

This response was submitted to the consultation held by the Nuffield Council on Bioethics on *Public Health: ethical issues* between May and September 2006. The views expressed are solely those of the respondent(s) and not those of the Council.

Anon 8

Mr Harold Schmidt  
Nuffield Council on Bioethics  
28 Bedford Square  
London WC1B 3JS

*Dear Mr. Schmidt,*

**Consultation paper; Public health: ethical issues**

OEDA monitors the effects of industry on the wellbeing of its workforce, (employers and employees) consumers and the community. This has been my work for 39 years.

**Employment** should be included as a **Factor that influences public health**. Your page 9.

I am surprised and concerned that industry is only mentioned on

**page 7**. What are the responsibilities of other parties such as communities and **industries**?

**page 16**. Laws can be introduced that make certain **standards obligatory for industries** such as food producers, or for companies that produce particularly harmful emissions into the environment.

**page 16**. penalties such as high taxes **on industrial emissions** (a disincentive).

**page 27**. mentions manual occupations in that 29% smoke regularly. Manual workers face more serious risks.

**page 30**. Both tobacco and alcohol are produced and marketed by **powerful industries**.

Can Prohibition be justified?

HSE banned new use of asbestos in the UK in November 1999.

Should other substances be banned?

**COMMENTS ON QUESTIONS 1 TO 9**

**Question 1.**

I agree with the definition.

**Question 2.**

**Factors that influence public health.**



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Dear Mr. Schmidt,

NO FORGET

### Consultation paper; Public health: ethical issues

I should be grateful if you could add the following to my response dated 14 September 2006.

Under **5. Obesity** you ask

What are the appropriate roles and obligations of parents .... schools .... and the government in tackling the problem of childhood obesity ?

Under **6. Smoking** you ask

Should groups who increase their chances of requiring public health resources such as people engaging in adventure sports be asked for increased contributions ?

I feel very strongly that lack of exercise can lead to obesity in children and adults. Provided parents and organisers agree that a child is fit, they should be encouraged to participate if they wish.

Such activities should be professionally planned and organised, with insurance to cover the cost of treating any accidental injuries.

Yours sincerely

In certain areas of Enfield, alcohol may only be consumed inside buildings, ie we have alcohol free streets.

If adopted nationally, it would be possible to control the amount of alcohol consumed, except in the home.

Price increases or restrictions on off-licence or supermarket sales could reduce home drinking.

#### Question 8

##### Supplementation of food and water.

The information you provide on the benefits of fluoridation is not convincing. One in 6 people caries-free is not an impressive result.

Referenda should certainly be required and fluoride-free drinking and cooking water should be available to all at a reasonable price.

During my work for OEDA, I have learnt to take a pragmatic view. I recommend this approach.

Yours sincerely



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Industry, Employment and Commerce all affect the environment, social and economic factors, lifestyle, preventive medicine and in some cases, genetics. Their contributions to health should be assessed.

**Question 4.**

**Control of infectious disease.**

Those involved should be congratulated on their successful containment of SARS. For outbreaks of infections as serious as SARS, prevention must be considered to be more important than concern for civil liberties. However, it is necessary to safeguard against abuse. Could this be a role for WHO?

HIV/AIDS is a world-wide problem. TV programmes (soaps, dramas, sitcoms, chat shows) are likely to be the most effective means of getting the message to those at risk.

**Question 5.**

**Prevention of Obesity.**

**Children.**

Restore or provide sports grounds for schools. Encourage activities. Monitor school meals and sale of snacks. The Media are at the moment providing good publicity.

**Adults**

The connection between obesity and certain foods is 'NEWS' at the moment. Guidelines for manufacturers, caterers and retailers are needed. This enforcement could be considered.

Exercise is important but time-consuming.

Treatment should not be withheld solely because a person is considered to be 'overweight' but to withhold treatment would be justified if the patient's weight would make the treatment ineffective or dangerous.

**Question 6**

**Smoking**

Prevention of the sale of tobacco would be likely to lead to worse problems - e.g. American Prohibition. Cigarette consumption and the damage caused would probably be reduced if manufacturers, suppliers, purchasers were all taxed heavily.

If heavy taxation failed to reduce consumption, it would at least provide income which should be used to meet the cost of treatment.

**Question 7**

**Alcohol**

As with smoking, Prohibition would be likely to lead to worse problems. Large price increases could be a deterrent.