

## Herts one of the safest places in UK, says report

HERTFORDSHIRE is still one of the safest places to live in the country, according to the latest Government figures.

The British Crime Survey (BCS), which measures people's experiences of crime, found there were fewer offences in the East of England region than anywhere else in England and Wales during the past year.

Hertfordshire has a recorded number of 93 crimes per 1,000 people for the year up to the end of March 2005, which is significantly less than the national average of 105.

According to the BSC, overall crime in UK has fallen by seven per cent and the number of offences recorded by the police has also decreased by six percent. This can be seen most clearly in a decrease in domestic burglary and car theft.

Hertfordshire has seen a 26 per cent decrease in car crime between September 2004 and March 2005, since the police launched Operation Tarantula.

Figures also show that people in the county are less worried about being a victim of crime than elsewhere in the country and are confident in the local police.

Ian Laidlaw-Dickson, chairman of Hertfordshire Police Authority, said: "We really do seem to be turning the corner in terms of bringing offenders to justice in the county and reducing some of the key crime areas such as home burglaries, robbery and vehicle crime.

"However we should not rest on our laurels — there is still a great deal to do to make Hertfordshire even safer."

# Liz getting to grips with new bionic arm

By ALICE AINSWORTH

ainswortha@hertsessexnews.co.uk



**IT WORKS:** Liz Bond with physiotherapist Glyn Blakey and the device which has helped her regain the use of her hands

A BIZARRE-looking mechanical arm is the revolutionary tool for spinal injury patients — and a Braughing mum who broke her neck in three places was the first in the world to test it.

Liz Bond, 57, of Ford Street, crushed her vertebrae when she was thrown from her horse two years ago.

She likened her injuries to those of the late *Superman* actor Christopher Reeve, but whereas his spinal cord severed fully, hers was incomplete. The accident left the mother of five unable to walk or clasp objects properly.

"In hospital it was my hands they were really concerned about and I was thinking, 'I don't care about my hands, I just want to walk'," she explained.

"But when I got home it was things like doing up zips and buttons and getting money out of my purse that was the most trouble."

Fortunately for Liz, her physiotherapist at Hertford County Hospital, Glyn Blakey, had just spent a week in America training to use the Saeboflex Orthosis.

"She was the first person in the world who we used it on for a spinal cord injury," Glyn explained. "It's

usually used with stroke patients."

"She has been using the Saeboflex for about a year but the most dramatic improvement was in the first two months.

To begin with, Liz could only unclench her fingers when her wrist was fully bent, but the gadget works by straightening the fingers.

Through springs, it enables patients to perform grasp and release movements that would otherwise be impossible.

Liz said: "It was really nice just to be able to hold my hand out straight. The more I used it the better I got — if you keep hard at it then it makes a difference."

Through sheer determination, Liz is now walking again and is working full time.

She is even planning to get back on a horse, much to the dismay of her children.

"I've been riding since I was five and you do fall off," she said. "Now it'll be getting on that's the problem — but I'll go to Riding for the Disabled and do it that way."

Through Glyn's clinics, Liz has been able to support Michael Hughes, from Datchworth, who suffered severe spinal injuries when he fell off his bicycle.

He is also gradually improving his strength and is now able to open one hand again without Saeboflex.