



**LIFE-CHANGING:** Florence Betteridge can now give her full attention to her A-level studies following her treatment for scoliosis.

Pictures: **ANDREW PARTRIDGE**

# Flossie's miracle

**BY KATIE MCGONAGLE**

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**IPSWICH:** Being a teenager is tough enough, dealing with everything from exams and peer pressure to worrying about the future.

And for Florence Betteridge, life became even harder when she was diagnosed with scoliosis just a few months before sitting her GCSEs.

But despite suffering severe back pain and being told she would need drastic spinal surgery, she has now put the worst behind her after discovering a new course of treatment.

Florence, known as "Flossie" to friends, was just 16 when she heard the devastating news that doctors had detected a 42 degree curve in her spine.

The now-18-year-old, who lives in north west Ipswich, said: "I was getting really bad pain and taking pain-killers every day because I couldn't concentrate.

"I had to have a cushioned chair because my exams were so long that I couldn't sit through them, and I had to stop playing hockey because it meant having to twist my back.

"Sometimes I wouldn't want to do things because I knew it would be a long day and my back would end up hurting."

Experts at the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital in Stanmore, London, recommended that she consider surgery to insert metal rods into her spine in a bid to straighten it as much as possible.

Florence added: "When my mum and I were told about the operation, I was so shocked I cried for days after-

## Fear of op drove teenager to seek alternative help for spinal agony

wards at the thought of it. I was really upset and I didn't want to have the operation. It can be quite risky because my curve is lower down my spine, so there's a higher risk of paralysis.

"I found it really hard to deal with."

But the Ipswich High School pupil eventually found help at a clinic specialising in non-surgical treatments for scoliosis, where she learnt a series of stretching exercises which she says helped her improve her posture.

Since attending the Woodbridge clinic in September 2009, she has kept up the exercise regime, doing a 40-minute session each day to maintain the progress she has made.

"During [the time I was at the clinic], I grew 3cm in two weeks just from stretching out my spine.

"I think my life has changed quite a lot because I was quite miserable before, always thinking about my back and being in pain.

"Now I still have to think about my posture and how I'm standing, but I'm much happier. I don't have any pain and I can do everything that my friends do.

"It's almost like a miracle."

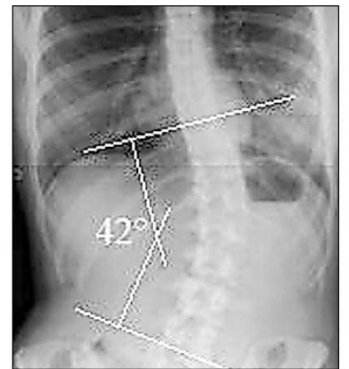


**EXERCISE REGIME:** Florence with some of the equipment she used to aid her recovery

Florence is sitting her A-levels this summer and has secured a place to study sociology at Leeds University.

She attended Scoliosis SOS in Woodbridge. Visit [www.scoliosissos.com](http://www.scoliosissos.com) for details.

**Do you have an inspirational story to tell? Write to Your Letters, Evening Star, 30 Lower Brook Street, Ipswich, IP4 1AN, or e-mail [eveningstarletters@eveningstar.co.uk](mailto:eveningstarletters@eveningstar.co.uk).**



**AGONY:** An x-ray showing the 42 degree curve in Florence's spine

### fastfacts

#### Scoliosis

■ **Scoliosis is an abnormal curvature of the spine to one side, either left or right.**

■ **It can range from being fairly slight to very severe.**

■ **Between three and four children in every 1,000 born in the UK are affected by the condition.**

■ **Scoliosis is more common in girls than in boys.**

■ **About three in every 1,000 children will need surgery, while others will either get better on their own or can use a back brace.**