

## **FOUR ETHICAL FRAMEWORKS: a short summary**

*There is no one universally accepted way of deciding whether something is ethically acceptable or not. Instead there are several different ethical frameworks. You don't always get the same answer!*

### **Rights and duties**

Rights define what people can expect as their due, so far as it is under the control of people or human society. There is always a duty associated with a right, though in many cases the duty on other people is simply that they do not interfere with or prevent others claiming their rights. Any right an individual has relies on other people carrying out their duties towards that individual. So it follows that if people neglect their duties, then other people's rights may be neglected.

### **Maximising the amount of good in the world**

This framework balances the benefits of an action against the risks and costs. It promotes the common good to help everyone have a fair share of the benefits in society, a community or a family. This framework is often described as 'the 'greatest happiness for the greatest number'. It could be seen as 'right' to override the rights of individuals in order to bring about happiness in the wider community.

### **Making decisions for yourself**

This framework considers that people should make their own lives. Respecting people's autonomy (independence) and decision-making abilities enables individuals to make reasoned and informed choices. Personal autonomy is where people control their own destiny, through decisions they make throughout their lives.

### **Leading a virtuous life**

This framework supports the moral 'rightness' or 'wrongness' of actions. An action can be described as right or wrong independently from any consequences of the action. It is not the consequences that make an action right or wrong, but the principle or motivation on which the action is based.

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