

Pioneering work helps teen live her dreams

BY RICHARD BIRCH

CITY teenager Rebecca Foster-Rooke's dream of a career in childcare has been restored after she underwent pioneering and life-changing treatment.

The 16-year-old, who lives in Thompson Road, Heavitree, thought her chances of working in nurseries had ended when she was diagnosed with scoliosis.

The condition causes the spine to excessively curve sideways.

It affects more than four per cent of the population and if left untreated can lead to fatal heart and lung problems.

Having been unable to secure immediate help on the NHS, she and her family instead sought private treatment with the London and Suffolk-based Scoliosis SOS.

Rebecca, who attends St Peter's school and is currently awaiting her GCSE results, said: "I am overwhelmed with the treatment I received and it has changed my life."

She was 13 years old when she was given what she describes as "a life sentence of misery".

Mum Julie said Rebecca had always been very active and had always dreamed of working with children when she left school but said her daughter was "left devastated" when she was told that her spine was rapidly curving to the right.

The family claims to have been told that if her condition continued to progress that she would need to undergo a nine-hour operation which could in-

volve having metal rods fitted down her back.

Rebecca said: "After endless X-rays and appointments with various specialists, I was told that I should continue with everyday life as normal, being monitored until the spine curve reached 40 degrees and then possibly having surgery.

"I was now experiencing a great deal of pain which often meant I had to sit out of PE lessons.

"My confidence suffered and I was also struggling to pick up the small children I sometimes looked after with a view to starting a childcare course."

The family then got in touch with Scoliosis SOS which was founded and run by Erika Maude, who has Scoliosis herself.

It offers a range of non-surgical treatments, including exercises to promote correction of posture.

After several weeks, Rebecca says she is now pain-free and has also made significant improvements to her physique and lung capacity.

She added: "Before coming for treatment my scoliosis prevented me from wearing certain clothes, as I was so self-conscious about my back

"I was also in a lot of pain especially when I was carrying children around.

"People around me started to notice that my curve was getting bigger and I was terrified that I would end up needing to have surgery.

"I knew that there were risks involved with the operation and



PAIN-FREE: Rebecca Foster-Rooke, 16, performs part of her daily exercise routine to help alleviate a twisted spine condition called scoliosis



that there was a possibility that I could have limited flexibility and movement after the rods were fitted.

"I also knew that in the worst case I could be left paralysed.

"I am overwhelmed by what I have achieved at the SOS centre, being able to stabilise my condition and learn exercises to control my pain is priceless."

She is now enrolled on a childcare course which starts in September.

For more information, visit www.scoliosisSOS.com

PROGRESS: Rebecca holds diagrams showing the improvement in her condition