



Government Office for the South West  
representing central government in the south west region

GOSW

# Empowering and Engaging Citizens

Dave Duggan

Assistant Director

Safer and Stronger Communities Directorate

Government Office for the South West



Towards Community Empowerment  
Government Office for the South West  
18 January 2008

## Why is empowerment part of government policy?

- **Tackling disaffection with the political processes**
- **Improving services through better engagement**
- **Helping strengthen communities through involvement, interaction and cohesion**



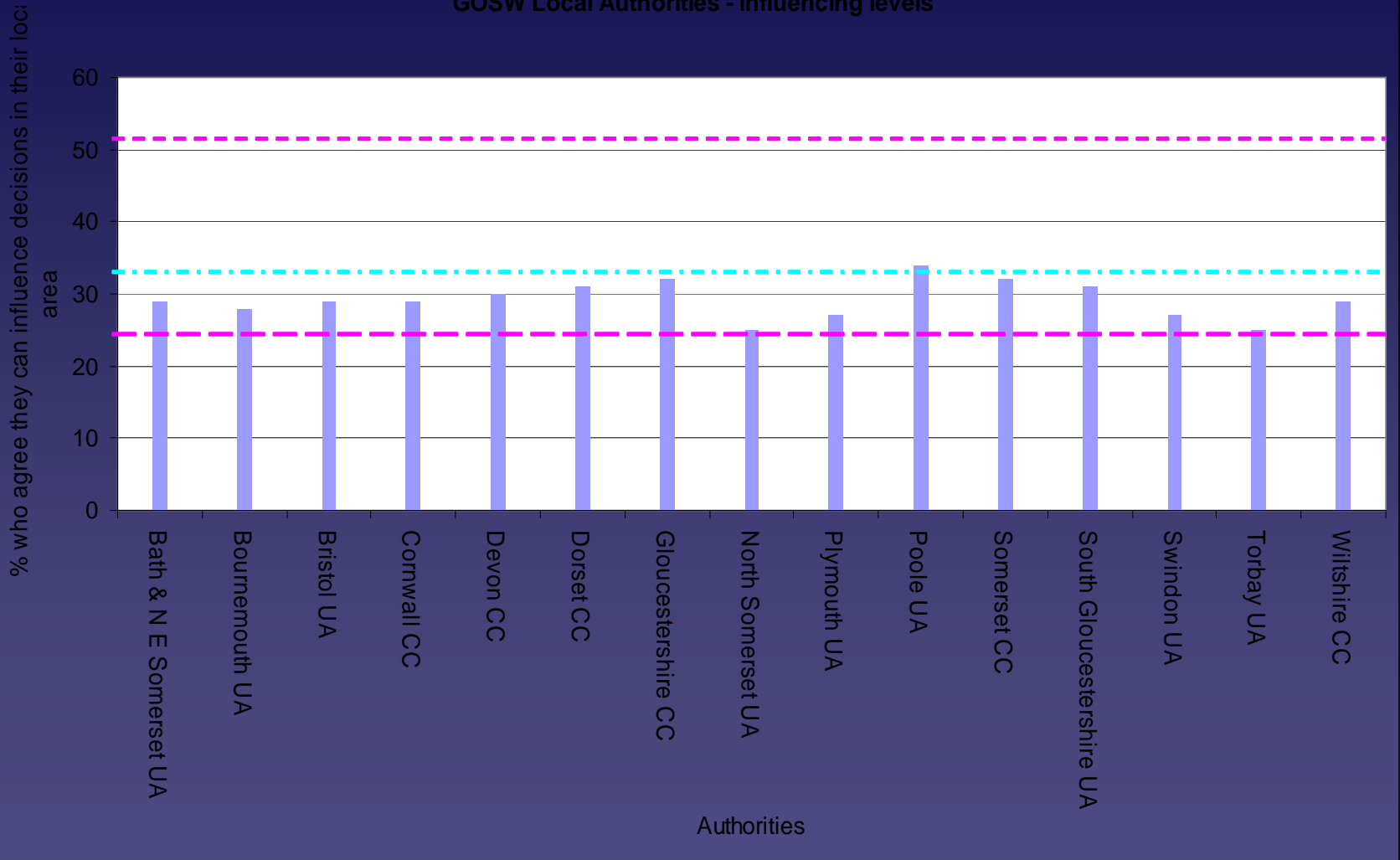
# Measurement and Targets

- Local Area agreements
- 198 National Indicators (up to 35 targets agreed)
- National Indicator 4: % of people who feel they can influence decisions in their locality
- The Place Survey – data early in the New Year



# Current Performance in the Region

GOSW Local Authorities - influencing levels





# A Measurable Improvement?

- Around 15-20,000 MORE people answering positive (if asked)
- Without losing any of those answering positively now!



# Areas in the SW selecting National Indicator 4 as a target

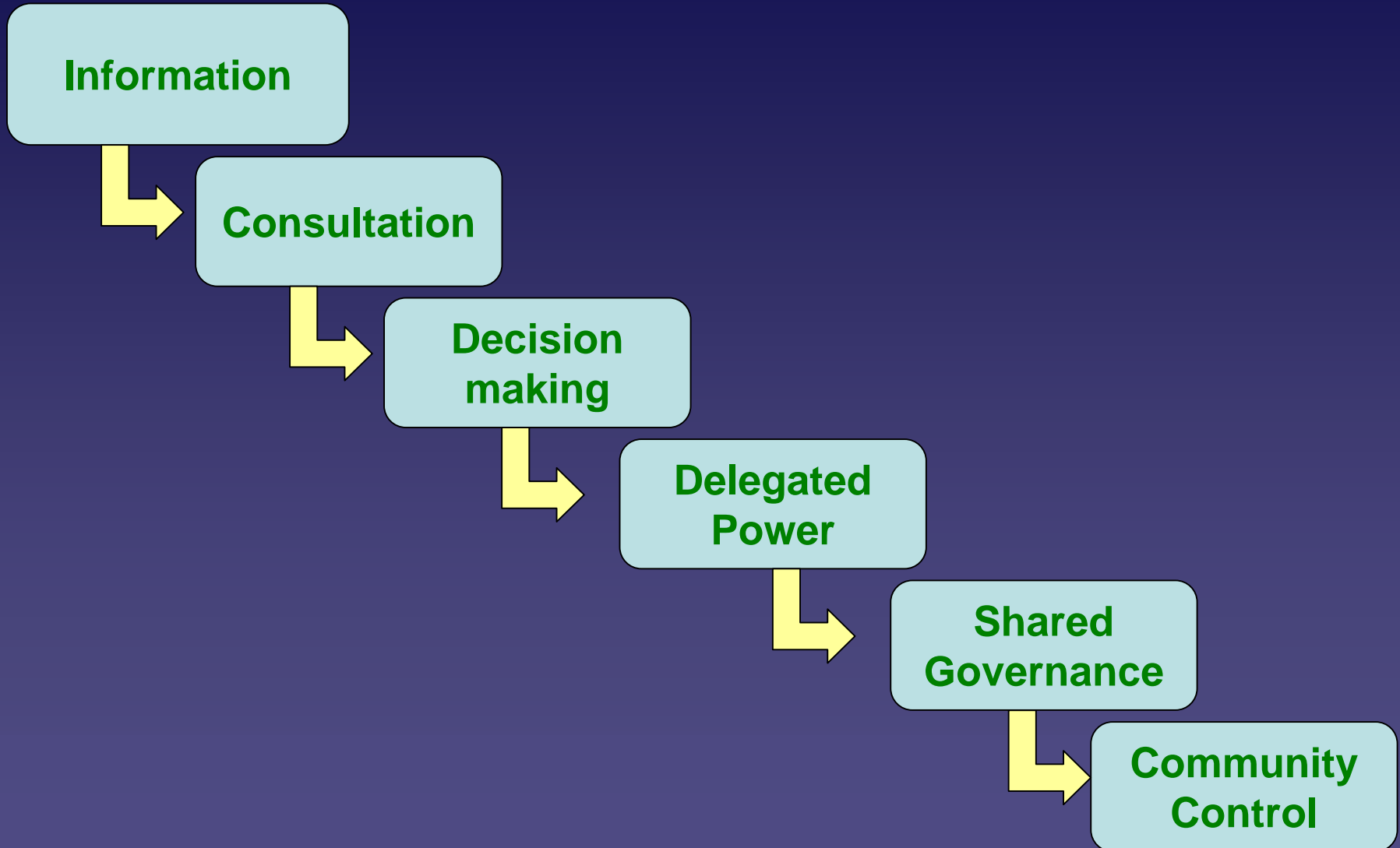
- Devon
- Poole
- Somerset
- South Gloucestershire
- Gloucestershire
- North Somerset
- Plymouth
- Torbay
- Wiltshire



- What approach is being taken in your area to increase empowerment?



# Degrees of Empowerment





# Key Recent Developments

- Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act (2007)
- Communities in Control – White Paper – July 2008



# The 2007 Act

The act introduced statutory requirements for:

- Arrangements for new Local Area Agreements
- Proposals for more unitary councils
- Local Involvement Networks (Public Health)
- The Duty to Involve



# The Duty To Involve

- involve *representatives of local persons* in the exercise of any of their functions, where they consider that it is appropriate to do so.

## Three ways to involve

- **providing information** about functions
- **consulting** about the exercise of the particular function
- **involving in other ways**
- **AND**
- **how to take part**
- **what is involved in taking part in local decision making**



# Duty To Involve – applies to ?

Originally

- Local Authorities
- Fire and Rescue Authorities

But proposals to extend it include:

- English Heritage
- Homes and Communities Agency
- Jobcentre Plus
- The Environment Agency
- Health and Safety Executive
- The Learning and Skills Council in England

- Museums, Libraries and Archives Council
- Natural England
- Police Authorities
- Probation Trusts and other providers of probation services
- Regional Development Agencies
- Sport England
- Youth Offending Teams
- Local Probation Boards



# Communities in Control – White Paper July 2008

- **The purpose of the White Paper is to transfer power from government to citizens and communities – and so promote more empowered citizens and put communities in control**



# Main themes of the White Paper

- Being active in your community
- Access to Information
- Having an influence
- Challenge
- Redress
- Standing for Office
- Ownership and Control



# Some “Empowerment” Initiatives – promoted through the White Paper

- Participatory Budgeting (pilots in Wiltshire and Cornwall – everywhere by 2012)
- Increased accountability – overview and scrutiny
- Role of Councillors
- Petitions and Councillors “Call for Action”
- Grassroots Grants (£130m nationally)
- Local Involvement Networks (LINKs)
- Asset Transfer
- Encouraging some delegation of budgets



## The Empowerment Team in the Region

- Regional Empowerment Partnership
- Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership (LIFT SW)
- National Empowering Authorities Network – IDEA and CLG - Plymouth and Wiltshire in the SW
- Audit Commission and the CAA
- SW Resource Centre

Working together