

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.

Professor David B. Morton

I propose to comment only on the list of questions on Page 9. If you wish me to elaborate further I would be happy to do so, but I am sure the Working Party will have considered many of them anyway.

There is a more overarching general point in that the debate underlying this Report involved ethical issues such as freedom of choice and personal responsibility and yet does this figure highly enough in the school curriculum? Is it the subject of examination so that those at school have some incentive to learn it? Such moral philosophy underpins much of our culture in nearly all aspects of social cohesion and tolerance and does not have to be complicated, but made relevant with practical examples.

2. Factors that influence public health should include education.

5. Obesity: Those of influence should be encouraged to lead by example e.g. teachers, doctors etc. Better labelling of food and dietary guidance, exercise, as mentioned is starting to happen, but at too late an age.

Treatment for addictions, including all mentioned, should not withheld from persons unless that treatment would be seriously jeopardised in some way, and no effort was being made to change. Factors that try to influence addictions like price, do not work but encourage crime and probably abuse. Giving too stringent guidance can encourage deceit when asked e.g. units of alcohol consumed per week.

9. Any enforcement for a greater good must be accompanied by a risk assessment that decides the level of certainty of prevention, treatment, personal restriction and so on. Other elements include cost, freedom of choice for the competent together with care of the vulnerable, all backed by a thorough education programme.

The questions on the importance of the ethical principles are surely tilting at windmills. They should all be considered and then after the ethical journey some policy implemented that shows all have been taken into consideration and why one might 'trump' another.