

WOULD YOU LET A ROBOT LOOK AFTER YOUR BABY?

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Standards provide guidance, requirements and specifications that inform what should or should not be done. Ethics are principles that demarcate the boundaries of what is or is not considered acceptable. Standards are revised periodically to address changes in science and technology, and ethics also change over time as public opinion adapts to changes in society and culture. As robotics become ever-more a part of our everyday life the need for standardisation has grown, and in 2016 the British Standards Institute (BSI) published the world's first formal standard on robot ethics BS 8611:2016 'Guide to the ethical design and application of robots and robotic systems'. As this standard is already being revised to address changes brought about by the ongoing rapid rise in robotics in society, it is important to ensure that the public opinion which informs current ethical norms is incorporated. To this end, an online survey has been conducted to capture public opinions on what is acceptable / unacceptable for future robot applications in six contexts where robotics could / will be applied: childcare, hospital surgery, elderly care, military combat, factory work, and as a human companion. Analysis of the data provided by 228 participants of varying age, experience and occupation reveals a snapshot of the public opinion that represents ethical boundaries in the UK at the current time, and this will be used to inform the BS 8611 revision. In this presentation the survey, results and implications will be presented and discussed.