

Empowering Child Life Therapy in the workforce

The bespoke design of education to support new therapists

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Creating a workforce that is work ready

Child life therapists are bachelor qualified early years educators and are employed in Australia as Allied Health Professionals. Despite being an important profession in supporting children in the hospital environment, there is no formal certification or qualification in Australia to support the credentialing and professional identity of child life therapists (CLT). The impact is twofold: 1) there is no formal workforce pipeline within this crucial professional group in children's care and 2) the scope of practice can be undefined. Recognizing this gap and impact on workforce supply, Monash Children's Hospital collaborated with partners to build interactive modules based on best practice education principles that met professional scope of practice standards as defined by the Association of Child Life Therapists Australia.



Figure 1: Ambiguity in the Child Life Therapy workforce pipeline



Design of twelve work ready clinical modules

The design process (figure 2) highlighted challenges of the previous training program (figure 3) that the new training program sought to address.

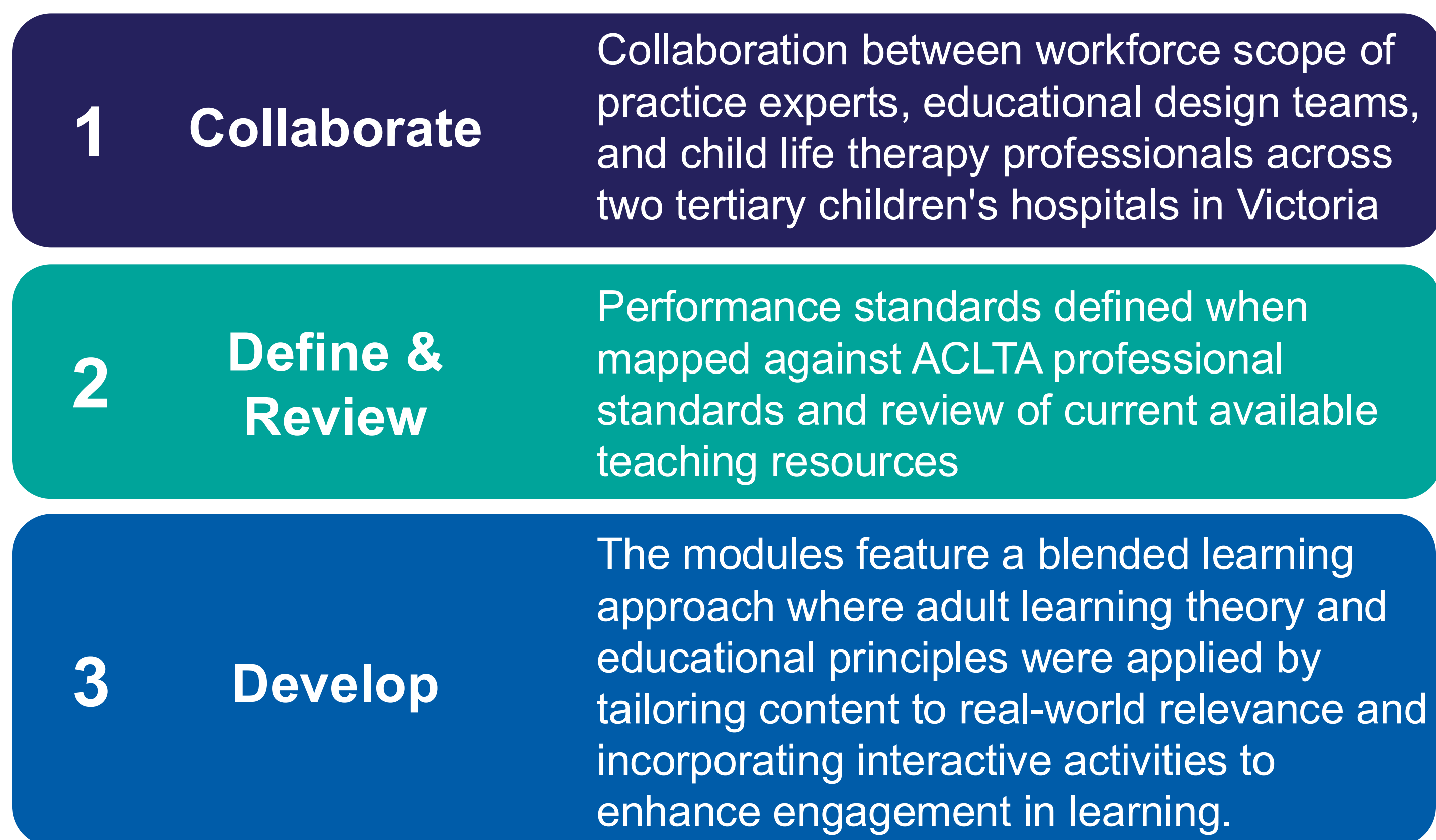


Figure 2: Design process for clinical modules



Figure 3: Review of training program

Overview of the new program

The modules are structured to facilitate building foundational knowledge to lead to higher level application and implementation of skills in the key work areas of child life therapists at Monash Health.



Figure 4: Modules in the program

What have our employees said?

It has been a longstanding issue for this workforce that whilst their knowledge of child development and behaviour is well grounded, their medical knowledge was sparse due to lack of hospital experience prior to employment. The development of these modules has ensured that this gap was bridged, and that child life therapists are hospital ready.

Child life therapists are actively engaged in advocating for children's rights, and these modules reinforced the alignment between their work and these essential principles. Employees shared that new learnings from the program were helpful to their orientation in to working in the hospital context.

We also heard from operational management that the structure, consistency and visibility of this training program brings increased confidence of colleagues to support the transferability of this workforce's education skills to the healthcare setting

The impact on our senior therapists since its introduction has also been noted, with reduced time and coordination required to in the process of onboarding new staff. There is now an increased oversight on the theoretical development of new staff's knowledge, which in turn frees the senior clinicians time to prioritise supervision, reflective practice and application of skills on the job

...how mindful we've got to be about children, their voice and rights...was really good to keep this at the forefront of my learning and practice

'[The modules] brought [all my previous studying and training] all together and made it relevant to the role.'

There were things, particularly the medical aspects, where there was a lot of learning for me...

We wish to acknowledge Royal Children's Hospital for sharing their teaching resources in our initial scoping phase.



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