

Autonomous, Diverse and Focused Healthcare for the Young Dancer



Elmhurst Ballet School students by Andy Ross

For young trainee dancers, healthcare is often a frustration with the limitations of many off-the-shelf insurance schemes. Injury and other health issues are part and parcel of a dancer's life. It is crucial that there is good support for students in vocational dance settings to give them the very best start to becoming a healthy professional dancer.

At Elmhurst Ballet School we have traditionally met students' healthcare needs by engaging with conventional private insurance companies. This was simply not meeting the needs of the student dancers or giving them the quickest and most cost effective access to healthcare such as physiotherapy.

We have found Elmhurst's new approach to healthcare has helped our students access high quality care quickly and efficiently, allowing them to make the most of their training with a safe, robust, economical support system.

- Jessica Wheeler, Principal, Elmhurst Ballet School

By the start of the 2015-16 academic year, Elmhurst's Health and Wellbeing Team were becoming increasingly frustrated with the restrictions placed on them by these insurance providers. Costs were increasing, whilst the services on offer to the students were decreasing or offered with greater restrictions. We found that it was almost impossible to access private support for those students with mental health difficulties and recurring injuries and this created unnecessary stress and difficulties for students, parents and staff.

We needed a different model to support the dancers. Initially we explored working with one of the larger insurance companies to develop a policy specifically aimed at meeting the unique needs of young elite ballet students, but we were unable to raise any interest in this proposal. Our 'eureka' moment finally came during a meeting with the school's governing body where the idea of a Health Trust was raised. With the expert guidance and administration of the HCB Group, and Healix Health Services, the idea of developing the Young Performers' Health Trust Scheme evolved. The feasibility assessment together with the planning process took the school approximately 18 months to complete and involved much consultation with parents and staff. The scheme was universally supported by parents. The next phase involved a trial version launched in April 2018 that came with some trepidation.

Although we had done everything we could to ensure the Health Trust succeeded, it was still a huge step into the unknown as no one had developed a Trust like this within a school before, let alone a vocational school. We had also cut our ties with the insurance companies we had previously used, so there was no way back.

The trial period of the Scheme was very successful but came with a steep learning curve for the departments involved in the running and administration of the Trust. There was a huge responsibility, particularly on the Health and Wellbeing team to ensure that funds were appropriately allocated and within the prespecified budget. It is worth noting that the Health Trust comes with an increased administration workload for the school. This includes tracking and monitoring of treatment and invoicing, however, we found that this workload was outweighed by the benefits of this innovative approach to healthcare.

So what are the benefits? Firstly we have found ourselves empowered with autonomous decision-making on fund allocation. We are now able to negotiate with healthcare providers to get the best price for their services and have been able to diversify and expand the expertise within the Health and Wellbeing team which now includes a specialist Adolescent Mental Health Nurse.

As indicated from the Table of Benefits (see right), our students now have access to more generous allowances for physiotherapy with this being more than doubled against that of traditional policies. Importantly for our parents the Trust does not require an excess payment, giving an immediate saving of approximately £100 and therefore speedy access to treatment. Finally, as we reflect back on our first full academic year of running the Young Performers' Health Trust Scheme we find ourselves feeling proud of the risks we took to develop this pioneering product. Elmhurst Ballet School finally has the bespoke policy it always desired – a truly focused healthcare model that meets the needs of our talented dance students. Elmhurst has led the way and we hope we have inspired other vocational schools and performance organisations to follow. Looking ahead we have many more plans to develop the healthcare provision, and coupled with our innovations in injury prevention, this really is a good time to be a healthy dancer at Elmhurst Ballet School.

Table of Benefits

Outpatient Investigations and Treatment	Level of Cover
Outpatient consultations with a specialist following GP referral (outside of term time) and Elmhurst GP referral (during term time)	Full Cover - within reasonable and customary guidelines
Outpatient diagnostic tests and investigations following specialist or Elmhurst GP referral	
Outpatient physiotherapy, outpatient preventative physiotherapy and acupuncture when taken with the Elmhurst school appointed physiotherapist, following referral from the Health and Wellbeing Team	£500 per trust year
Outpatient physiotherapy on specialist referral	10 sessions per trust year
Outpatient sports massage following referral from the Elmhurst Health and Wellbeing Team	6 sessions
MRI scans on Elmhurst GP or specialist referral CT and PET scans on specialist referral	Full cover - with an agreed provider
Hospital charges for outpatient surgical procedures	Full cover - within reasonable and customary guidelines
Outpatient Mental Health Cover	12 sessions per trust year
Inpatient and Day case Treatment	Level of Cover
Specialist fees for inpatient or day case treatment	Full cover - within reasonable and customary guidelines
Hospital charges for inpatient and day case treatment	Full cover
Parent accommodation	Full cover
Mental Health Treatment - Inpatient	£10,000 per trust year
Additional Benefits	Level of Cover
NHS Cash Benefit	£100 each night or day up to a maximum of £1,000 per trust year

FURTHER INFORMATION

www.elmhurstdance.co.uk/Fitness-and-Health*

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