abilities - Planning, implementing and evaluating age/developmentally appropriate play experiences play and leisure for children/young people, both individually and in groups. This may include experiences for patients, siblings and their families. These experiences may assist in normalising the healthcare environment - Support children through their medical interventions and assist in their ability to cope with illness, hospitalisation and ongoing health care experience. These experiences may include directed or non directed medical/preparation play, in liason with nursing/medical and other healthcare staff; or thearpeutic/development play tailored to multidisciplinary team treatment goals

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Effectively and efficiently manage one or more allocated client caseloads (including specialties), and prioritise client needs - Demonstrate the application of specialised child life therapy knowledge when performing complex tasks. Undertake professional duties of an innovative, novel and/or critical nature without direction
<p><i>Management/Direction of staff, volunteers and students</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Directly responsible for the management and supervision of staff within their Service/Department; assigns staff to caseloads and duties - Allocate referrals in collaboration with staff, according to the expertise of each therapist and workloads, in an equitable manner - Manage team member requests for leave (e.g. ADOs, sick leave) to ensure appropriate cover. Ensure annual leave is managed appropriately - Communicate regularly with department members around accountability; including chairing of minuted regular team meetings - Develop and maintain performance to ensure effective monitoring of the team's functions e.g. reviewing time management, workloads, professional standards, practice outcomes, facilitating professional behaviours and attitudes - Responsible for recruitment, selection and performance management of staff under direct supervision. Liaise with HR regarding staff contracts, recruitment requests, interviewing and induction of new employees. Coordinate and supervise the orientation and competency requirements of new staff - Provide leadership, advice, guidance and assistance to other child life therapists, including facilitating the teaching of clinical techniques and service standards - Provide clinical supervision, support and guidance to other child life therapists in a sensitive and positive manner. Ensure appropriate processes are in place to support clinical supervision for all staff - Develop and maintain service/local professional development and training programs for child life therapists

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Build knowledge and capacity within the team around clinical skills, and actively encourage the team to use you as a resource - Coordinate effective use of volunteers for preparation, cleaning and play opportunities for children/young people; provide supervision and orientation as appropriate - Supervise and coordinate university placement students; and school-age or vocational education work experience students
<i>Quality control of services, quality improvement projects and research</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify areas of clinical practice that could be developed and opportunities for clinical change. Initiate, lead, and complete beneficial quality improvement or research activities. Facilitate the involvement of department/service staff in research or quality improvement activities
<i>Service Planning, Development and Administrative duties</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Responsible for the strategic planning, implementation, evaluation and review of child life therapy services (and if applicable other recreational activities/therapeutic services) for patients, families and, in some facilities, their visitors. Develops and reviews practice guidelines, protocols/audits and quality indicators - Respond to and review customer feedback; maintain service and own statistics; manage administrative records, accreditation requirements and reports; all as required to evaluate efficiency and effectiveness - Create clear and timely entries to clinical notes/reports - Initiates and participates in risk management activities - Attend to other office and administrative duties as required
<i>Use and develop advanced theoretical knowledge of child development, learning and the healthcare environment</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maintain and develop own specialist skills in line with evidence-based practice - Participate in ongoing professional development, including ACLTA Accreditation - Engage in regular clinical supervision with establishment of own learning objectives as per service guidelines - Assist in the development of educational resources for health professionals, as well as for patients and parents/carers

	<p>- Demonstrate advanced child life therapy reasoning skills that enhance the service's ability to manage more complex clients</p>
--	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------