

Battered men get their own refuge

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Britain's first safe house for battered men is to open in secret over the New Year. The refuge, in south-west England, will shelter men and their children who have been physically or emotionally abused by a female partner.

According to the most recent British Crime Survey, for 1996, 4.2 per cent of men and an equal proportion of women said they had been assaulted by a current or former partner in the previous year. In those incidents involving injury just under 50 per cent of women were hurt, and 31 per cent of men.

Men's rights groups argue, however, that the male figure could be even higher because men are reluctant to admit being victims. They say at least one in every six incidents of domestic violence - around 18 per cent - are committed by women on men.

The new refuge, which is already sheltering two battered men, has a family bedroom, a living room, access to a bathroom and kitchen and is staffed by volunteers.

It was welcomed by David Smith, 46, who has three small children. 'I've been emotionally abused by my wife since I married her over six years ago. People see her in public and think she's wonderful, but they don't see the private side to her,' he said.

'I didn't see her angry temper until we were married. It's awful. She loses her temper a lot and uses foul language in front of the children. You can't stop her once she's started. I've asked her to go for counselling but she won't.

<http://society.guardian.co.uk/socialcare/story/0,7890,1111699,00.html>

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