# Natalee Barnett’s women-only gym sparks fresh debate after UK Supreme Court ruling



In early March 2025, fitness influencer Natalee Barnett made headlines with her announcement regarding the opening of her women’s only gym in London, named ‘The Girl’s Spot’. In a video shared on X, Barnett declared her new gym would exclusively serve “biological women,” marking a significant departure from her earlier commitment to inclusivity towards transgender women. This shift has sparked intense debate within both social media circles and broader societal discussions about gender and inclusivity.

The backdrop to Barnett’s decision is the April ruling by the UK Supreme Court, which has clarified that, under the Equality Act 2010, the definition of a woman relates strictly to biological sex. This ruling arose from a legal challenge led by For Women Scotland, contesting guidance from the Scottish government that recognised trans women with gender recognition certificates as women for public board quotas. While this decision has been received positively by some advocacy groups focused on women’s rights, it has raised alarms among transgender activists, who fear it could exacerbate discrimination and further marginalise an already vulnerable community.

In her initial video announcement, Barnett linked her trans-exclusionary stance to a personal experience of having been sexually assaulted in a gym, claiming her decision was not easy and had been contemplated for years. This rationale has drawn significant criticism, as many argue it perpetuates harmful stereotypes that equate trans women with danger. Statistics reveal a troubling reality; a report by Galop indicated that in 2020, 7% of trans individuals experienced sexual assault compared to 2.9% of the cisgender population in England and Wales. This glaring disparity highlights the ongoing victimisation faced by trans women, challenging Barnett's narrative that they pose a threat to cisgender women in communal spaces.

Despite the backlash, a segment of Barnett's audience has expressed support for her decision, arguing that the gym provides a necessary refuge for women who want privacy while training, particularly for those from religious backgrounds. Some commenters lamented their feeling of losing spaces to the inclusion of trans women, echoing sentiments rooted in misconceptions about who constitutes a ‘real’ woman. Such views ignore the reality that access to single-sex spaces should not be perceived as a zero-sum game. Moreover, the notion that trans women take away opportunities from cisgender women is fundamentally flawed, as it undermines the dignity and rights of trans individuals.

Barnett had previously marketed her gym as an inclusive space for all women, raising significant funds through GoFundMe to support its establishment. This apparent reversal has led to accusations that she misled her backers. Critics argue that her current exclusionary stance not only betrays her earlier promises but also contributes to a broader trend of diminishing trans rights under the guise of women’s safety. As the conversation around gender inclusivity continues to evolve, Barnett's actions have inadvertently fostered a climate where misinformation thrives, potentially undermining hard-won rights for trans individuals.

Looking ahead, questions linger regarding the enforceability of Barnett's policy. How will she decide who qualifies as a 'biological woman'? Such questions highlight the practical challenges of policing gender identity in a gym setting, raising concerns about discrimination and the arbitrary judgement of patrons. Furthermore, the Supreme Court ruling might bolster her confidence, but it also invites scrutiny over the implications of exclusionary practices in commercial ventures.

As Barnett progresses towards opening ‘The Girl’s Spot’, debates surrounding the intersection of gender, safety, and inclusivity remain unresolved. The ruling from the Supreme Court serves as a legal lever for those holding exclusionary views, yet it also challenges advocates of inclusivity to recommit to affirming the identities and rights of all individuals, regardless of their gender identity. In this charged environment, the conversation surrounding trans women in women’s spaces is not merely about gym access; it reflects wider societal attitudes and the ongoing struggle for recognition and equality.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://roarnews.co.uk/2025/nataleebfitness-and-the-danger-of-excluding-trans-women-from-womens-only-spaces/), [[2]](https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/uks-highest-court-rule-definition-woman-under-equality-laws-2025-04-15/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[3]](https://www.ft.com/content/1e87c431-23e9-4318-954e-56d8fa92f5ef), [[4]](https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/4/17/trans-women-arent-legally-women-what-the-uk-supreme-court-ruling-means), [[5]](https://www.politico.eu/article/uk-supreme-court-rules-woman-means-biological-female-trans-gender-recognition/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://roarnews.co.uk/2025/nataleebfitness-and-the-danger-of-excluding-trans-women-from-womens-only-spaces/), [[6]](https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2025/04/britain-rules-woman-supreme-court/682511/?utm_source=apple_news)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://roarnews.co.uk/2025/nataleebfitness-and-the-danger-of-excluding-trans-women-from-womens-only-spaces/), [[7]](https://www.clydeco.com/en/insights/2025/04/supreme-court-rules-that-the-legal-definition)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://roarnews.co.uk/2025/nataleebfitness-and-the-danger-of-excluding-trans-women-from-womens-only-spaces/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/uks-highest-court-rule-definition-woman-under-equality-laws-2025-04-15/> - In April 2025, the UK Supreme Court ruled that the legal definition of 'woman' under the Equality Act 2010 refers to biological sex, excluding transgender women. This decision stemmed from a legal challenge by For Women Scotland, which opposed Scottish government guidance that classified trans women with gender recognition certificates as women. The ruling clarifies that single-sex services can lawfully exclude trans women, a decision welcomed by women's rights advocates but raising concerns among transgender campaigners about potential increased discrimination.
3. <https://www.ft.com/content/1e87c431-23e9-4318-954e-56d8fa92f5ef> - The UK Supreme Court's April 2025 ruling determined that under the Equality Act 2010, the legal definition of a 'woman' is based on biological sex, excluding transgender women. This decision originated from a legal dispute between For Women Scotland and the Scottish Government over a 2018 bill aimed at increasing female representation on public boards, which included trans women in its definition of women. The ruling has sparked political debate, with some parties supporting the decision while others express concern over its implications for trans rights.
4. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/4/17/trans-women-arent-legally-women-what-the-uk-supreme-court-ruling-means> - In April 2025, the UK Supreme Court ruled that the legal definition of a 'woman' under the Equality Act 2010 refers to biological sex, excluding transgender women. This decision followed a legal challenge by For Women Scotland against the Scottish government's inclusion of trans women with gender recognition certificates in the definition of women for public board quotas. The ruling has significant implications for the operation of single-sex spaces and services, raising concerns about potential increased exclusion of trans individuals from essential services and spaces.
5. <https://www.politico.eu/article/uk-supreme-court-rules-woman-means-biological-female-trans-gender-recognition/> - The UK Supreme Court's April 2025 ruling established that the legal definition of a 'woman' under the Equality Act 2010 is based on biological sex, excluding transgender women. This decision arose from a legal challenge by For Women Scotland against the Scottish government's inclusion of trans women with gender recognition certificates in the definition of women for public board quotas. The ruling has far-reaching implications for the provision of single-sex spaces and other gender-specific public services across Scotland, England, and Wales.
6. <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2025/04/britain-rules-woman-supreme-court/682511/?utm_source=apple_news> - In April 2025, the UK Supreme Court ruled that for the purposes of the Equality Act 2010, the terms 'man,' 'woman,' and 'sex' refer to biological sex, affirming that sex is binary. The ruling clarifies the legal distinction between sex and gender identity in cases involving anti-discrimination law, especially in women-only spaces like shelters, hospital wards, and prisons. While it allows the exclusion of trans women from such spaces, it maintains protections for transgender individuals under other provisions of the Equality Act.
7. <https://www.clydeco.com/en/insights/2025/04/supreme-court-rules-that-the-legal-definition> - The UK Supreme Court's April 2025 ruling determined that under the Equality Act 2010, the terms 'man,' 'woman,' and 'sex' refer to biological sex, excluding transgender women. This decision arose from a legal challenge by For Women Scotland against the Scottish government's inclusion of trans women with gender recognition certificates in the definition of women for public board quotas. The ruling emphasizes the importance of a clear and consistent interpretation of the Equality Act to ensure that groups sharing a protected characteristic can be identified and their obligations complied with.