

Healthwatch Halton Annual Report 2020-21



Contents

Message from our Chair	3
About us	4
Highlights from our year	5
Maternity Matters	6
Finding Help and Support	8
GP websites	9
Responding to COVID-19	10
Volunteers	13
Finances	15
Next steps & thank you	16
Statutory statements	17



To find out more >>>

Visit our website to find information on our current and past projects.

www.healthwatchhalton.co.uk/healthwatch-projects/

healthwatch
Halton

Message from our Chair

When I wrote this statement last year I did not envisage that one further year on we would just be moving into some sense of normality. The year has yet again been one of great challenge and the COVID-19 pandemic has obviously been the biggest.

The impact on health and social care services of COVID-19 and the lockdown restrictions on social contact have put an enormous strain on people and services. Yet we've seen a tremendous response from our local services who have adapted to the changes and pressures while continuing to provide great care.

The efforts made every day by NHS staff and all the volunteers who supported them with the vaccination programme have been staggering and they should be so proud of what they have achieved.

During the pandemic Healthwatch Halton switched its focus to ensuring local people were kept informed on the numerous changes that were taking place as a result of COVID-19. We developed new ways to reach out and engage and we greatly expanded our online presence to ensure we provided people with clear, consistent and concise advice and information to help address their concerns. Through our website, social media and engagement this information was viewed almost 550,000 times.

We introduced a series of online 'Tuesday Chat' Zoom sessions, to help inform the public about a range of local services, which have received positive feedback. We have continued to work with all our partners to distribute and construct clear information to support the public, whilst continuing to seek your valuable feedback about services in general and of course COVID-19.

One of our original priorities for this year was to gather the experiences of women using maternity services for Halton. Due to COVID-19, the project turned into an online only piece of work. We were delighted though with the number of people who took the opportunity to give us their experiences. It was pleasing to note, in the final report, a commitment from NHS Halton CCG to include Healthwatch Halton in the development work around the maternity pathway.

We supported the Healthwatch network by joining with Healthwatch across the country to take part in the #BecauseWeAllCare campaign, which encouraged people to give their feedback on their experiences of care.

You can read about more of the work we carried out this year within this report.

This year we were also delighted to sponsor one of the awards for the Halton Community Kindness Awards. These awards are designed to recognise the outstanding work of the people and groups in our communities who make life a little easier for those around them. Our award was presented to The Sanctuary, Widnes, for the tremendous support they give to some of the most vulnerable and diverse groups across Widnes.

I look forward to another interesting and challenging year for Healthwatch Halton in supporting the people of Halton.



Kath Parker

Healthwatch Advisory Board Chair

About us

Here to make health and care better

We are the independent champion for people who use health and social care services in Halton. We're here to find out what matters to people and help make sure your views shape the support you need, by sharing these views with those who have the power to make change happen.

Helping you to find the information you need

We help people find the information they need about services in their area. This has been vital during the pandemic with the ever-changing environment and restrictions limiting people's access to health and social care services.

Our goals



1 Supporting you to have your say

We want more people to get the information they need to take control of their health and care, make informed decisions and shape the services that support them.



2 Providing a high quality service

We want everyone who shares an experience or seeks advice from us to get a high quality service and to understand the difference that their views make.



3 Ensuring your views help improve health and care

We want more services to use your views to shape the health and care support you need today and in the future.



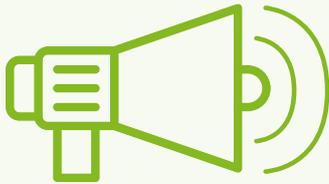
“Local Healthwatch have done fantastic work throughout the country during the COVID-19 pandemic, but there is more work ahead to ensure that everyone’s views are heard. COVID-19 has highlighted inequalities and to tackle these unfair health differences we will need those in power to listen, to hear the experiences of those facing inequality and understand the steps that could improve people’s lives.”

Sir Robert Francis QC, Chair of Healthwatch England

Highlights from our year

Find out about our resources and how we have engaged and supported people in 2020-21.

Reaching out



1404 people

told us about their experiences of health and social care this year.

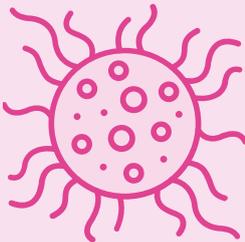
67,093 people

accessed Healthwatch information and advice online or contacted us with questions about local support

Our social media messages, website and newsletters were viewed

549,558 times

Responding to the pandemic



We engaged with and supported

45,899 people

during the COVID-19 pandemic this year. Through our website, social media, email and telephone. This total also includes two pieces of work on people's experiences during the pandemic and feedback gathered on the COVID-19 vaccination programme.

Making a difference to care



We published

8 reports

about the improvements people would like to see to health and social care services locally.

Health and care that works for you



15 volunteers

helped us to carry out our work. In total, they contributed almost 84 days of time.

We employ 4 staff

1 full-time and three part time or 2.6 full time equivalent.

We received

£122,207.11p in funding

from our local authority in 2020-21



Maternity Matters

Maternity Matters

Thanks to people sharing their experiences of local maternity services we have been able to help commissioners with their plans to improve the local maternity pathway for women and their families

From December 2020 to February 2021 we gathered the experiences of local women who had given birth in the past 12-18 months. 132 women took part in an online survey and 10 gave more in depth details of their experiences.

Our report highlighted positive aspects of local maternity services, with 78% of women feeling health professionals had been supportive during their pregnancy.

There were some areas for improvement, including continuity of care, with 46% saying they had seen 4 or more midwives during pregnancy, while almost a third felt appointments weren't always at convenient times and 27% didn't feel listened to when they raised a concern.

9 out of 10 women told us they had used maternity apps and the internet for support and information during pregnancy. Our report asked for further engagement with women over the use of apps and called for an 'approved' list of online information and advice.

NHS Halton CCG is currently leading on a project to improve the local maternity pathway and responded to our report and recommendations with a willingness to work with Healthwatch Halton on the development of the pathway.



We would like to first of all thank Healthwatch Halton for taking the time to coordinate this piece of work, as we found it extremely useful and timely, with it coinciding with a project we are currently leading on to improve the local maternity pathway for woman and their families.

Leigh Thompson

Chief Commissioner NHS Halton CCG

Maternity Matters summary



132 women took part in the survey



52% were first-time mums



84 births were since the start of the pandemic



89% of women had downloaded maternity related apps



Almost 1 in 3 women felt appointments weren't always at convenient times



46% of women had seen 4 or more midwives during their pregnancy



78% felt health professionals were supportive



70% of partners couldn't attend antenatal appointments due to Covid restrictions



27% didn't feel listened to when raising a concern during labour and birth

Continuity of Carer - Engagement is planned to ensure to women have the opportunity to contribute to the redesign of the pathway which includes a focus on 'having access to the same midwife from the same midwifery team throughout their journey where possible and at times that suit them'.

Online Support apps - NHS Halton CCG will ensure this recommendation is included in the women and families engagement plan and will also raise this with the midwives when working through the next stages of the redesign of the local pathway.

Further involvement - NHS Halton CCG have agreed that Healthwatch Halton, and those women who offered to take part in further engagement, will be involved in the future development work on the local maternity pathway.

At Healthwatch Halton we have committed to follow up on the recommendations in the report with the commissioner and providers of maternity services towards the end of 2021, to check the progress made against the recommendations within the report.

Read the full report at

www.healthwatchhalton.co.uk/report/maternity-matters/



Share your experience of Maternity Services

Have you, or someone you know, used local maternity services in the past year?

We'd like to hear your story.

What was good?

What could have been better?

 www.healthwatchhalton.co.uk/contact-us/

 **0300 777 6543**

 enquiries@healthwatchhalton.co.uk



Finding Help and Support

Young People's Mental Health

Healthwatch Halton undertook this area of work as we had limited intelligence on young people's preferred sources for information or initial help for their mental health.

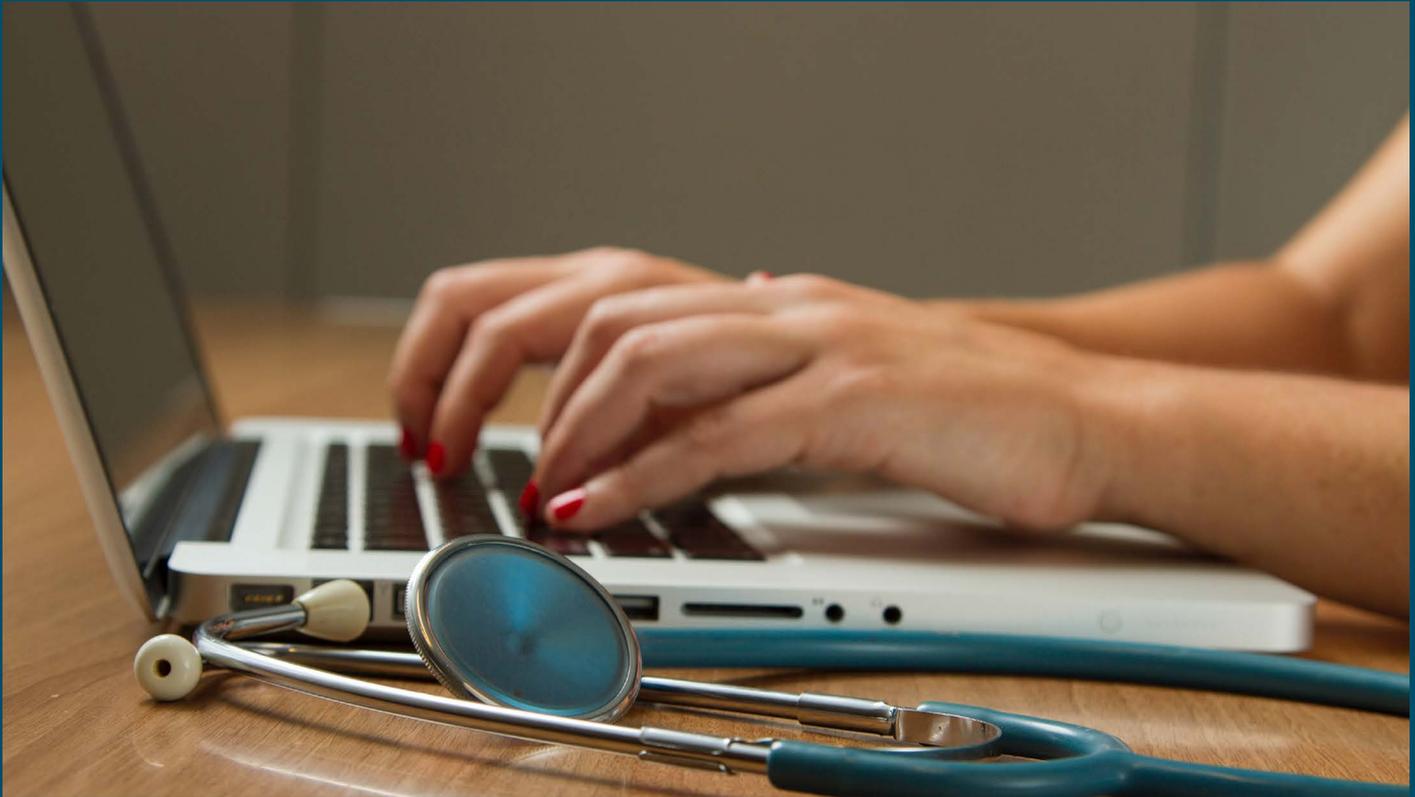
Our report found that four in five young people were confident they knew where to get help if needed. One in two young people stated that friends were their preferred option for help. A key part of the THRIVE model for mental wellbeing is having low level support accessible through school or college. We found that while three in five felt supported by their school or college, some young people's expectations weren't always met and they faced barriers in being able to access services.

The report recommended mental health support information be given out at schools as part of the yearly induction and called for regular mental health awareness sessions to be held in schools / colleges. Due to the relatively small number of young people who took part in the project the report also called for further engagement to be carried out, working with schools and colleges to ensure the engagement reached as wide a group of young people as possible.

Thanks to these young people sharing their views and experiences with us, we have been able to ensure that improving mental health services for young people remains a priority issue in Halton. The report has recently been presented to the Children and Young People's Emotional Health and Wellbeing Partnership Board, and a formal response and action plan for the recommendations is due shortly. NHS Halton CCG have also agreed to meet with service providers to discuss the report and findings and feedback to Healthwatch Halton.

We have committed as part of our work plan to follow up on the implementation of any recommendations later this year.

Read the full report at www.healthwatchhalton.co.uk/report/finding-help-and-support/



GP websites

During December 2020 and January 2021, a group of Healthwatch volunteers went online and visited all local GP practice websites. As well as looking at the accessibility of the websites, their aim was to look for information that a patient might need without having to call or visit the practice.

Our report reflects that many people have been able to access the relevant information they required to help them stay safe and well, despite the varied and differing layout and content of each individual website. The majority of websites did a fine job of providing the basic information needed by a patient; opening times and how to contact the practice. Beyond that, our volunteers reported a wide variance in the quality and quantity of information available.

Volunteers felt that some websites were put together without any real thought of making it easy for patients to find what they may be looking for. Other sites were easy to navigate and view, but often with sections of information that weren't maintained well enough to keep them up to date and informative. Many websites lacked clear information on patient registration and lacked detail on how patients could make a complaint.

Next Steps

The report has been presented to the local GP Patient Participation Group network, with an offer to work with the group to produce a checklist of essential information for all websites. Our volunteers will revisit the websites in 6 months time to look at what has changed.

Read the full report at www.healthwatchhalton.co.uk/report/gp-website-review/



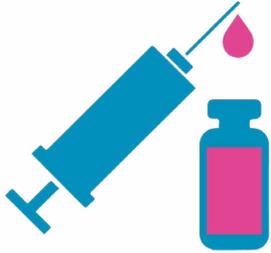
Responding to COVID-19

Healthwatch plays an important role in helping people to get the information they need, especially through the pandemic. The insight we collect is shared with both Healthwatch England and local partners to ensure services are operating as best as possible during the pandemic.

This year we helped people by:

- Providing up to date advice on the COVID-19 response locally through a dedicated section on our website which included links to local and national help and advice on a range of issues. This single section alone had **26,601** visits during the year
- Listening to local peoples worries and concerns around the pandemic and feeding these back to those responsible for the views and feedback about vaccines and the vaccine roll-out
- Feeding back to those responsible for the vaccine programme delivery on patient experience to help the progress of the programme
- Promoting the vaccine roll-out
- Promoting the community volunteer response
- Helping people to access the services they need

Top four areas that people have contacted us about:



40% on Vaccines and Vaccinations



20% on GP services



20% on access to Dentistry



10% on access to Hospital care

Clearing up confusion



Early in the pandemic, we heard from almost **200** people about the lack of clear information and often inaccurate information. Our role became much more focused on providing local people with clear, consistent and concise advice and information articles through our website and social media accounts to help address people’s concerns. In just three months, Healthwatch Halton’s local information had been accessed by over **11,000** people.

During the year as a whole we’ve seen a huge **953%** increase in the visits to our website with the majority of visitors looking for information or advice on accessing services or support during the the pandemic.

Common questions people asked included:

- How and when can I book a COVID-19 test?
- What is the guidance on shielding?
- What days is the blood clinic open?
- How can I find an NHS dentist?



Contact us to get the information you need

If you have a query about a health and social care service, or need help with where you can go to access further support, get in touch. Don’t struggle alone. Healthwatch is here for you.

-  www.healthwatchhalton.co.uk
-  **0300 777 6543**
-  enquiries@healthwatchhalton.co.uk

Finding and accessing the right service can be worrying and stressful. Healthwatch plays an important role in helping people to get the information they need to take control of their health and care and find services that will provide them with the right support.

Breast Screening appointments

Jane contacted us as she'd been trying to book an appointment with the breast screening clinic for 4 days with no success.



Her phone calls went constantly to answer-phone. The hospital website only gave her an option to cancel an appointment, not book one.

We contacted the hospital trust to highlight the issues and heard there were some issues facing the department at the time. Due to COVID-19 the department had been very short staffed and phone calls weren't being answered. The online booking option also didn't display correctly when accessed via a mobile phone, leaving the patient unable to book her appointment.

With the help of the hospital trust we were able to help Jane book her appointment.

We were later informed by the trust that their website provider had fixed the issue with the Breast Screening webpages when accessed by mobile phone and the hospital switchboard were given updated details to help them support callers.

Blood Clinics

We were contacted by a number of people following the cancellation of a local phlebotomy clinic.



Many had attended the clinic on the day, having been asked by their GP practices to have blood tests, only to find on arrival that the clinic had been cancelled.

On contacting the hospital trust, we were informed that details of the planned cancellation had been shared with the local CCG for distribution but not directly with GP practices.

The Trust agreed to put details up at the clinic to inform patients of any future planned cancellations. In addition they agreed to inform Healthwatch in advance if there were planned cancellations.

An update we posted to our website and social media accounts regarding a further cancellation which we were informed of by the Trust reached almost 8000 people in the following days.



Volunteers

At Healthwatch Halton we are supported by **15** volunteers to help us find out what people think is working, and what improvements people would like to make to services.

This year our volunteers have :

- Helped people have their say from home, by promoting surveys through social media and to family, friends and neighbours.
- Carried out website reviews on local GP services on the information they provide.
- Helped with the local and national volunteering efforts.
- Our Advisory Board volunteers have completed online training sessions including, Healthwatch induction, GDPR essentials, Mental Health Awareness, Safeguarding and Equality and Diversity
- Attended online meetings to represent Healthwatch Halton.



In memory of Sue Ellison 1951 - 2021

'What I hope I'm doing - in a small way - is being a voice and speaking for those residents who can't do-so themselves'.

Sue Ellison, one of our longest serving volunteers and board members passed away suddenly earlier this year. Sue was a tremendous advocate for local people. She was a highly active member of our Enter & View team and also helped out at many outreach sessions in the community.



Board members - Diane

"I have been on the Healthwatch Board for two years now. Prior to the pandemic it involved attending a lot of face to face meetings to represent Healthwatch Halton.

This year it has all moved online and I've been able to continue to represent Healthwatch albeit in a 'virtual' role. I've also been able to help by being part of the volunteer group assessing local GP websites to see how easy it was to find information.

"I have found volunteering with Healthwatch Halton over the last year both interesting and challenging - the team adapted quickly to a new way of working in order to maintain continuity in supporting the health needs of the local community during this difficult time, and also to ensure their interests are looked after as we return to normality." - **Jane**

"The experience of the last year has been so encouraging for such a difficult time, watching Healthwatch adapt its approach so that it can still manage to give the public good advice and get their voice heard is very uplifting. Credit to all the staff and volunteers." - **Kath**

"I just wanted to say a quick thanks to all of you though for making my time with you so far so lovely. You have all been very warm, kind and welcoming. I appreciate that." **Ashley**



Volunteer with us

Are you feeling inspired? We are always on the lookout for new volunteers. If you are interested in volunteering, please get in touch with **Healthwatch Halton**.

 www.healthwatchhalton.co.uk/volunteer-opportunities/

 **0300 777 6543**

 jude.burrows@healthwatchhalton.co.uk

Finances

To help us carry out our work we receive funding from our local authority under the Health and Social Care Act 2012.

Income

- Funding received from local authority
- Balance b/f 2019/20



Expenditure

- Staff costs
- Operational costs
- Support and administration



Next steps & thank you

Top three priorities for 2021-22

1. Access to Primary Care services
2. Digital Exclusion
3. Signposting and Information

Next steps

As we start to move away from national restrictions, we will continue to offer virtual working and online engagement but will start to increase our community outreach and events to ensure that we reach all parts of our community.

We have plans to carry out a series of 'virtual visits' to a number of local services, in addition to the gradual re-introduction of our face to face 'Enter & View' programme.

We are committed to following up on the impact of the recommendations made in this year's report. We will also provide updates on the progress made to those people who took part in our work.

From the increased number of enquiries we've received, it's clear that access to some primary care services continues to be a problem for many people in Halton. We'll be focussing on this in the next 12 months and will start by carrying out a piece of work to gather peoples experiences of dental services.

We are committed to equality and diversity and reaching out to seldom heard communities. We will be speaking with people who are more likely to experience 'digital exclusion' to understand why and how it can impact their experiences of healthcare.

We will also be reviewing our existing signposting and information role to identify any unmet needs so gaps in information can be plugged. As a result of this work we will aim to show information and signposting services have been improved for people who use health and social care services in Halton.

I'd like round off the annual report by offering my thanks to everyone who has supported Healthwatch Halton in our work this year.

We've appreciated the partnership working from our local NHS services and the great relationships that we have developed with our voluntary sector colleagues.

Thanks must go to my amazing staff team. They have been a joy to work with through a very challenging year, and also our volunteers and advisory board members who help drive our work forward.



Dave Wilson
Manager
Healthwatch Halton

Statutory statements

About us

Healthwatch Halton, Suite 5, Foundry House, Widnes Business Park, Waterside Lane, Widnes WA8 8GT

Address and contact details of the organisation holding the local Healthwatch contract as of 31/03/2021:
Engaging Communities Solutions,
Unit 42, Staffordshire University Business Village, Dyson Way, Stafford ST18 0TW

Healthwatch Halton uses the Healthwatch Trademark when undertaking our statutory activities as covered by the licence agreement.

The way we work

Involvement of volunteers and lay people in our governance and decision-making.

Our Healthwatch Advisory board consists of seven members who work on a voluntary basis to provide direction, oversight and scrutiny to our activities. Our board ensures that decisions about priority areas of work reflect the concerns and interests of our diverse local community. Through 2020/21 the board met 6 times and made decisions on matters such as choosing Healthwatch Halton's priorities, based on intelligence gathered and feedback received from the public, and aligning them with local and national priorities.

We ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities. Concerns and feedback from the public are collated from our online feedback centre, engagement reports, signposting enquiries and outreach sessions. Local, regional and national intelligence is also gathered from a variety of sources, including voluntary and community sector organisations. Areas of interest are identified from these sources and a shortlist of potential work priorities is created.

Public feedback on our priorities is gathered via an online priorities survey and through community outreach. The Healthwatch Advisory Board reviews the feedback and priorities list and then agrees on our main priorities for the coming year.

Healthwatch Advisory Board members 2020-2021

- Kath Parker - Chair
- Paul Cooke - Vice-Chair
- Sue Connolly - HAB member (joined December 2020)
- Sue Ellison - HAB member (passed away Jan 2021)
- Maureen Isherwood - HAB member
- Diane McCormick - HAB member
- Jane Pritchard - HAB member
- Dave O'Connor - HAB member (joined July 2020)

Methods and systems used across the year's work to obtain people's views and experience.

We use a wide range of approaches to ensure that as many people as possible have the opportunity to provide us with insight about their experience of health and care services. During 2020/21 we have been available by phone, by email, provided a webform on our website, provided a feedback centre system, attended virtual meetings of community groups and forums, provided our own virtual activities and engaged with the public through social media.

We are committed to taking additional steps to ensure we obtain the views of people from diverse backgrounds who are often not heard by health and care decision makers. This year we have done this by, for example, holding a series of public Zoom sessions and inviting local organisations to come and talk about their services and how they've been working during the pandemic and their plans for the future. Local NHS Trusts and the CCG have also used these as an opportunity to engage with the public and voluntary sector groups on proposals for updated and new services. The sessions have been recorded and promoted on social media to give more opportunity for public involvement on the topics covered.

We have promoted an easy read version of the Healthwatch England 'Because We All Care' questionnaire to support more people to be able to feedback and worked with local organisation Halton Speak Out to encourage people with learning disabilities to feedback.

We distributed paper copies of our feedback leaflets to community venues such as the local foodbank and Women's Centre to help in reaching people who may not have online access.

We ensure that this annual report is made available to as many members of the public and partner organisations as possible.

We publish it on our website, www.healthwatchhalton.co.uk/reports/annual-reports/ and promote its publication through our e-bulletin, social media accounts and the local voluntary sector network.

Responses to recommendations and requests

All requests made for responses to recommendations or information were met in a timely manner.

This year, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we did not make use of our Enter and View powers. Consequently, no recommendations or other actions resulted from this area of activity.

There were no issues or recommendations escalated by our Healthwatch to Healthwatch England Committee and so no resulting special reviews or investigations.

Health and Wellbeing Board

Healthwatch Halton is represented on the Halton Health and Wellbeing Board by Kath Parker, Healthwatch Halton's Advisory Board Chair.

During 2020/21 our representative has effectively carried out this role by attending meetings and sharing information gathered by Healthwatch Halton, including feedback on the vaccine roll-out.

healthwatch Halton

Healthwatch Halton
Suite 5, Foundry House
Widnes Business Park
Waterside Lane
Widnes
WA8 8GT

Tel: 0300 777 6543

www.healthwatchhalton.co.uk

e: enquiries@healthwatchhalton.co.uk

 [@HWHalton](https://twitter.com/HWHalton)

 facebook.com/hwhalton

 instagram.com/hwhalton
