

# The Little Book of Influence

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Helping community and voluntary groups to achieve their goals by providing support, inspiration and resources throughout Dorset.



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A guide to  
influencing  
decision makers  
in Dorset

HAVE YOUR SAY!

[www.DorsetCommunityAction.org.uk](http://www.DorsetCommunityAction.org.uk)

## Welcome to the Little Book of Influence.

This guide has been designed to help you have your say and influence decisions, whether local or national, that affect you and your community.

### Why would I want to influence decisions?

Decisions are made throughout Dorset every day on things that might affect you. They might be decisions about jobs or transport, schools or libraries, the environment, new buildings, housing development – almost anything you can think of. This guide will help you to understand some of the many different ways you can influence decisions about things that affect your community.

### How easy is it to influence decisions?

How much you can influence decisions depends partly on the amount of time you are able to spend “being influential”. But it is also a lot about knowing how and who to influence.

*That's where this guide comes in!*

Preparing to influence

Who to influence

Tools for influencing

“The difference between what we do and what we are capable of doing would suffice to solve most of the world’s problems.”

Mahatma Gandhi



## \* What are you trying to achieve?

Being clear about what you aim to do makes it easier for people to support you and join your campaign. Remember, what are your key messages?

» [www.campaigncentral.org.uk/know-how](http://www.campaigncentral.org.uk/know-how)

**TIP**

To get you thinking about defining your issue check out this short film clip from [louder.org.uk](http://louder.org.uk)

» [www.bit.ly/Define\\_Issue](http://www.bit.ly/Define_Issue)

## \* Evidence

Evidence is really crucial to your case, whether it's proving the need for a new service, opposing a development, fighting the loss of a service, supporting an environmental cause or anything else you are campaigning about. Using statistics can give your campaign greater credibility.

» [www.dorsetforyou.com/statistics](http://www.dorsetforyou.com/statistics) (Dorset)

» [www.statistics.gov.uk](http://www.statistics.gov.uk) (National)

You might need to make a Freedom of Information request to get hold of information vital to your case.

» [www.bit.ly/FIRequest](http://www.bit.ly/FIRequest)

Once you've gathered your evidence, you can start to build your case.

» [www.bit.ly/case\\_building](http://www.bit.ly/case_building)

## \* Consultation

Do other people feel the same way as you do? You may need to **organise surveys or a public meeting** or similar activities to find out whether other people agree with you. This may also form part of your evidence to support your cause.

» [www.bit.ly/why\\_consult](http://www.bit.ly/why_consult)

» [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com)

## \* Mapping influence

This means knowing where and when the key decisions are made (see the Who to Influence section). Many important decisions that affect your community are made at council meetings, so make sure you keep an eye on developments!

» [www.dorsetforyou.com/committees](http://www.dorsetforyou.com/committees)

## \* People

These are your most valuable resource! Think about **how other people can help you** with what you are aiming to do.

Is there a group already active in the area?

Do you need to form a new group?

(Dorchester Community Action can help you with this). Could you form a partnership with existing groups? Do you need volunteers?

Do you need activists?

» [www.bit.ly/useful\\_allies](http://www.bit.ly/useful_allies) (short video clip)

## \* How are you going to achieve your aim?

See the Tools section to develop your strategy.



climate change  
campaigning • democracy  
climate • social media  
children • freedom  
immigration • food  
poverty • water  
referendum  
discrimination  
education  
funding  
civil society  
independence  
energy  
women  
campaign  
farming  
environment  
transport • nonprofit  
music • activism  
social change  
work

When you think about who to influence, don't only think in terms of Government and councils. Depending on the issue, **you may need to lobby or influence all sorts of organisations**. It may be a large landowner, a Housing Association or the Chamber of Commerce that you need to influence. Don't forget about these organisations, as well as some of the more obvious!

**TIP** If your issue is specifically rural, contact Dorset Community Action who will be able to give you contacts and advice.

» [www.dorsetcommunityaction.org.uk](http://www.dorsetcommunityaction.org.uk)

## \* Parliament

It may be that you need to **campaign directly to Parliament** over an issue important to you. You could do this by lobbying your MP or groups of MPs, submitting a petition to Parliament, submitting evidence on a bill or by taking part in a committee inquiry.

see *Tools for Influencing* section

» [www.parliament.uk/get-involved/have-your-say](http://www.parliament.uk/get-involved/have-your-say)

## \* Members of Parliament (MPs)

**Having your MP on side can be a powerful campaigning tool**. They can raise the issue in Parliament or with local media. Whatever their party's priorities, it's their job to pass on your concerns. There are 8 MPs covering Dorset, Bournemouth and Poole.

» [www.theyworkforyou.com](http://www.theyworkforyou.com)

## \* Government

Sometimes it's useful to know the workings of all the different departments of government. MPs may make the decisions, but they are implemented by civil servants. Make sure you know which agency to approach.

» [www.bit.ly/uk\\_gov\\_depts](http://www.bit.ly/uk_gov_depts)

## \* Members of European Parliament

Is your issue something that is decided by the European Parliament rather than the UK one? In that case you may want to lobby your MEP. There are 6 MEPs representing the South West, you can contact any or all of them.

» [www.europarl.org.uk](http://www.europarl.org.uk)

## \* UK Youth Parliament (UKYP)

UKYP is run by young people for young people. It provides **an opportunity for 11-18 year olds to have a powerful voice** which is listened to by local and national government, as well as providers of services and agencies who work with young people.

» [www.ukyouthparliament.co.uk](http://www.ukyouthparliament.co.uk)

**TIP** Dorset has 3 elected members of the UK Youth Parliament

## \* Councillors

Many important local decisions are made by your council, whether it's at a County, District, Borough, Town or Parish level.

» [www.dorsetforyou.com/councillors](http://www.dorsetforyou.com/councillors)

## \* Council Officers

It's always useful to know who does what in your local council

» [www.dorsetforyou.com/387559](http://www.dorsetforyou.com/387559)

## \* Health

Influencing very large organisations such as NHS Dorset, particularly when the structures for collecting residents views change frequently, can be very difficult. But don't give up! **There are mechanisms for getting your voice heard.**

» [www.dorset-pct.nhs.uk/getting\\_involved/](http://www.dorset-pct.nhs.uk/getting_involved/)

» [www.bit.ly/Dorset\\_LINK](http://www.bit.ly/Dorset_LINK)

» [www.dorset-pct.nhs.uk/the\\_organisation/board.asp](http://www.dorset-pct.nhs.uk/the_organisation/board.asp)

## \* Schools

Schools are very influential institutions within communities. Being a governor is one way to influence the strategic direction of the school. Schools want governors from the local community, as well as parents of pupils. Speak to your local headteacher for more info.

» [www.dorsetforyou.com/schools](http://www.dorsetforyou.com/schools)

» [www.dorsetforyou.com/schoolgovernors](http://www.dorsetforyou.com/schoolgovernors)

## \* Community Safety

You may have heard of PACT (Partners and Communities Together). This offers a direct route to influencing how community safety resources are prioritised locally.

» [www.bit.ly/Dorset\\_PACT](http://www.bit.ly/Dorset_PACT)

**TIP** PACT meeting dates and venues will normally be advertised locally

The Dorset Police Authority is an independent body responsible for ensuring Dorset has an efficient and effective police force. They hold a range of public consultation events and can send representatives to your community meeting.

» [www.bit.ly/DorsetPA](http://www.bit.ly/DorsetPA)

## \* Community Partnerships

Community partnerships work towards establishing and delivering community plans.

They work differently in different parts of the county but can be a very effective method for taking up local issues.

» [www.dorsetforyou.com/330093](http://www.dorsetforyou.com/330093)

## \* Business

Depending on the issue, lobbying business bodies can be highly effective. Many environmental and social campaigns rely heavily on lobbying businesses.

## \* Building and development planning

If you want to influence planning decisions it's particularly important you know what planning applications have been submitted, how you can act and the deadlines for commenting on them.

» [www.dorsetforyou.com/planning](http://www.dorsetforyou.com/planning)

## \* Housing

If you are a tenant of a Housing Association there will be a mechanism for expressing your views.

**TIP** Some of the community partnerships also have Housing Forums.

» [www.dorsetforyou.com/housing](http://www.dorsetforyou.com/housing)

## \* Forums

Joining a forum can be a good way of sharing information, meeting with others in similar situations and **joining together to have a "voice" with decision makers**. These are some of the forums currently in existence in the county:

0-19 VCS Forum

» [www.dorsetyouth.com/third-sector-support](http://www.dorsetyouth.com/third-sector-support)

Dorset Sustainability & Environment Forum

» [www.sustainabledorset.org.uk](http://www.sustainabledorset.org.uk)

Dorset Health & Well-being Forum

» [www.dorsetcommunityaction.org.uk/health\\_well-being\\_forum](http://www.dorsetcommunityaction.org.uk/health_well-being_forum)

Older People's Forums for individuals aged 50+

» [www.acdorchester.org.uk/forums.html](http://www.acdorchester.org.uk/forums.html)



After defining the issue, motivating others to join your campaign and carefully identifying who you need to influence, **it is now time to develop a successful campaign.**

## \* Campaign

Behind every successful campaign is a clear campaign strategy.

» [www.campaigncentral.org.uk](http://www.campaigncentral.org.uk)

» [www.volresource.org.uk/info/campres.htm](http://www.volresource.org.uk/info/campres.htm)

## \* Be memorable

It is important that your message is clear, concise and visible. You want people to understand and remember what you are telling them.

## \* Social media

A new but very valuable campaigning tool! There are lots of ways to get your message across using the Internet. Some of the more well-known ones are **Facebook, Twitter**, blogging and online forums. If you are not comfortable using these tools, plenty of people are experts – just ask around!

» [www.volunteergenie.org.uk/new-media-adventures](http://www.volunteergenie.org.uk/new-media-adventures)

## \* Be creative

» [www.bit.ly/campaign\\_tactics](http://www.bit.ly/campaign_tactics) (short video clip)

## \* Media

Use your local press! Getting local papers, radio and even television coverage of your campaign can raise its profile and help it gain more support.

» [www.mediatrust.org](http://www.mediatrust.org)

## \* Participate in a Council meeting

It is your right to ask a question for consideration at full council meetings!

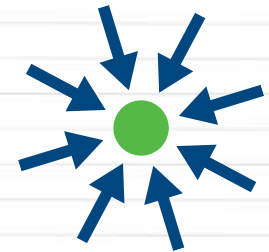
» [www.dorsetforyou.com/394093](http://www.dorsetforyou.com/394093)

## \* Targeting Decision Makers

**Network, network, network!**

Know who's who in decision making and ensure they are aware of your views.

» [www.campaigncentral.org.uk/know-how/influencing-decision-makers](http://www.campaigncentral.org.uk/know-how/influencing-decision-makers)



## \* Lobbying

Methods of lobbying vary greatly, ranging from sending letters, making presentations, providing briefing material or organising rallies.

» [www.parliament.uk/get-involved/have-your-say/lobbying](http://www.parliament.uk/get-involved/have-your-say/lobbying)

## \* Petitions

Collecting signatures in support of your cause is a good way of evidencing support.

**TIP** Did you know that a petition with enough signatures on it has to be discussed in a full County Council meeting?

» [www.dorsetforyou.com/petitions](http://www.dorsetforyou.com/petitions)

» [epetitions.dorsetforyou.com](http://epetitions.dorsetforyou.com)



*John Smith*

## \* Protests

Organising a peaceful protest has maximum impact for a cause and will often get media coverage. Find a way to deliver a strong message through the use of placards or **create ideas that grab attention!**

» [www.yourrights.org.uk](http://www.yourrights.org.uk)

## \* Town and Parish Planning

If your town or parish is developing a plan or updating one, this is a good opportunity to be involved and get your views included.

» [www.dorsetforyou.com/330476](http://www.dorsetforyou.com/330476)

## \* The Compact

The compact is an agreement between government and the voluntary sector outlining how they will work together.

**TIP** It's about how they **HAVE** to work with us!

» [www.bit.ly/The\\_Compact](http://www.bit.ly/The_Compact)

## \* The Dorset Compact

The Dorset Compact outlines how local authorities will consult, engage and involve the voluntary sector in the planning, design and delivery of local services.

» [www.dorsetforyou.com/4243](http://www.dorsetforyou.com/4243)

## \* Measuring Your Impact

A crucial part of campaigning is **working out the impact you have made**, so that you can assess progress, try different routes and improve your approach.

» [www.bit.ly/axis\\_of\\_influence](http://www.bit.ly/axis_of_influence)

“It always seems impossible until it is done.”

Nelson Mandela

