



There is nothing more absurd than the furore over a woman with short hair being crowned Miss France

BY LINDA KELSEY PAGES 20-21

NHS DENTISTS ON THE BRINK

Worst crisis in 75 years could see services slashed, report warns

By **Kate Pickles**
Health Editor

NHS dental services are at their 'most perilous point' ever and radical reforms are needed to 'slow the decay', a report warns.

Experts at the Nuffield Trust say the situation is so bad the service must now be limited to just check-ups, pain management and emergency treatment.

It comes after reports of patients across the country forced to queue overnight for what few NHS dental places become available – as figures show only four in ten adults have seen a health service dentist in the past two years.

The trust – a charitable organisation aimed at improving healthcare in the UK – said a sweeping overhaul is needed, as the days of heavily subsidised NHS dentistry are 'gone for good'.

And there are fears for future generations, with tooth decay now the most common reason for a hospital admission for children aged six to ten, who should be able to access the service for free.

The report insists that efforts must be made to lure back dentists from the lucrative private sector, where many have fled, by offering better contracts based on work carried out rather than targets which can see them actually lose money for treating NHS patients.

Even then, restoring universal access 'would cost billions each year', largely paying for care that people are currently getting by paying privately at an enhanced rate.

The average fee for an initial consultation with a private dentist is now £74 while the same appointment on the NHS costs £25.80.

Dental leaders said the report reads 'like the last

Turn to Page 2



Esther Rantzen: Why I've signed up for Dignitas

SEE PAGE SEVEN