

Awareness & Early Diagnosis of Cancer

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Background

The North of England has some of the poorest cancer survival rates in England. Research has shown that public awareness of the signs and symptoms of cancer is lower in the North of England than in the rest of England and many patients present with late stage disease. To try to address this NECN has undertaken a series of initiatives in the Awareness and Early Diagnosis of Cancer Project to raise the public awareness of cancer and to work with the health community to achieve earlier diagnosis of cancer.

Aims and Objectives

- To increase public awareness of the signs and symptoms of cancer
- To increase the number of people visiting their GP with signs and symptoms of cancer.
- To support Primary Care to manage patients through the system appropriately.
- To increase the number of practices participating in initiatives related to the awareness and early diagnosis of cancer.
- To improve dialogue between primary and secondary care.

Method

NECN were early adopters of the Be Clear on Cancer (BCOC) brand and ran several public awareness campaigns with local media partners. These campaigns have utilised nationally developed messages and were localised to include local GPs and cancer survivors. We have worked with colleagues across Public Health, Primary, Secondary and Tertiary care to ensure the healthcare community is prepared for the campaigns and have produced capacity modelling tools to assist them with this.

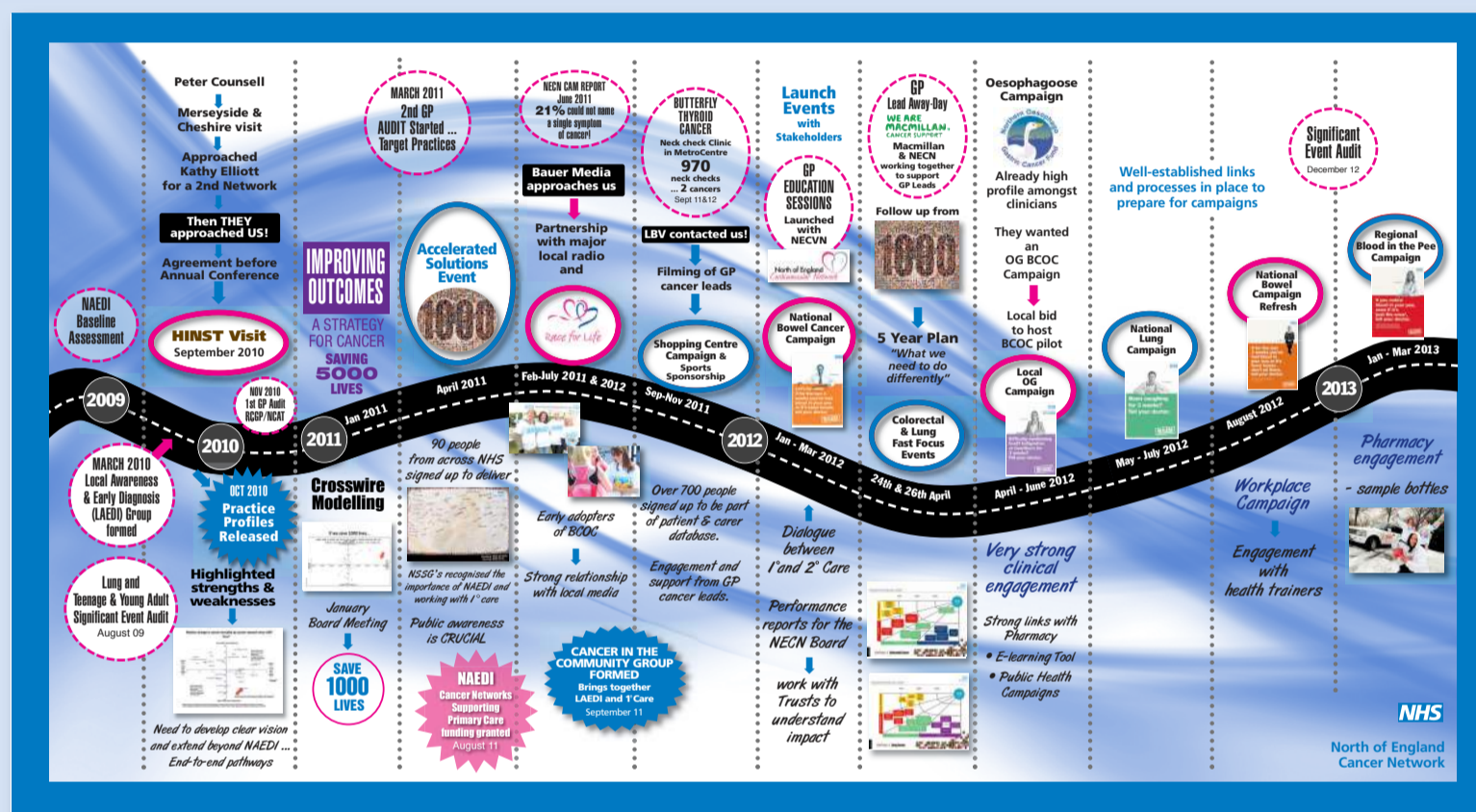


Figure 1: The Awareness and Early Diagnosis journey in NECN

We have worked with GP Cancer Leads to introduce a range of initiatives in Primary Care to support earlier diagnosis of cancer. Specific projects include the coordination of audits across primary care; building dialogue between primary and secondary care through educational sessions; supporting GPs to use practice profiles to drive improvement and implementation of cancer decision support tools.

Number of initiatives in which practices are participating
(NAEDI data collection March 2013)

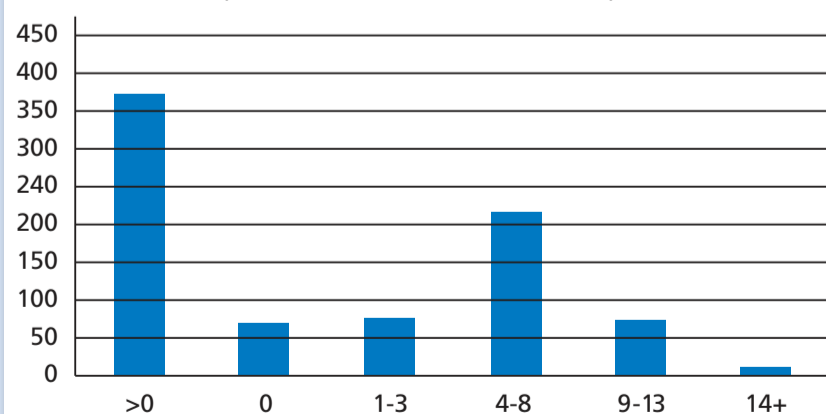


Figure 2

Benefits of the Project

- Awareness levels of the signs and symptoms of cancer have increased significantly,
- There has been an increase in people attending their GP with relevant symptoms,
- There has been an increase in the number of people being referred urgently with a suspicion of cancer,
- In NECN since November 2011 there has been a 83% increase in activity to support awareness and early diagnosis of cancer in Primary Care.
- 84% of all practices in NECN have engaged in at least 1 activity with a majority taking part in between 4 and 8 initiatives (see figure 2)
- Practice participation in any initiative resulted in a greater increase in referrals, smaller proportion of cancers being diagnosed through less favourable routes such as emergency admissions and routine pathways and a reduction in variation between practices.