

Information on single-sex sessions

Is it acceptable to run female-only sports sessions?

Yes

The Association of Colleges Sport, Sport England and Women in Sport fully support the opportunity for all people to participate in sport.

Running female-only sports sessions is commonplace across schools, Local Authorities, gyms and other environments where sport and physical activity is on offer.

It is perfectly acceptable to offer female-only sessions – they are regularly offered when take-up from females in the existing sport provision is low.

In England, women and girls take part in less sport than men and boys.

With a number of colleges raising the issue of Senior Leadership Teams being uncomfortable with female-only sessions taking place, the advice from the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) and the Equality Act 2010 highlights that it is *not* discriminatory to offer this provision, if there is a need for it to take place.

The legal position – a little more detail

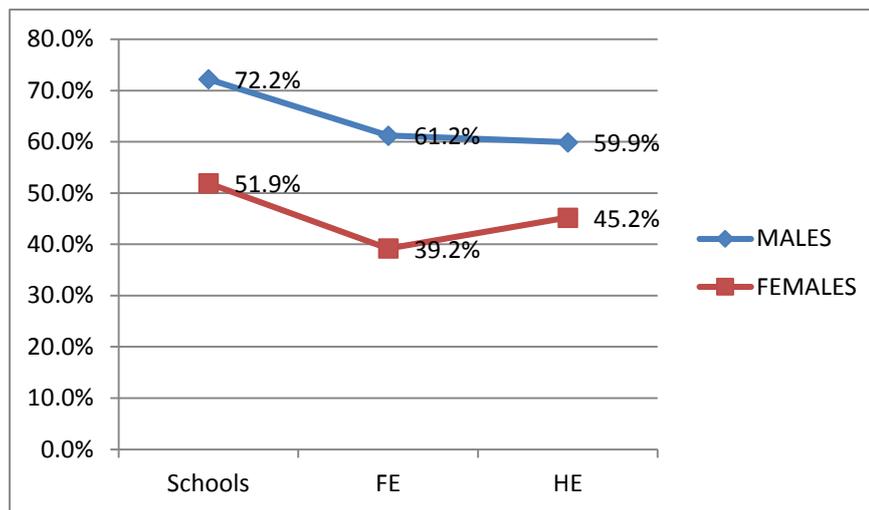
The [Equality and Human Rights Commission](#) make it clear that as a service provider you are allowed to provide single-sex services (services just for men or just for women) where:

- this is objectively justified on the grounds of low participation in sport in one gender
- only men or only women require the service
- there is joint provision for both sexes but that is not enough on its own
- if the service were provided for men and women jointly, it would not be as effective and the extent to which each sex requires the service makes it not reasonably practicable to provide separate services for each sex
- the services may be used by more than one person at the same time and a woman might reasonably object to the presence of a man (or vice versa)
- the services may involve physical contact between a user and someone else, and that other person may reasonably object if the user is of the opposite sex.

The EHRC give an example of how this could be applied: ‘in a commercial gym and swimming pool, women-only swimming sessions could be provided as well as mixed sessions.’

What are the participation levels of males and females in education?

According to the Association of Colleges Sport Survey 2012/13 there is a big gap between male and female student participation in colleges: 69% male v 31% female. This is also confirmed by Sport England's Active People Survey as shown below.



Data source: Sport England Active People Survey 7

We know we can deliver single-sex sessions, but should we?

Taking into account the wealth of positive health and social outcomes linked to sports participation, it is the responsibility of educational institutions as well as partners in the sports sector, to offer a varied menu of sporting opportunities that will get more girls taking part in physical activity. If offering female-only sessions is what is needed to close the gap between male and female participation rates, it is perfectly acceptable to offer single-sex sessions.

Useful websites:

Sport England: www.sportengland.org

Association of Colleges Sport: www.aocsport.co.uk

Women in Sport: www.womeninsport.org