

Communities progress report



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Introduction

In July 2008 the Government published the white paper *Communities in control: real people, real power* which aims to pass power into the hands of local communities. It seeks to generate vibrant local democracy in every part of the country, and to give real control over local decisions and services to a wider pool of active citizens. This builds on the 2006 local government white paper *Strong, safe and prosperous communities*, which signalled a devolution of power from Whitehall to town halls and from local authorities to local communities in England.

Good progress has been made in delivering commitments set out in the 2006 white paper and the subsequent Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. Further details are in the final implementation plan published on 19 March 2009 (www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/implementationplanprogress3).

Communities in control recognised this progress, and actions following the *Governance of Britain* green paper (July 2007) but argued there is still more to do to match people's high aspirations for the services they receive and to tackle complex issues such as people feeling alienated from local democracy, and political disengagement. The answer lies in empowerment: passing more and more political power to more and more people, using every practical means available. In this way, public services fit the needs of users and democracy becomes, not a system of occasional voting to select who governs us, but something that infuses our way of life.

Progress so far – a lot has been delivered already

Since publishing *Communities in control* last summer a great deal has already been achieved. We have:

- introduced the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Bill to Parliament
- signed off 150 local area agreements and completed a review and refresh
- published a participatory budgeting strategy (page 68, *Communities in control*)
- launched a review of redress for council services (page 101, *Communities in control*)
- run a consultation on improving local accountability and published a response to this (pages 90, 91 and 110, *Communities in control*)
- announced the successful applicants for the empowerment fund (page 29, *Communities in control*)
- created a social enterprise and third sector unit in Communities and Local Government (page 125, *Communities in control*)
- run a consultation on codes of conduct for local authority members and employees (page 109, *Communities in control*)
- run a consultation on time-off entitlements (page 113, *Communities in control*)
- run a consultation on the making and enforcement of byelaws (page 72, *Communities in control*)
- run a consultation on community land trusts (page 122, *Communities in control*)
- responded to the Commission on Integration and Cohesion, setting out how the Government is following up all of the Commission's 57 recommendations (www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/governmentresponsecoic)
- published a cohesion delivery framework (www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/cohesiondeliveryrevised)
- published an interfaith framework (www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/facetofaceframework)
- announced a Migrants Impact Fund and published *Managing the impacts of migration: improvements and innovations* (www.communities.gov.uk/news/corporate/1180107)
- published *Strong, safe and prosperous communities* guidance including Sustainable Communities Act guidance (www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/strongsafeprosperous)

- invited local authorities to submit proposals under the Sustainable Communities Act (page 75, *Communities in control*)
- funded 49 choice based letting schemes through the Regional Choice Fund, covering about 80 per cent of councils in England
- published *Citizens of equal worth: the project group's proposals for the national tenant voice* (www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/equalworthreport)
- announced funding to encourage at least 20 new young mayors around the country
- consulted on and published the first local spending report under the Sustainable Communities Act
- published guidance on the Councillor Call for Action promoting these powers for councillors (page 67, *Communities in control*)
- set up initial participatory budgeting for community safety pilots (page 67, *Communities in control*)
- announced the total place initiative to examine public spending, pooling budgets, and local leadership in 13 local pilot areas
- set up a pilot programme of Take Part local pathfinders to help people participate in their local areas, by building skills, confidence and knowledge, and by supporting community leadership (page 39, *Communities in control*)
- announced the national body for youth leadership (page 86, *Communities in control*)
- completed a review of accreditation for civic roles looking at what relevant qualifications and modules exist and to see what could be built upon (page 115, *Communities in control*)
- launched an external asset transfer unit and extended the Advancing Assets for Communities programme to a further 22 areas in 2009-10, supporting local authorities and community organisations to work together on proposals to transfer public assets to community management and ownership (page 119, *Communities in control*). Also initiated work on the introduction of a 'meanwhile lease', to facilitate the short-term leasing of vacant town centre shops to third sector organisations
- introduced comprehensive area assessment
- published faith buildings guidance *Churches and faith buildings: realising the potential* which helps faith groups, as part of the wider third sector, to find resources to make their buildings better adapted for wider community use and to support the delivery of local priorities in partnership with other local agencies.

Next steps – implementation

Communities and Local Government is responsible for the cohesion and empowerment aspects of Public Service Agreement (PSA) 21 'to build more cohesive, empowered and active communities'. This includes commitments made in *Communities in control* and the local government white paper. We manage this work through six workstreams:

1. Performance
2. Decision making and accountability
3. Empowerment and participation improvement
4. The third sector and social enterprise
5. Citizen engagement tools
6. The Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Bill

This progress report is structured around these six workstreams.

The delivery of this agenda is challenging and requires individuals, agencies, community groups, government and delivery partners to work together across a wide range of issues including empowerment, policing, health, education, community justice, immigration and welfare reform. Many of the actions set out in this report are for central government to deliver but once in place it will be for delivery partners such as local strategic partnerships, councillors, primary care trusts and government offices to implement the actions, exercise the powers and make use of the support available.

This progress report is a working document which sets out the key pieces of work across government. These are our plans to implement commitments from *Communities in control*, the local government white paper, and other sources to support local authorities, their local public sector partners, the third sector and citizens and communities in building cohesive, empowered and active communities. Over time, these activities are designed to make the case for and provide evidence to support effective mainstreaming and embedding of empowerment, cohesion and local priorities into the day-to-day work of service providers. Some of these actions are subject to Parliamentary approval and the timings are indicative.

1. Performance

(Lead Director: Andrew Campbell, supported by Julie Carney, Jane Cockerill and Deborah Heenan)

The new local performance framework introduced in the local government white paper and implemented through the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 applies to local authorities and their service-delivery partners (for example the police, Jobcentre Plus and NHS Trusts).

It comprises a new single set of 188 national performance indicators and places local area agreements (LAAs) on a statutory footing. Local authorities and other local service providers have come together with national government to develop agreements for each of England's 150 top-tier local authority areas. Each LAA contains up to 35 priorities, selected from the national indicator set and agreed with government. All 150 LAAs were signed off on 30 June 2008. Communities and Local Government recently led the first annual review and refresh of the new LAAs. This was done to ensure the priorities and targets in LAAs continue to be the right ones and that progress continues to be made.

From April 2009 the new comprehensive area assessment (CAA) was introduced, replacing comprehensive performance assessment (CPA). CAA is intended to back up improved local accountability and responsiveness to citizens with the assurance and challenge of more risk-based and proportionate assessment and inspection. CAA will be carried out jointly by the independent local service inspectorates, ensuring high standards of expertise and impartiality. The first CAA reports will be available from November 2009.

Since the National Improvement and Efficiency Strategy was published in 2007, followed by the first set of regional improvement and efficiency strategies in March 2008, progress continues to be made with updated strategies for 2009 now agreed and funding released.

Other ongoing commitments from the local government white paper can be accessed at (www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/implementationplanprogress3)

June 2009

Implement powers enabling joint standards committees and new monitoring and intervention powers for the Standards Board.

Summer 2009

New byelaw powers introduced.

Implement revised model code of conduct.

November 2009

First CAA reports will be accessible from the publicly available, web-based CAA reporting tool.

Autumn 2009

Inspiring Communities programme to engage citizens from the outset in a co-design process to develop local campaigns to raise aspirations and attainment in 15 deprived neighbourhoods.

Local authorities and their partners have made extensive use of the new ways of working introduced in the local government white paper. They should now use the programmes and tools set out in this chapter and continue to deliver high quality and efficient services which are responsive to the needs of citizens and engage their communities.

2. Decision making and accountability

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(Lead Director: Stuart Hoggan, supported by Claire Cooper, Paul Downie, Deepak Rawal, Paul Rowsell)

The decision making and accountability workstream covers a wide range of issues set out in *Communities in control* and the 2006 local government white paper. It covers a series of initiatives linked by the extent to which they provide or support mechanisms for citizens to hold public bodies to account or be involved in the decision making process.

Spring 2009

Fifth round of choice based lettings schemes launched (page 81, *Communities in control*).

June 2009

Publish report of the Review of Redress looking at the feasibility and practicality of introducing/ extending the idea of redress for citizens when council services fail to meet agreed targets (page 101, *Communities in control*).

July 2009

First proposals under the Sustainable Communities Act will be submitted to the Local Government Association 'the selector' (page 75, *Communities in control*).

Summer 2009

Government response to the consultation on *Changing Council Governance Arrangements – Mayors and Indirectly Elected Leaders* (page 94, *Communities in control*).

Publication of toolkit to assist tenant management organisations influence and deliver other neighbourhood services (page 81, *Communities in control*).

Completion of research stage of review of tenant participation compacts (page 81, *Communities in control*).

Autumn 2009

Establish pilots to look at how community pledgebanks can help deliver local priorities (page 100, *Communities in control*).

Establish a 50-strong national tenant council which will eventually be part of the structure of the national tenant voice.

2009

Publish a review of the Local Government Ombudsman's jurisdiction (page 98, *Communities in control*).

Extend the length of existing community contract pilots and carry out an independent evaluation to help identify the best way of encouraging the development of contracts in more neighbourhoods (page 100, *Communities in control*).

We are considering the timing of secondary legislation on the right to time off for a broader range of civic duties in light of the responses to the consultation and the current economic circumstances (page 113, *Communities in control*).

2010

Introduce a duty on local authorities to respond to local petitions, subject to Parliamentary approval (page 65, *Communities in control*).

Introduce a requirement on those councils with LAA responsibility to designate an officer to support the overview and scrutiny function, and broaden the scope of what a joint overview and scrutiny committee may consider, subject to Parliamentary approval (page 91, *Communities in control*).

Appointment of national tenant voice board of directors (page 81, *Communities in control*).

Target for all local authorities to have choice based letting schemes in place (page 81, *Communities in control*).

Local authorities and tenant management organisations should use the powers and processes set out in this chapter to provide citizens with more opportunities to be involved in decisions that affect them. Citizens should take full advantage of these processes and support mechanisms to hold public bodies to account. For example, local authorities may wish to start preparing for the new duty to respond to local petitions by considering how their current systems could be used to increase accountability locally.

3. Empowerment and participation improvement

(Lead Director: Stuart Hoggan, supported by Claire Cooper and Henry Tam)

The empowerment and participation improvement workstream covers a wide range of issues set out in *Communities in control*. This series of initiatives is linked by the aim to improve local empowerment and participation.

2008 – 2011

Further increase the number of participatory budgeting projects. Undertake an evaluation of participatory budgeting and report by December 2009 (page 67, *Communities in control*).

Work with action learning partners to arrange, manage and evaluate a project which tests a remit for Local Involvement Networks (LINKs) which is wider than health and social care during July 2008 – May 2011 (page 92, *Communities in control*).

Projects on customer-led transformation in service delivery looking at efficiency and whole system innovation in local area delivery. Working with the Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnerships and Local Government Delivery Council, year one funding has been allocated to support a range of projects including the promotion of interactive websites; customer insight data; cross-sector working; and investment to prevent negative outcomes (page 74, *Communities in control*).

Action research project led by Development Trusts Association and Co-operatives UK to support organisations undertaking community share and bond issues and identify the factors that can make this a successful approach to financing community enterprise and achieving wider and deeper engagement during January 2009 – March 2011 (page 122, *Communities in control*).

Exemplar councils launched to develop and share best practice on what it means to be a councillor in the 21st century, to run over 2009/10 and 2010/11 (paragraph 62, *Councillors commission report*).

Investment of up to £6.5m to further assist community involvement in planning in 2009-2011. Up to £1m for the planning bursary scheme; £1.5m for the contribution to the empowerment fund.

Up to £4m additional funding for local planning authorities to support community participation (page 80, *Communities in control*).

Spring 2009

Launch a task force to look at the role of the public service workforce in empowering users and residents and how the frontline can respond to a more empowered public (page 29, *Communities in control*).

Summary of responses to community land trust consultation published (page 122, *Communities in control*).

Phase two Take Part local pathfinders begin delivery (page 39, *Communities in control*).

Ministerial shadowing and internships with councillors for young people begin (page 86, *Communities in control*).

Young mayors national partner selected.

Summer 2009

Make it easier for people to find information on ways to be active in civic roles in their communities (page 115, *Communities in control*).

Programme of accreditation for civic roles (page 115, *Communities in control*).

Employers' information pack providing better information for employers about benefits of civic roles for their staff (page 114, *Communities in control*).

New young mayors scheme begins in at least 20 areas across the country.

2010

Publish final report on empowering the frontline taskforce (page 29, *Communities in control*).

Extend the duty to involve to a number of partner authorities, subject to Parliamentary approval (page 28, *Communities in control*).

A new duty on local authorities to promote democratic understanding, not only of the council and its various functions, but also of the other main public service providers in the local area as well as other elected bodies such as the police and health trusts etc comes into force. It will also require local authorities to promote the opportunities for people to take on a number of civic roles such as magistrates and members of youth offending panels, subject to Parliamentary approval (page 24, *Communities in control*).

Introduce the title of 'Alderwoman' for former elected councillors and allow all local authorities to recognise the service of both councillors and local people, subject to Parliamentary approval (page 110, *Communities in control*).

Local service deliverers should look for opportunities in the range of programmes and initiatives set out in this chapter to increase empowerment and to raise levels of participation. For example, seeking opportunities to introduce participatory budgeting, implement an asset transfer, or preparing for the duty to promote democratic understanding.

4. Third sector and social enterprise

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(Lead Director: Stuart Hoggan, supported by Claire Cooper)

The third sector plays a vital role in providing the support and encouragement essential to empowering communities. It is key to achieving the actions in this progress report that we continue to work closely with the third sector, as well as other key stakeholders such as the Council on Social Action¹ (CoSA). With CoSA we have identified strong communities as a common agenda and will continue to work together to deliver the best outcomes through improving public services, inspiring citizens to make a difference, and developing and sustaining community hubs where civil society and social enterprises can thrive.

Our aim is to invest in the long term sustainability and underlying strength of the sector through:

- the empowerment fund which will support organisations with national reach to turn key empowerment proposals into practical action
- the Communitybuilders programme – funding to support community anchor organisations. Our approach is part of the Government's new strategy for building a partnership with the third sector, working with a full range of organisations and a wider range of activities, with a greater emphasis on long term sustainability and local partnership working
- creating a stronger focus on social enterprise across CLG – exploring opportunities to work more closely together to deliver shared goals of transforming communities, building a stronger local economy and a fairer society

We are also committed to:

- developing the capacity of faith-based organisations to contribute to the wider communities agenda, and developing their role as part of the wider third sector
- developing the capacity of local government and its local and regional partners to recognise and support the role of faith-based organisations in supporting and developing the wellbeing of local communities

¹The Council on Social Action brings together innovators from every sector to generate ideas and initiatives through which Government and other key stakeholders can catalyse, celebrate and develop social action. It makes recommendations to Government and others as an advisory body, independent of Government.

April 2009 – March 2012

The empowerment fund will run from April 2009 to March 2012 (page 29, *Communities in control*).

Spring 2009

The Communitybuilders programme will be delivered by a national partner organisation which will use its knowledge and experience of the third sector and community organisations to deliver the programme in the most effective manner. The national partner will be selected and the programme will be open to applications from spring 2009 (page 41, *Communities in control*).

Faiths in Action Round 1 funding to be announced – a three-year, £4m programme to fund local interfaith projects.

From May 2009

Local authorities, third sector organisations and social enterprises to submit bids to the Future Jobs Fund to create jobs for young people and others facing barriers to employment before they reach 12 months on Jobseeker's Allowance. Jobs to be in place from late autumn 2009.

2009

Deliver relevant actions set out in the Government's action plan to support the third sector through the downturn: *Real help for communities: volunteers, charities and social enterprises*.

Working with faith communities we will develop a *Charter of Excellence for Faith Communities in Service Delivery*. By signing this, faith-led organisations delivering public services will give assurance to potential local authority funders that all services will be delivered in compliance with the relevant equalities legislation, and that public money will not be used to support worship or proselytising.

CLG is continuing to work with the LGA, IDeA, Inter Faith Network, Faith Based Regeneration Network and others to update the *Faith & Community* guidance originally published by the LGA in 2002. The outcomes of this work will help build the capacity of local government and their partners to engage more effectively with faith groups, both individually and through multi-faith and interfaith structures. This may include the development of targeted guidance on a number of areas of activity.

2009 – 2014

Communitybuilders is a £70m investment fund, which will provide a mix of grants and loans to recipients. This will allow for the recycling of monies and will mean that the programme can continue to invest until 2014. Funding will take place at different stages of the project cycle, supporting both existing organisations and newly formed organisations (page 41, *Communities in control*).

Those organisations who receive funding from these programmes will provide opportunities for citizens to become more involved and empowered in their communities. The practical guidance and support being published should be used by local authorities and their partners to improve services and support local people, including through identifying opportunities to work with social enterprises.

5. Citizen engagement tools

(Lead Director: Stuart Hoggan, supported by Bert Provan)

The citizen engagement tools workstream brings together initiatives designed to improve the information available to the public and to promote innovative ways of using technologies to improve citizen engagement and empowerment.

Started in March 2009

Work in conjunction with the Local Government Association (LGA) and the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) who announced the first tranche of pilots, to showcase and develop best practice in using information to empower citizens, and in particular:

- encouraging more interactive websites to address immediate issues
- encouraging local authorities to use online deliberative approaches to discuss local issues with their citizens
- providing a wider range of information to allow scrutiny and engagement

Summer 2009

First publication of good practice on citizens information pilots on IDeA website and elsewhere.

Announcement of the locations of the digital mentors pilot areas.

Appointment of a digital inclusion champion and task force to represent the interests of digitally excluded groups and communities.

Autumn 2009

First interim research report on citizen information pilots.

Service deliverers should look to the projects, schemes and tools in this chapter to identify ways they could support citizens to be more engaged in their local communities. For example, using community and social media and online deliberative approaches to discuss local issues with citizens.

6. Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Bill

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(Lead Director: Stuart Hoggan, supported by Deepak Rawal)

The Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Bill was introduced to the House of Lords on 4 December 2008. This Bill promotes local democracy and economic development, devolving greater power to local government and communities, and ensures fairness in construction contracts.

The Bill is designed to strengthen local democracy, by passing more power and responsibility to local authorities, communities and citizens, including taking proposals forward from the white paper, *Communities in control: real people, real power*:

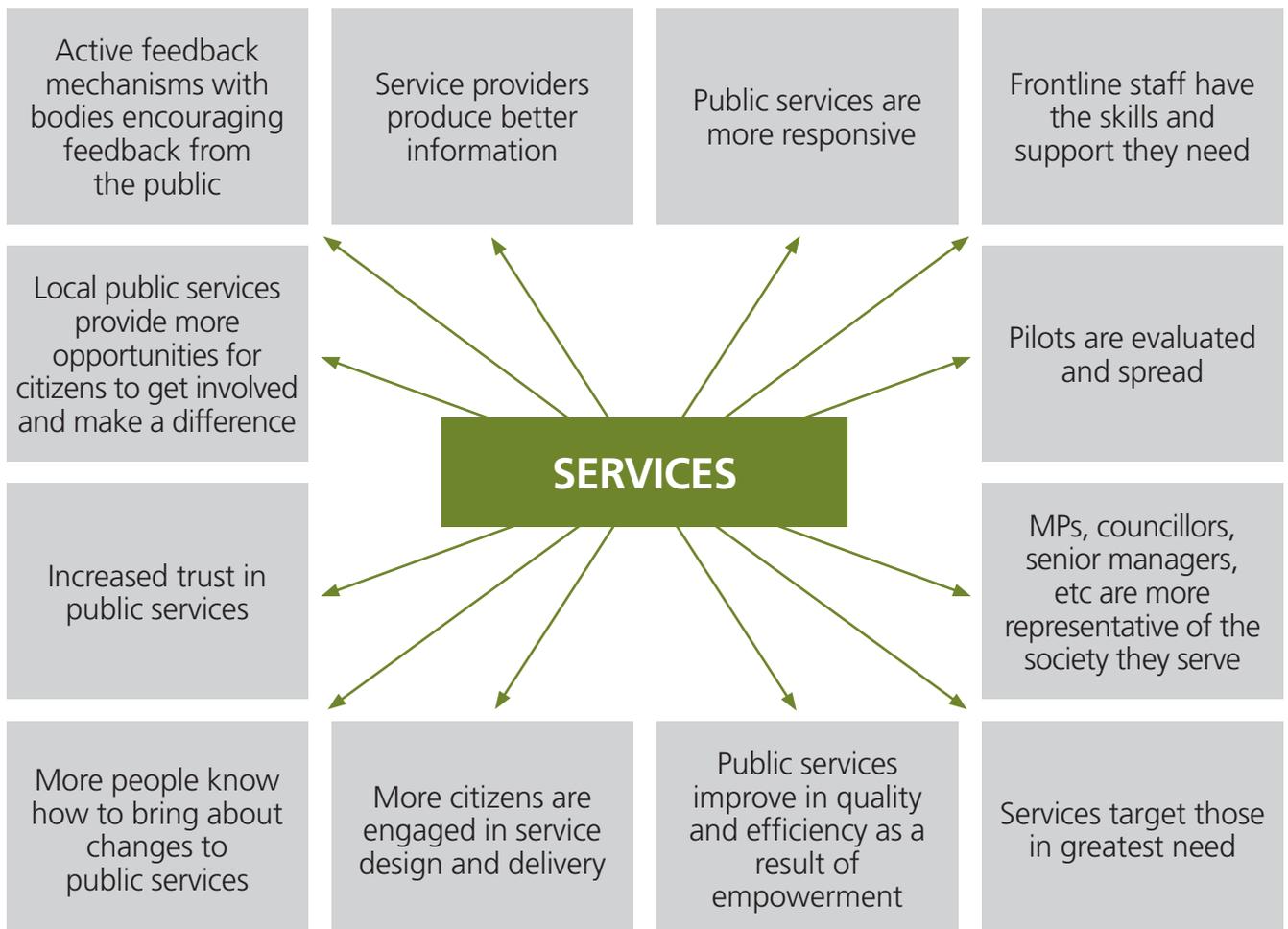
- introduce a duty on local authorities to promote democratic understanding, not only of the council and its various functions, but also of the main public service providers in the local area such as the police and health trusts etc. It will also require local authorities to promote the opportunities for people to take on a number of civic roles such as magistrates and members of youth offending panels
- introduce a duty on local authorities to respond to petitions which will give citizens greater power to hold local authorities to account and influence local services
- extend the duty to involve to a number of partner authorities
- introduce the title of 'Alderwoman' for former elected councillors and allow all local authorities to recognise the services of both councillors and local people
- introduce a requirement on those councils with LAA responsibility to designate an officer to support the overview and scrutiny function, and broaden the scope of what a joint overview and scrutiny committee may consider

Implementation is dependent on the progress of the LDEDC Bill so the timings for these proposals given elsewhere in this document are indicative and are subject to Parliamentary approval.

Conclusion

These are our plans to implement commitments from *Communities in control*, the local government white paper and other sources to support local authorities, their local public sector partners, the third sector and citizens and communities in building cohesive, empowered and active communities. Over time, these activities are designed to make the case for and provide evidence to support effective mainstreaming and embedding of empowerment, cohesion and local priorities into the day-to-day work of service providers.

It is critical that momentum is maintained here and this becomes a matter of instinct, and of day-to-day business. Ways we will know this has been successful will be changes to services and changes for citizens:





How we plan to achieve this

The activities set out in this progress report will help us achieve these ambitions. Looking to the future we will embed these principles and practices by working with government and third sector stakeholders and citizens and communities to:

- promote the principles of *Communities in control* and to provide information and communications on opportunities to become involved in controlling and influencing local service provision, leading to clear expectations on the part of citizens
- generate and promote best practice and successful pilot programmes and extend opportunities for citizens and communities to get involved
- use the local performance management system and, where appropriate, inspection and regulation to improve performance and increase accountability. We will continue to support capacity building throughout the delivery system and look for ways to improve skills and sponsor innovation

In doing this we will take account of the needs of specific groups, in particular young people and vulnerable groups, to provide tailored solutions. We will make links to other areas of work including on issues such as equalities, socioeconomic disadvantage and social mobility.

We believe that implementing *Communities in control* is even more important in difficult economic times. By putting into practice the vision set out in the white paper, local authorities can:

- increase trust in public institutions
- improve the quality and efficiency of services
- take and justify difficult decisions
- promote good community relations
- build resilient community networks

As local authorities everywhere start to make use of the 'duty to involve' (which came into force in April) *Communities and Local Government*, the LGA and others will continue to support them in translating the theory of empowerment into practice. Doing so is far from an ideological exercise, or an optional add-on: it is a way of making a genuine difference at a time when people need it most.

Annex: Policy commitments chapter by chapter in *Communities in control*

Chapter	Commitment	Timing
1.	Launch the frontline taskforce to look at the role of the public service workforce in empowering users and residents and how the frontline can respond to a more empowered public	Spring 2009
	Successful recipients of the empowerment fund announced and fund commences	March 2009/ April 2009
	Publish final report on empowering the frontline taskforce	2010
	Extend the duty to involve to a number of partner authorities	2010
	A new duty on local authorities to promote democratic understanding	2010
2.	Set up pilot programme of Take Part local pathfinders	Early 2009
	Take Part phase two pathfinders begin delivery	Spring 2009
	National partner for Communitybuilders programme to be selected	Spring 2009
	Communitybuilders programme	2009-2014
3.	Supporting a range of innovation in new technologies	Spring 2009
	A national coordinator appointed to fund a selection of demonstration projects	April 2009
	Pilot a digital mentor scheme in deprived communities in England	2009
4.	National body for youth leadership announced	January 2009
	Publish guidance on the Councillor Call for Action	February 2009
	Further increase the number of participatory budgeting projects	2008/09 – 2010/11
	Projects on customer-led transformation in service delivery	2008/09 – 2010/11
	Funding to support community involvement in planning	2009-2011
	Set up participatory budgeting for community safety pilots	By March 2009
	Councillor Call for Action for local government matters and crime and disorder matters comes into force	April 2009
	Offer support to tenant management organisations wanting to influence and deliver other neighbourhood services	Early 2009
	Fifth round of choice based letting schemes launched	Spring 2009
	First proposals under the Sustainable Communities Act submitted to the Local Government Association	July 2009
	Publication of a toolkit to assist tenant management organisations influence and deliver other neighbourhood services	Summer 2009

Chapter	Commitment	Timing
	Completion of research stage of review of tenant participation compacts	Summer 2009
	Appointment of national tenant voice board	2010
	Introduce a duty on local authorities to respond to local petitions	2010
	Target for all local authorities to have choice based letting schemes in place	2010
5.	Work with action learning partners to arrange, manage and evaluate a project which tests a remit for Local Involvement Networks (LiNs) which is wider than health and social care	July 2008 – May 2011
	Government response to the consultation on Changing Council Governance Arrangements	Summer 2009
	Introduce a requirement on those councils with LAA responsibility to designate an officer to support the overview and scrutiny function, and broaden the scope of what a joint overview and scrutiny committee may consider	2010
6.	Publish the report of the Redress Review	June 2009
	Establish pilots to look at how community pledgebanks can help deliver local priorities	Autumn 2009
	Publish a review of the Local Government Ombudsman's jurisdiction	2009
	Extend the length of existing community contract pilots and carry out an independent evaluation	2009
7.	Complete a review of accreditation for civic roles	January 2009
	Employers' information pack providing better information for employers about benefits of civic roles for their staff	Summer 2009
	Make it easier for people to find information on ways to be active in civic roles in their communities	Summer 2009
	Programme of accreditation for civic roles	Summer 2009
	Introduce the title of 'Alderwomen'	2010
8.	Action research led by the Development Trusts Association and Co-operatives UK	Jan 2009 – March 2011
	Advancing Assets for Communities programme supporting people to run and own local services	2009/10 – 2010/11
	Asset transfer unit operating	April 2009
	Action research project to support collaborative approaches to strategic asset management	April 2009
	Summary of responses to community land trusts consultation published	Spring 2009

