

The power of communications

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Setting the scene

- High level of media and patient interest in cancer drugs
- Managing the communications is always going to be a challenge – highly emotive issues
- As commissioners we are required to ensure good communications



Where we started

- Pre-2006 we were a step behind
 - Inconsistent approach to availability of drugs across the region = 'postcode prescribing'
 - High profile regional media campaign about Alimta
 - National and regional media publicity about Herceptin
 - Lack of understanding by media about the treatments i.e. 'wonder drugs'



How we are working now

- Consistent approach to availability of cancer drugs
- Planned approach to communications – proactive and reactive
- Better understanding among media about new treatments



How we got there

- Media statements prepared after each meeting of North of England Cancer Drug Approvals Group
- Media handling mainly through one office
 - Key messages about group included in communications
- Briefings for editors and health correspondents when necessary
- Focus on positive developments



The benefits

- Better media coverage
 - Individual issues still highlighted but more balance included
 - More coverage of positive developments
 - Journalists better informed



Issues to consider

- Working with the media can be time-consuming
 - Interviews can be difficult and need careful handling
 - Professionals need to be well briefed and be willing to make time available (and to fit in with media deadlines)

