Engaging with the media

What they read in the media largely shapes the general public’s perception and understanding of the NHS.

Using the media is an important and effective way of reaching different sections of the local community to communicate what we do and how we plan to improve services.

Recognise that journalists are likely to focus on anything controversial because it sells newspapers! They will always support communities and individuals against the public sector if there is any hint of threat to their local NHS.

Be prepared for the issues they may focus on. Think about what concerns local people, patients and particularly staff who may be affected by changes. It is always best to tackle any negative issues rather than risk people going to the press and putting you “on the back foot”.

There are a number of approaches you can choose (e.g. press releases, press briefings, phone-in sessions or interviews). Your local newspaper may be prepared to run an opinion poll on your behalf. Invite your local media to any public events you are holding.

Use "case studies" (e.g. examples where patients have benefited or would benefit from the type of service you are proposing), as the media like to focus on what the proposal means to local people. Keep a look out for potential case studies.

Your Communications Lead is always a source of help and advice, so keep in constant touch. In particular they can help you:

- rebut criticism
- arrange with senior managers who will be available to act as spokesperson and respond to enquiries from the media
- advise on who will be the first contact for the media and who needs to authorise press releases and media interviews.

http://engagementguide.nhshull.nhs.uk/page/engaging-with-the-media