

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.

Dr David Chappel

I have been unable to access the web materials but since I have only a couple of minor comments I have just put them into this email

I welcome this report which covers most of the main issues to consider in current public health practice. The only area I think missing is access to, and use of, personal information to improve public health. This has been partly picked up in recent debates around research but also need consideration from a public health perspective (autonomy, consent and solidarity are key issues here).

Passive or second hand smoking is qualitatively a different issue to the main discussion because it is about harm to others. Recent legislation was careful to deal with this issue alone, hence its widespread support. In some ways there is little more to say on the subject but it makes an interesting case study showing the need to carefully separate out ethical issues under general headings such as 'smoking'

Alcohol also needs a bit more careful thinking. Although not essential for life it shows many similarities to fat and salt as issues rather than cigarettes and drugs because the public health 'vision' is moderation not abstinence. This is one of the reasons it is politically so difficult to deal with. The harm to others aspect (crime and disorder) has become an easier political battleground moving it out of the public health area to a degree recently.

These are personal comments which I am happy to have quoted and attributed and would be happy to clarify if required. I saw the report 'on circulation' round our department and would be keen to receive a copy of the final report.