

July 2008

## Having an influence

*How do I have my say and influence the decisions being made on my behalf, both by elected and appointed people?*

*Communities in control: real people, real power* was launched on 9 July 2008. This White Paper is about passing power to communities and giving real control and influence to more people. Please visit [www.communities.gov.uk](http://www.communities.gov.uk) for more information.

We would like to encourage community groups to discuss and feedback to us about the topics raised in the White Paper. Please use this topic discussion guide in conjunction with the Community Power Pack which is also available from our website.

### Points to consider

*Communities in control* will give new rights for people to petition for action from their councillors and public officials, and how we will encourage more people to vote in elections.

It sets out our vision for democratic decision-making to be conducted as locally as possible, so people can feel that their local government is part of the fabric of community life, and that their views can be heard and acted on by their local councillors. It looks at how people can get involved at a very local level in areas such as planning, housing and tenant empowerment.

It is important to understand the needs of citizens, customers and users of services and on how to strengthen youth engagement in democratic processes.

### Key policies

- Introducing **a new duty for councils to respond to petitions**, ensuring that those with significant local support are properly debated
- Encouraging every local authority to use **participatory budgeting** (where panels of local people are given a say on how part of their local budget is spent) in some form by 2012
- Encouraging the creation of more **neighbourhood councils**

- Supporting local authorities in engaging more people in **commissioning local goods and services**
- Providing more **funding to support community engagement** in planning
- **Empowering social housing tenants** for example through the establishment of a National Tenant Voice to give tenants a voice and expertise at national level.

## Questions for discussion

- In your view has the White Paper captured the correct points on how to give people a greater say in decisions being made on their behalf?
- How far do you think that these policies will address the issues raised?
- What more do you think needs to be done to address these issues?