



Students listen to the presentation by Natasha Devon, co-founder of the Self Esteem Team.

Pictures: DENISE BRADLEY

Vital life lessons for 500 teens at school's mental health workshops

Hundreds of teenagers talked body image, social media and self-confidence at a school workshop designed to boost their wellbeing.

On Monday, almost 500 year nine, 13 to 14-year-old, pupils from the Norwich School, Jane Austen College in Norwich, Hobart High School in Loddon and Framingham Earl High School met in Norwich for the mental health event.

Norwich School, which hosted the day, welcomed the Self Esteem Team, a movement founded by Natasha Devon, Nadia Mendoza and Grace Barrett to educate pupils, teachers and parents

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about mental health and body image issues in young people.

Over the day, the trio covered issues including exam stress, body image and self-esteem in three different workshops held at the Cathedral and in school buildings.

Ms Devon, one of the cofounders, said: "All of us have experience of mental illness and I didn't really feel like my mental health teaching at school got it right. It didn't focus on how it starts and what leads to it, and we

focus on the here and now and what's happening in pupils' lives."

Ms Devon's first session focused on body image and social media, and covered why society viewed certain body types in certain ways: "Fifty-two per cent of 12 to 14-year-old girls avoid doing certain school activities because they don't like how they look," she said. "And 11pc say they never raise their hand in class.

"There's a lot of people out there who don't think body image should be spoken about in schools - that it's for learning maths and science. My message is if someone doesn't feel good about themselves, they won't be

engaging with those subjects."

Nicola Hill, acting deputy headteacher at the school and event organiser, said: "Mental health is such a key issue for young people in 21st century, especially with the impact that social media has. It very much affects people from all backgrounds and we wanted to provide a collaborative event for schools around the region. [The workshop] was about ensuring that information from experts is heard and that we provide practical strategies for coping with issues."

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Factfile

Self Esteem Team

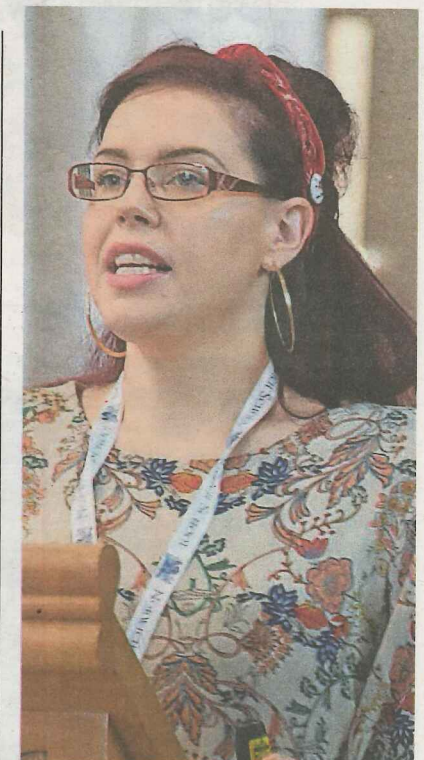
Since its inception in 2013, the Self Esteem Team has been keen to focus on issues affecting boys as well as girls.

Mental health problems among boys and men are a focus for many charities, with studies repeatedly showing that men feel less able to open up about issues than women.

Miss Mendoza said the group is now asked to hold body confidence workshops for boys more frequently, while Ms Devon said they were one of the first organisations in the country to do so.

Miss Mendoza said: "When we first started it was largely year nine pupils we were speaking to about body image and mental health, but that has shifted now.

"We're often talking about exam stress and we are getting more and more requests from primary schools to hold workshops there, as well as for more boy-specific body confidence workshops," added Miss Mendoza.



Natasha Devon, of the Self Esteem Team.