

## Child life therapy

### Workforce modelling factsheet

Child life therapy is an allied health profession which focuses on supporting, educating and empowering children and young people through their health care journey. Child life therapists use evidence-based and developmentally responsive interventions to reduce the stress, pain and anxiety that can be associated with hospitalisation, thus reducing the risk of paediatric medical traumatic stress. Child life therapists tailor play-based interventions and non-pharmacological strategies to support preparation and procedural care needs. In partnership with children and families these coping strategies can be developed to improve lifelong outcomes.



### Workforce characteristics for NSW Health child life therapy workforce in 2040



**43**

Headcount



**29.0**

Work hours per week



**29.0**

Years average age



**3.4%**

Aboriginal workforce target



Demand is expected to grow **1.4%** (low demand scenario) to **1.5%** (high demand scenario).

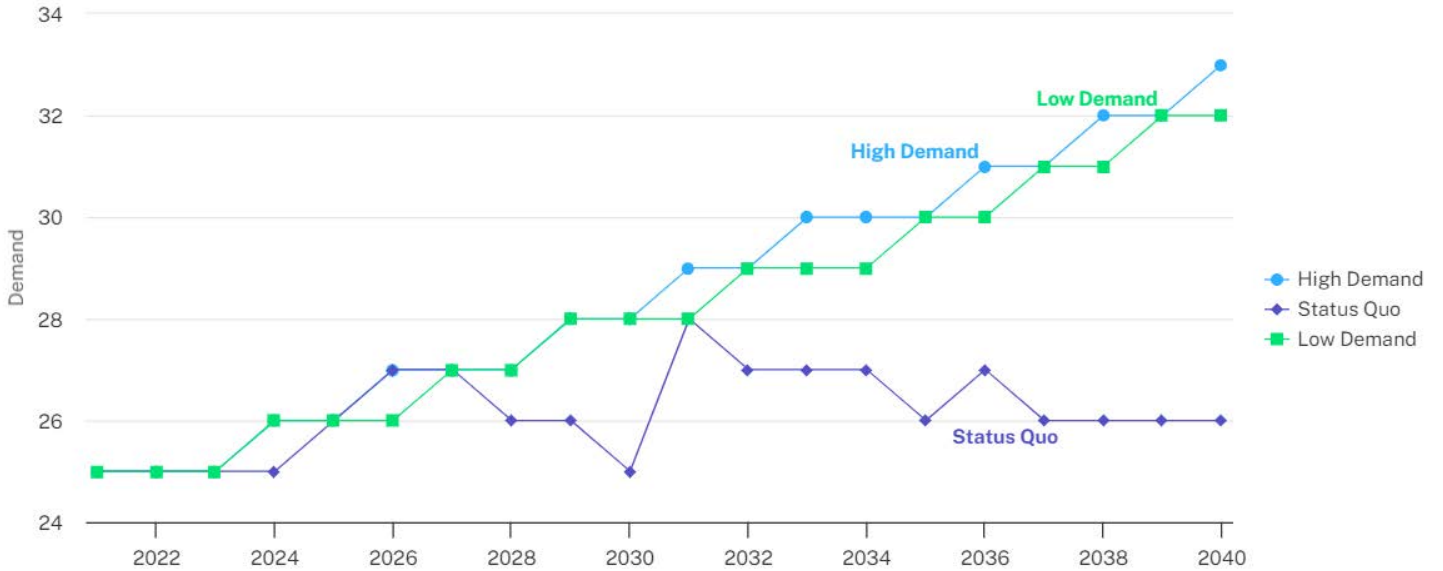
Workforce modelling indicates the need to grow the NSW child life therapy workforce by around **1 to 2** new professionals per annum to meet community need in 2040 across both demand scenarios.

**REASONABLE**  
CAREER  
OPPORTUNITIES

### Notes

- Data included is limited to the workforce employed under the relevant health professional award.
- Specialty health networks are not displayed geographically in the workforce distribution maps.
- LHD/SHN may engage in sessional arrangements in selected circumstances.
- Workforce that cannot be aligned to a physical location have been attributed to a pre-determined facility within each LHD/N. This may impact on Headcount shown at these facilities within the distribution map.
- NSW Health does not make any representations or warranties whether expressed or implied with respect to the accuracy and completeness of the information contained in the fact sheet.

## Projected FTE growth for NSW Health child life therapy workforce to 2040



## Workforce characteristics for NSW Health child life therapy workforce in 2021



**32**  
Headcount



**26.7**  
Work hours per week



**43.9**  
Years average age



**96.9%**  
Female



**9.4%**  
Aged 60+



**3.1%**  
Aboriginal

### Metropolitan Sydney



**25**  
Headcount



**28.5**  
Work hours per week



**43.1**  
Years average age



**9.4%**  
Aged 60+

### Non-Metropolitan Sydney



**7**  
Headcount



**20.3**  
Work hours per week



**47.3**  
Years average age



**0%**  
Aged 60+

## Child life therapy junior entrant positions into NSW Health



2017  
3

2018  
5

2019  
2

2020  
2

2021  
4

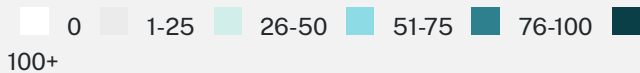
## Workforce distribution for NSW Health child life therapy workforce in 2021

The geographic distribution of the public workforce by local health district/network, by facility and per 100,000 population.



### Legends

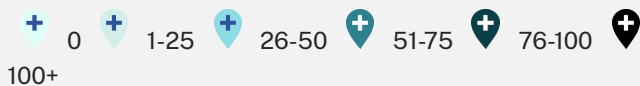
#### Per local health district



#### Per 100,000 population



#### Per facility



### Other networks

- Sydney Children's Hospitals: 20 to 50 | 1 to 2 per 100,000
- Enable NSW: 0 to 10 | 0 per 100,000
- Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health: 0 | 0 per 100,000

## Workforce considerations

- Headcount may not represent child life therapy workforce due to instances of child life therapists being under an alternate award classification including Health Education Officer – Non-Graduate, Senior Health Education Officer – Non-Graduate, Play Leader. This factor impacts headcount number in the metropolitan and non-metropolitan locations.
- Population demographic changes and increasing incidence of complex conditions and care needs as a result of advances in technology and increased survival rates of premature babies increases demand for child life therapy services.
- Temporary funding initiatives / positions impacts on workforce stability and influences workforce movement.
- Ensuring sustainable child life therapy training pipelines appropriate for the emerging needs of NSW Health will be a key enabler for the profession and services available for the community. This will rely on partnership arrangements with education providers.
- Lifting the profile of child life therapy is an important strategy. Allied Health Assistants, service development roles and educator positions may advocate the value of the child life therapy profession, increase top of scope work and consequently grow and retain the child life therapy workforce as needed.
- Future models of care that include child life therapy workforce in emergency care, Hospital In The Home (HITH) programs and outpatient care will contribute valuably to increased system demand and assist in preventing avoidable hospital admissions.