

## Professor Angus Dawson BA (Hons), MSc, PhD

Professor of Public Health Ethics & Head of Medicine, Ethics, Society & History (MESH)

Primary Care Clinical Sciences

### Contact details

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### About

Angus Dawson is Professor of Public Health Ethics and Head of Medicine, Ethics, Society & History (MESH).

Angus has published extensively on many issues in bioethics. In recent years he has been particularly focused on public health ethics (e.g. vaccinations and issues related to lifestyle choices) and the use of empirical evidence in moral arguments (e.g. in relation to problems in gaining informed consent in clinical trials).

Angus has many collaborative research projects across the world, with particularly strong ties with Canada, India, Sri Lanka, Taiwan and the US. He is joint Editor-in-Chief of the journal Public Health Ethics and joint coordinator of the International Association of Bioethics' Public Health Ethics Network (InterPHEN).

### Qualifications

- PhD Philosophy 2000
- MSc Health Care Ethics 1990
- BA (Hons) Philosophy 1989

### Biography

Angus Dawson qualified with a BA (Hons) in Philosophy from the University of Sussex in 1989. He went on to study for a MSc in Health Care Ethics at Liverpool University, before completing a PhD in Philosophy at Manchester University in 2000.

After teaching a wide range of topics in ethics and philosophy at a number of different universities, he was appointed as Lecturer (1998), and then Senior Lecturer in Ethics & Philosophy (2004), at Keele University. At Keele he set up and was the founding Director of the Centre for Professional Ethics, where he specialised in teaching ethics to mid-career health care professionals. Angus spent two years at the University of Toronto on consecutive research fellowships. In 2007-8 he was based at the Centre for Ethics and then in 2008-9 he was at the Joint Centre for Bioethics (JCB). He continues to be an Honorary Research Fellow at the JCB. He was appointed as Professor of Public Health Ethics at the University of Birmingham in August 2011.

Angus has a broad range of research interests in bioethics. His main focus in recent years has been on establishing and developing the field of public health ethics. Much of his early work in this area explored ethical arguments about vaccinations. More recently he has begun work on ethical issues related to chronic disease (particularly those said to be the result of 'lifestyle choices' e.g. obesity, smoking, drinking etc). In addition, he is interested in expanding the boundaries of what we count as legitimate topics for public health ethics, for example into areas of mental health (e.g. suicide). He also has a growing interest in how methodological issues intertwine with ethical issues, and has recently worked on papers about the ethics of cluster randomised trials, surveillance and natural experiments.

Angus has been involved in many interdisciplinary research projects, international collaborations, and policy work at national and international levels. He has worked on projects for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in the US, the World Health Organisation, the Public Health Agency of Canada, and the UK's Health Protection Agency.

### Teaching

#### Teaching Programmes

- [Medical Science BMedSc \(/undergraduate/courses/med/biomedical-science.aspx\)](#)
- [Public Health MPH/PG Diploma/PG Certificate \(/postgraduate/courses/taught/med/public-health.aspx\)](#)

### Postgraduate supervision

Angus is interested in supervising doctoral research students in the following areas:

- Public Health Ethics
- Research Ethics
- Bioethics

If you are interesting in studying in these subject areas please contact Angus on the contact details above, or for any general doctoral research enquiries, please email: [dr@contacts.bham.ac.uk \(mailto:dr@contacts.bham.ac.uk\)](mailto:dr@contacts.bham.ac.uk) or call +44 (0)121 414 5005.

For a full list of available Doctoral Research opportunities, please visit our [Doctoral Research programme listings. \(http://www.bham.findaphd.com/?\)](http://www.bham.findaphd.com/?)

## Research

### RESEARCH THEMES

Public Health Ethics, Research Ethics, Bioethics, Methodology in Ethics, International Ethics, Emergency Ethics

### RESEARCH ACTIVITY

#### Health Promotion, Chronic Diseases and 'Lifestyle Choices'

Angus' most recent research has been exploring a series of ethical and policy issues related to the promotion of the public's health through attempts to influence and change so-called 'lifestyle choices' (with a particular focus on eating behaviour and exercise). The causes of obesity are complex and attempts to prevent and treat them are likely to be equally complicated. His work in this area is particularly focused on questioning the degree to which we are free to choose or shape our preferences in relation to our lifestyles, and what implications our conclusions on such topics have for thinking about the legitimacy of different policy options. Is it justifiable to seek to shape the environment and society to push or nudge people to adopt healthier lifestyles? Is it appropriate for the state to be 'neutral' in terms of their citizens' lifestyles?

#### Methodology in Ethics: the Normative and the Empirical

Angus' interest in this topic goes back to his PhD, but his recent work in the area has focused on exploring how ethicists, policy makers and research ethics committees (RECs) ought to respond to the empirical evidence about the common lack of comprehension of information provided within a research and clinical context. He has argued that the common focus on informed consent as the most important principle in research ethics is problematic and that RECs ought to focus more on issues of benefits and harm not just prioritise consent. Other examples of his recent work in this area include projects on the ethics of cluster randomised trials, surveillance and natural experiments.

#### Vaccination Ethics and Policy

Over the last ten years Angus has worked on a project about ethical issues relating to infectious disease, with a particular focus on vaccinations. He has written a series of papers exploring different arguments related to vaccination (e.g. harm to others, best interests, public goods etc). He is currently working on completing a monograph on this topic. Angus' work on vaccinations has been widely cited and has been influential in policy formation. For example, his paper on Hepatitis B vaccination (published in *Lancet: Infectious Diseases*) is a key citation in the British Medical Association's policy on this issue.

## Other activities

### Current

- Vice-President, International Association of Bioethics, 2009-12
- Member, Board of Directors, International Association of Bioethics (IAB), 2007-2012
- Member, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), Research Ethics Board, 2009-
- Member, HPA, Advisory Group on Ionising Radiation (AGIR), Human Radiosensitivity Sub-group, 2010-12
- Member, Public Health Ethics International Collaboration Steering Group, 2011-
- Member, Airwave Health Monitoring Ethical Governance Committee, UK Home Office, 2005-
- Joint Coordinator of the IAB's International Public Health Ethics Network (InterPHEN), 2002-
- Member, Advisory Board of Wellcome Trust-funded post-doc Kerry Woolfall, CONseNt methods in paediatric Emergency Care Trials: CONNECT, 2011-

### Past

- Member, Scientific Committee for the 10<sup>th</sup> IAB World Congress, Singapore, 2010
- Member, Ontario Childhood Healthy Weights Surveillance Steering Committee, 2009-2010
- Member, Ontario Population Cohort Study Ethics Working Group, 2008-2010
- Expert Member, WHO Task Force on Ethics & TB Control, 2007-2010
- Consultant, Public Health Ethics Curriculum, Public Health Foundation, India, December 2007
- Chair of the Wellcome Trust Summer School on 'Public Health Ethics', September 2007
- Member, Shropshire Local Research Ethics Committee, 2004-6
- Member, Advisory Board of AHRC-funded project: Community: Healthcare Organisation and Regulation in a Diverse Society (CHORDS), 2011.
- Chair, Wellcome Trust Workshop, Disaster and Conflict Ethics: Developing a Research Agenda (26/05/11)

### Journals

- Joint Founder and Joint Editor-in-Chief, *Public Health Ethics*, 2007-
- Editorial Board member, *Bioethics*, 2010-
- Member, International Advisory Board, *International Journal of Feminist Approaches to Bioethics*, 2009-
- Editorial Board member, *Indian Journal of Medical Ethics*, 2008-
- Editorial Board member, *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, 2008-
- Editorial Board member, *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics*, 2006-
- Joint Editor of the International Association of Bioethics' Newsletter, 2007-2008
- Editorial Board member, *Journal of Travel Medicine & Infectious Disease*, 2006-10
- Editorial Board member, *Journal of Adult Protection*, 2005-200

## Publications

### Books

- Dawson, A. (ed.) (2011) **Public Health Ethics: Key Concepts and Issues in Policy and Practice**. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dawson, A. (ed.) (2009) **The Philosophy of Public Health**. Aldershot: Ashgate.. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Dawson, A., Verweij, M. (eds.). (2007) **Ethics, Prevention, and Public Health**. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Ashcroft, R., Dawson, A., Draper, H., McMillan, J. (eds.) (2007) **Principles of Health Care Ethics (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.)**. Chichester: Wiley.. Chichester: Wiley.

## Papers

- Sim, J, Dawson, A. (2012) 'Informed consent and cluster randomized trials', **American Journal of Public Health** (in press).
- Dawson, A. (2011) 'The moral case for childhood vaccination', **Health Affairs**, 30, 6: 1029-33.
- Dawson, A. (2010) 'The Future of Bioethics: Three Dogmas and a Cup of Hemlock'. **Bioethics**, 24 (5): 218-225.
- van Delden, JJM., Ashcroft, R., Dawson, A., Marckmann, G., Upshur R., Verweij, MF. (2008) 'The ethics of mandatory vaccination against influenza for health care workers'. **Vaccine**. 26 (44): 5562-5566.

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