

Title of Proposal: Women Only Gym Sessions

Background

1. CitySport opened for students, staff and the wider community in February of last year.
2. CitySport offer no women-only gym sessions or classes.
3. According to recent studies, men can be put off by female-dominated groups and find it difficult to speak openly about their weight in front of women. In contrast, the camaraderie, blokey banter and competitive team spirit of an all-male group seems to get markedly better results, with those attending men-only slimming classes losing twice as much weight as men in mixed groups.
4. A new report from the International Health, Racquet & Sportsclub Association found that though gym membership is almost evenly split between the sexes, each gravitates toward different things: women are significantly more likely to go for group classes, Pilates, stretching and yoga; whilst men are more inclined to use gym machines, handle free weights, and play sports.
5. Over half (56%) of women polled by the women resource centre would choose a women-only gym over a mixed gym. Only 28% of women would choose a mixed gym and 16% didn't know. When asked an open-ended question respondents who stated they would choose a women-only gym over a mixed gym respondents were able to give multiple reasons. The most frequently cited reasons for choosing a women-only gym were: • Feel more comfortable (127 responses/cited by 23% of respondents) • Feel less self-conscious (105/19%) • Personal preference (98/17%) • Not have men watch you, or look at your body (82/15%) • Not feel intimidated or sexually harassed by men (56/10%)

Principles

1. Women-only services are needed and wanted by women and have significant, positive impacts on their service users. The value and benefits of women-only services are many - women feel safe, supported and comfortable using women-only services. They become empowered, increase their confidence and self-esteem, feel less marginalised and more able to express themselves.
2. Women want to have the choice to access women-only services. Many women would not access mixed services, even if there were no appropriate women-only services available.
3. Despite the evidence of the significant value and benefits of women-only services, they are misunderstood and disregarded.

4. A benefit of single sex gym classes is the opportunity to network and mix with women—the same way men have always made connections on the golf course and ball court. Leanne Shear, cofounder of Uplift Studios, a New York City-based gym for women, hosts super popular "workout and wine" events and happy hours after classes, giving members an opportunity to bond on a professional or personal level. "It levels the playing field and creates a sense of community," says Shear.
5. "Many women just don't feel comfortable working out around men; they feel judged or intimidated," adds Shear. That can keep you from reaching your fitness goals.

Idea/Proposal

1. Work with CitySport to see to what extent women only classes is possible.
2. Raise awareness and promote the benefits of women only gym sessions and classes.
3. If necessary, begin a campaign to get women only gym sessions and classes.

Bibliography

<http://thewomensresourcecentre.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/whywomenonly.pdf>