

Domestic abuse victims urged to come forward



Housing boss, Cllr Howard Doe, lays the first brick at St Mary's Island development

Work on homes for the elderly

Work has started on a £10.4 million housing scheme for the elderly on St Mary's Island.

Atlas Place, will provide 62 homes and will include a restaurant, hairdressing salon and landscaped gardens.

The first brick was laid by Cllr Howard Doe, Medway Council's housing boss, who was joined by representatives from developers Countryside Properties and island residents.

Cllr Doe said: "We must provide for the older people in our society."

The Extra Care scheme provides personalised care packages for those who need it and is funded through a combination of a Homes and Communities Agency grant and the housing association, AmicusHorizon.

Mark Miles-Lea, a director of AmicusHorizon, said: "This is our fourth such scheme, so we are well experienced in developing these type of homes. Above all, Atlas Place will provide good quality, purpose-built homes for 'local people' The mixture of one and two bedroom apartments will be accessible for wheelchair users and equipped with the latest technology. Properties will be available for rent and shared ownership from March 2018.

A year after new laws were introduced to help combat controlling behaviour by abusive partners, latest figures reveal more than one crime a week is reported to police in Medway.

The first anniversary of the new law, Controlling and Coercive Behaviour, under the Serious Crime Act 2015 was on December 28. It was brought in to help police protect victims of domestic abuse.

Each year in Medway police receive more than 6,000 reports of domestic abuse and Medway Council Labour group leader Cllr Vince Maple thinks lots of incidents still go unreported.

Cllr Maple, who is also an ambassador for the White Ribbon Campaign, said: "This law is a good step in ensuring that people are protected from this unacceptable and illegal behaviour.

"Across Medway there are over 6,000 reports a year of domestic violence and domestic abuse and it is widely acknowledged there is still under reporting.

"I would urge anyone who is feeling that they are a victim of controlling coercive behaviour to contact the police."

The White Ribbon campaign is part of a global movement to put a stop to male violence against women and girls.

DCI Susie Harper from the Kent Police's public protection unit said: "Domestic abuse takes many forms and spans all of society groupings; it is not just physi-

'It is widely acknowledged there is still under reporting'

cal violence. "Emotional and controlling behaviour can cause significant harm to a victim, and we will do everything to protect and support victims of domestic abuse.

"We welcome any new legislation that increases our capability to support victims of crime and would urge anyone who is a victim of domestic abuse to report it to either the police, or one of the many support organisations that are available.

"We will all work together to try and achieve the best outcome for you and your family and protect you all from harm."

People can seek help from the domestic abuse services website for Kent and Medway or they can visit the One Stop Shop, Sunlight Centre, Richmond Road, Gillingham every Tuesday 9.30am and 11.30am for advice and support around domestic abuse.

■ Visit www.domesticabuseservices.org.uk or for more information about the White Ribbon Campaign, see www.whiteribboncampaign.co.uk/aboutus.



Labour group leader, Vince Maple



DCI Susie Harper

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