

## Stockport Nexus Community

*Enhancing equality in our locality*



## Changing Times

NEWSLETTER

### Enhancing Equality in our Locality

### Welcome!

**OUR MAIN AIM IS TO SHARE INFORMATION ABOUT EQUALITY ISSUES AND CONCERNS WHICH MAY BENEFIT YOU LOCALLY. IN THIS EDITION YOU WILL FIND INFORMATION ABOUT EQUALITY ISSUES OF VARIOUS KINDS, WE WILL ALSO EXPLORE WHAT IS HAPPENING LOCALLY.**

#### IN THIS ISSUE

- A Christmas Message
- Nexus the Journey so far
- Equality in Public Organisations
- Update on Disability issues
- Events Update
- And much more.....

### A CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

I always feel a special sense of happiness as Christmas breezes through, thinking about having a lie in, and eating as much as I want without feeling guilty or making apologies, but then we must remember that some people will be alone and they do not have the luxury of being with family or friends. It can be an isolated and lonely time; especially, because there is an expectancy to be jolly and happy at Christmas. However, no matter how lonely or isolated you feel there is always something that you can do to change your situation and the way you feel. Even though it may not feel like you have a choice.

So what can you do? You have to find your inner strength to get you through, remember turn to the best ally you will ever have, the one person who will always be with you - yourself. Please never underestimate yourself. Just think for a moment, if you smile about something, and it can be anything, it will make you a little happier. Please find someone to chat with; it doesn't have to be a deep conversation just focus on something positive no matter how small. Take some time to help others who are either feeling the same way or are more vulnerable, it makes you feel better. If things get too difficult, you can always call on a friendly, compassionate voice at the other end of the phone, and can talk to the Samaritans. So remember, you do not have to be alone. The fact is nothing stays the same, the season will pass, and life will move on. It's these moments that makes us grow stronger. However you celebrate, Nexus wishes you a very merry Christmas and a Prosperous New Year!

### **NEXUS the Journey so far.....**

Its six months already since we emerged, and as we all know building something good is not easy and it does take a while, especially because we want to make a positive difference within the community. The concept of putting equality issues out in the open has had its obstacles. There are many who do not understand the concept, and completely mistake the idea for a lobbying group. The aim of nexus is to de-politicalize the injustices we face, and endeavour to find creative ways to work it through together.

We aim to raise awareness through events, discussions and workshops. The reception has been positive, but we understand that we have a long way to go. So far we have met with various voluntary organisations within Stockport and Greater Manchester to share the vision. We now sit on various boards within the community. For example, we are working in partnership with SMBC to do the 'Rise to the Challenge Event' in February 2013. The event will aim to encourage BME communities to come together to raise awareness about Health and Wellbeing. If you are interested in getting involved please contact Aba on 07984510144 or Veronica 07891 949470. Our priorities for 2013 - We

## **Freedom of Speech or Freedom of Control**

The Levenson Report has set out important challenges for consideration with regards to the practice and ethic of the press and its reporting systems. Baroness Onora O'Neill, Chair of the Equality and Human Rights Commission, said:

"Leveson has set out an important challenge. In response we need to find a broad consensus which will satisfy the public and be practical and effective at protecting people, promoting accurate reporting and safeguarding the ability of the media to hold power to account."

Any new regulator must be genuinely independent both of government and corporate power, and expert at balancing the right to freedom of expression with the right to privacy. It should also take into account the changing landscape in which newspapers operate, in particular the use of social media and the internet. "Most importantly, the powers afforded to such a regulator should protect everybody equally. The best test of a regulator is whether it fairly and effectively protects and supports individuals or groups needing redress for media misrepresentation and intrusion. Both the public and the newspaper industry appear to believe that the existing system of regulation does not offer this. The replacement will clearly need to balance competing human rights issues and as the expert body, the Commission will be keen to assist in this work." Excerpt from (EHRC)

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## Public organisations - Taking their Equality obligations seriously!

It would seem that some public Authorities have not and are not meeting their obligations on Equality. There is a misconception that because the Coalition government's agenda has changed direction, there's no need to fulfill their equality agenda. The fact remains that Equality is still law and particular groups are covered under a protected characteristics. Local Authorities in particular need to have an awareness of their demographics and the reality of what's happening within them. The SMBC Equalities Page is an example. The information is outdated and it is not a true representation of the Equality in the borough.

Recently, the Equality and Human Rights Commission published a new report on how public authorities in England have met their obligations on equality. The Commission monitors public authorities to ensure they are meeting their legal requirement to publish equality information to prove they are providing equal opportunities and making fair decisions. However the report reveals that only half of the public authorities assessed were responding fully to the requirements of the specific duty regulations to publish equality information such as the diversity of their staff and people who use their services. For example, 16% of public authorities had either published out of date or undated information and six per cent hadn't published any information at all.

The report sets out some recommendations for public authorities. These include: identifying best practice; comparing their own performance with other authorities in their sector; and using feedback from staff and service users on their published information to identify areas for improvement. Mark Hammond, CEO of the Equality and Human Rights Commission said that it is important that decision-makers fully understand the implications of their decisions on equality and making sure they have the right information is a first step. Publishing the information helps everyone to see how they are performing.' 'Using the equality duty intelligently can help public authorities use their resources more efficiently, targeting their services towards those who could benefit the most, and potentially avoids legal costs and changes to policies at a later stage.'

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## Equality in Business

A report by the Government Equalities office has dispelled the myth that businesses believe the equality act is a burden or red tape. A business survey reported that 90% of businesses supports equality in the workplace and sees it as a benefit rather than a bureaucratic burden. Mark Hammond, CEO of the Equality and Human Rights Commission, said:

"Following equality and human rights practice makes good business sense as it ensures that both employers and employees benefit from a fairer and more transparent workplace. This means a more productive workforce and a business that performs well." The survey shows that smaller companies are looking for more help and we will be looking at what we can do to provide this. More information can be found at [www.equalityhumanrights.com](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com)

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## Disability

Over one billion people, or approximately 15 per cent of the world's population, live with some form of disability.

Persons with disabilities, "the world's largest minority", often face barriers to participation in all aspects of society. Barriers can take a variety of forms, including those relating to the physical environment or to information and communications technology (ICT), or those resulting from legislation or policy, or from societal attitudes or discrimination. The result is that persons with disabilities do not have equal access to society or services, including education, employment, health care, transportation, political participation or justice. Evidence and experience shows that when barriers to their inclusion are removed and persons with disabilities are empowered to participate fully in societal life, their entire community benefits. Barriers faced by persons with disabilities are, therefore, a detriment to society as a whole, and accessibility is necessary to achieve progress and development for all.



The Convention on the Rights of (CRPD) recognizes that the existence of barriers constitutes a central component of disability. Under the Convention, disability is an evolving concept that "results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others."

Accessibility and inclusion of persons with disabilities are fundamental rights recognized by the CRPD and are not only objectives, but also pre-requisites for the enjoyment of other rights. The CRPD (Article 9, accessibility) seeks to enable persons with disabilities to live independently and participate fully in all aspects of life and development. It calls upon States Parties to take appropriate measures to ensure that persons with disabilities have access to all aspects of society, on an equal basis with others, as well as to identify and eliminate obstacles and barriers to accessibility.

In spite of this, in many parts of the world today, lack of awareness and understanding of accessibility as a cross-cutting development issue remains an obstacle to the achievement of progress and development through the Millennium Development Goals, as well as other internationally agreed outcomes for all.

December is Awareness Month. It provides an opportunity to address this exclusion by focusing on promoting accessibility and removing all types of barriers in society.

## What is World AIDS Day?

World AIDS Day 2012 was held on 1st December and was an opportunity for people around the world to unite in the response against HIV and AIDS by showing their support for people living with, and affected by, HIV.

Since 1988 the HIV epidemic has changed, with advances in treatment and understanding of the disease, many people now live long and relatively normal lives with HIV. People living with HIV still experience stigma and discrimination and World AIDS Day this year was a chance to challenge attitudes and behaviours as well as raise awareness.

An estimated 34 million people worldwide are HIV positive and around 1.8 million people a year die from HIV related illness. World AIDS Day is a time to remember that HIV has not gone away.

You can get involved or support the 2013 World AIDS Day Campaign

## Disability Assessment

A number of work centres used by ATOS firm to carry out fitness for work assessments for the government lacks disabled access at a quarter of its premises. Employment minister Mark Hoban said 31 of 123 centres used by Atos lacked ground-floor access for wheelchairs.

Six centres in particular had "terrible" problems, causing almost three-quarters of case backlogs by failing to inform applicants. The government is using ATOS to carry out face-to-face assessments of disability benefit claimants' eligibility known as the "limited capability for work assessment". A spokeswoman for ATOS healthcare said all assessment centres met "accessibility standards". We lease only 20 of the 123 centres we use, the remainder are government.

## No More Criminal Record Bureau

The **Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)** is now in operation and will carry out the functions previously the responsibility of the Criminal Records Bureau and the Independent Safeguarding Authority. The main role of the DBS will be to help employers in England and Wales make safer recruitment decisions and prevent unsuitable people from working with vulnerable groups, including children.

This follows a commitment by the coalition government to scale back the vetting and barring scheme and the criminal records regime to what it calls "common sense levels". The DBS is a non-departmental public body sponsored by the Home Office and is accountable to parliament. This means that the DBS operates with defined areas of autonomy and operational discretion. However, its effectiveness and efficiencies are closely scrutinized by ministers, officials and stakeholders.

## **People on sickness benefits to be offered work experience to help them back into a job**

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People on sickness benefits such as Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), who are expected to be able to get back to work at some point in the future will be able to take part in voluntary work experience to help them move towards a job. They are expected to take part in activity which helps them prepare for a return to employment. Short periods of work experience at an appropriate employer will help people with limited employment history get a flavour of the workplace environment, gain new skills and boost their confidence for an eventual return to work.

Mark Hoban, Minister for Employment said:

"Some people on sickness benefits haven't worked for a long time or may not have had many jobs, which will make it harder for them to find work in the future. Work experience is a very good way to increase someone's confidence and get them ready for their move into a job when they are well enough."

Any work-related activity is discussed fully with the claimant and consideration is given to their health problems or disabilities to ensure that any activity is appropriate to their personal circumstances.

He went on to say that people who fail to carry out any agreed work-related activity without good reason may face having their benefits sanctioned. Penalties for those who don't comply with the rules will be changed to be brought in line with Jobseekers Allowance.

The sanction will be made up of an open-ended period which is lifted when the claimant meets the requirements, followed by a short fixed period of 1, 2 or 4 weeks.

People who are too sick or disabled to work are placed in the support group for ESA where they get unconditional help and are not expected to do any work-related activity. (EHRC)

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## **Independent Advisory Group(GMP)**

### **What is the Independent Advisory Group (IAG)?**

The Independent Advisory Groups (IAGs) are groups of community representatives from the local area, who regularly meet with police or police authorities to form a two way dialogue and provide an opportunity to give feedback, advice and input a community perspective on a range of local policing issues.

These issues could range from discussing crime and disorder concerns, discussing specific incidents and community impact, to discussing local policing policies.

Anyone can join providing you live or work within the local policing area. Also, the police actively recruit as wide a range of people as possible from all backgrounds. It is this mix and range of men and women of all ages, ethnicities, sexualities, and disabilities etc. which make the advice given to the police by IAGs so invaluable. For more information or to learn how to become a local IAG member, Contact: [Stockport.partnership@gmp.police.uk](mailto:Stockport.partnership@gmp.police.uk)

## **Black Triangle supporting People with Disability Issues**

The grassroots, user-led, group Black Triangle believes that persuading GPs to write letters to tribunals quoting one of two employment and

support allowance (ESA) regulations could make it much easier for claimants to win appeals against the results of their work capability assessments (WCA). Black Triangle says thousands of people are currently at risk of serious damage to their health because – as a result of their WCA – they are being forced to carry out work or work-related activity that they are not well enough to do.

Black Triangle believes that persuading GPs to refer to regulations 29 or 35 – which are the two regulations which state that a claimant should not be found fit for work or placed in the work-related activity group if such a decision would pose “a substantial risk” to their “mental or physical health”. – could even save lives (date back to 2008).

Black Triangle is calling on disabled people preparing for their appeal to ask their GP to fill in the gaps in a short draft letter stating that the physical or mental health of the patient would “more likely than not” be harmed if they were found fit for work, or even found to have “limited capability for work” (the work-related activity group, for those expected to move gradually towards the job market).

Dr Stephen Carty, medical adviser to Black Triangle, He has already used the letter to help five patients who were facing appeals. He said that he had a 10-minute consultation and wrote an A4 letter, the diagnoses and how the ESA decision posed a risk to the patient’s physical or mental health.” He said the process was “very easy, very quick and very effective”, and that two of the five patients had told him that submitting the letter had led to the decision being “overturned immediately without the tribunal even taking place”.

Black Triangle believes that if a disabled person was found fit for work, despite one of the new letters

being submitted by their GP, and then experienced deterioration in their condition, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) could be liable for damages.

Carty also believes that the letters could offer legal protection for GPs, who could otherwise be sued if they failed to alert the DWP to the risk of their patient’s health deteriorating if found fit for work.

A spokeswoman for the Medical Defence Union, which offers GPs medical legal advice and insurance against being sued for clinical negligence, said the campaign was “not something we can comment on as it is [in] relation to a doctor’s clinical judgment which is not something we have a view on as it is up to each individual clinician”. [www.blacktrianglecampaign.org](http://www.blacktrianglecampaign.org)

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## Gay Marriages in a place of Worship

Britain will announce plans to allow gay marriages in Churches and other religious buildings, although David Cameron insisted no faith group would be forced to hold them.

Culture Secretary Maria Miller will unveil ministers’ responses to a consultation earlier this year, which will propose that religious organisations should be able to ‘opt-in’ to hold same-sex weddings, according to a government source. Amid strong opposition from the Church of England and Roman Catholics, as well as many members of Cameron’s Conservative party, Miller will stress that no religious groups will be forced to conduct gay weddings.

Gay couples have had the right to hold a civil partnership since 2004 but campaigners have pushed for full equality with heterosexual couples.

## BUSINESSES ARE STILL INTOLERANT OF HOMOSEXUALITY

Lord Browne, the former chief executive of BP, is urging companies to do more to end discrimination against homosexuals.



Speaking at the launch of 'Connect Out', a lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender network set up by Arup, the engineering and design consultants, he said: "My sense is that the business world remains more intolerant of homosexuality than other worlds such as the legal profession, the media and the visual arts. "In some industries, the situation is particularly bad. He said that amongst the many people he knows I know in private equity, where I now work, less than 1% is openly gay." He therefore wants "leaders in companies, and not just in human resources" to "think about inclusion in every decision they take". He says: "It comes down to a simple maxim - don't do anything that excludes people." And he feels that change requires "rigorous performance measurement", "

Lord Browne, who has never before spoken publicly about sexuality in the workplace, says it can be what he describes as "the smallest things" that can discourage gay people from being open with their colleagues about their sexuality. "It is things like homophobic jokes that you somehow get used to, but never accept. Or it's the conversational assumptions about spouses and children. Browne's comments will spark further debate over the levels of homophobia in British society, and the rights of prominent lesbians and gay men to keep details of their sexuality out of the public domain.

## A Policy for Older LGBT

In the framework of the 2012 European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations, AGE Platform Europe (AGE) and ILGA-Europe have decided to focus on the situation of older LGBT people in Europe. In a joint policy paper, the policy paper 'Equality for older lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex people in Europe' is the first of its kind at European level. AGE and ILGA-Europe call for a comprehensive and coherent approach to tackle multiple discrimination of older LGBT people, and

development of adequate responses to ageing LGBT communities national and on an level. In the paper AGE Europe have four main



for of policy support

on a as well as European policy and ILGA-identified challenges faced by older LGBT people: The lack of recognition of same-sex couples has an impact on their access to social protection and on their financial security. This becomes particularly worrying when people get older and cannot ensure that their partner will have access to their pensions and assets. Secondly Older LGBT people may have specific health needs and may face on-going stigmatisation in the field of healthcare. Some elderly LGBT people experience social exclusion and invisibility and cannot rely on the same family support as other older people.

**"Disability Stockport is a supportive organisation advocating for equality of Opportunity"**

### NEXUS FORUM

The next Nexus Forum will take place in January 2013, an opportunity to share information about any equality issues. If you would like to attend, please contact Tin at

[stockportnexuscommunity@gmail.com](mailto:stockportnexuscommunity@gmail.com)



## Rethinking Integration

There has been an enormous amount of academic and policy work on the integration of minority cultural communities, especially certain Muslim communities, into 'mainstream' society in the last decade. Our task in this briefing is to outline a potential new approach, one that we call 'everyday integration'.

We believe that this approach, grounded in new academic work, provides a better way of both analysing and advancing the possibilities for the integration of different communities into a stable social order.

Most of the work on integration so far has focused on supposed conflicts of values between minority communities and western liberalism, and the difficulties that these conflicts create for social life in European countries. Many of these debates have moved from academia into policy discourse, stemming from such events as the French headscarf controversy and the security implications of radicalisation and extremism.

For over a decade, this debate has been characterised by a simple choice between, on the one hand, a multicultural group-rights approach popular in much of the academic community and, on the other hand, an increasingly assimilative approach focused on developing a stronger sense of shared citizenship and national identity, which is popular among much of the policy community. It is our contention that both of these models are mistaken.

We propose that future work on the best ways of integrating minority communities into broader society should focus on everyday integration, that is, on sites where identities are constructed and reconstructed and where new possibilities of group allegiance are continually developed. In this briefing, we have suggested that four potential areas for further exploration in this regard are:

- early-years childcare
- shopping/ consumption
- leisure activities
- Supplementary education.

We believe that 'everyday integration' provides the possibility of a crucial new start for work in this vital policy area. There is rarely a time when equality and diversity is not a hot topic in politics, but the term has recently become stigmatized. **To some, this term is associated with being too 'politically correct'.** These people believe that the political correctness associated with attempting to achieve equality and diversity puts this term across as nothing more than an attempt to tick boxes during processes like hiring.

**Equality and diversity issues continue to plague almost every area of Britain.** Whether it is a lack of ethnic minorities and women in high-ranking government offices, or accommodation that does not meet the needs of those who are elderly and disabled, those who live in minority and disadvantaged groups find themselves drawing the short straw in their day-to-day lives. Take travellers for example; as a group in British society who are often looked down on, they find themselves being uprooted from their homes, and paraded in front of the media in a tastelessly voyeuristic manner. Despite this, those who strive to achieve equality and diversity for such groups are often on the receiving end of rolling eyes and comments about being 'too PC'.

The motivations for individuals pushing against the words equality and diversity tend to vary. While a small number may actually have poor intentions -- such as the BNP -- others may simply be labouring under naive beliefs. To many, Britain is a society that exists without prejudice. With such beliefs being relatively common, it is no wonder those who promote equality and diversity are perceived as fighting an empty fight.

These beliefs have developed to the extent that certain associations are now seeking to define and reaffirm what equality and diversity means. One such example is the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA), a body that has chosen to establish a nine point plan on promoting equality and diversity. This plan includes highlighting why the elderly require further investment, promoting the needs of different faiths and cultures, improving the representation of those who are disabled or a member of the LGBT

community. The fact that such guidelines need to exist clearly highlights that equality and diversity is not something that everybody takes seriously. As this term is seen as being too politically correct, there is a risk that its existence won't continue to serve the purpose it was designed for. **The more people continue to see equality and diversity as being too PC, the harder it will be to promote the needs of those who need the most support in our society.** By redefining and highlighting the needs of those who require more support, it will be easier to ensure that their needs are met, and remove the negative connotations associated with this phrase.

Nexus endorses this report, and it clearly links into the purpose of Nexus and what it stands for. More information can be found at the Website [www.ippr.org/publication/55/9761/rethinking-integration](http://www.ippr.org/publication/55/9761/rethinking-integration)

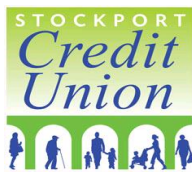
### Funding Opportunities

'You Say, We Pay' for 2012 / 2013 From new/existing projects, which could benefit residents from Adswold & Bridgehall. Grants of min. £500 up to max. £3,000 is available. Guidance and priorities for the funding will be included in the application packs and will be circulated at the end of next week. Application forms & guidance can be sent by email or paper application packs will be available in 4 locations around the community:

- Abacus (Adswold site) children's centre reception (Garners Lane, Adswold)
- Adswold Community Centre
- Bridgehall Community Centre (Stockport Direct – front desk)
- Open Door (Learner Lounge) 5 Cuddington Crescent, Bridgehall

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Credit unions provide the same products and financial services as other institutions—but credit unions are not-for-profit and exist to help people, not to make a profit. As such, all earnings are returned to their members in the form of high-interest savings and low rate loans. For more information and benefits Tel: 0161 430 5808 Email: [mail@stockportcu.com](mailto:mail@stockportcu.com)



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## Making Health Fair

The Clinical Commissioning Group Stockport has just produced their Equality and Diversity Strategy 2012-2016. Quite an interesting read. The strategy revolves around four main areas:

1. Understanding Our Community
2. Developing Responsive Services
3. Being a Good Employer
4. Being a Community Leader

However, they have mainly used national statistics to inform the strategy. Additionally there's very limited data relating to African and Caribbean groups in Stockport. All that said the document itself is very detailed and will help to begin to redress some of the inequality issues within the NHS. Nexus is keen to get involved with CCG to support their work. If you are interested in reading the strategy, please contact [www.stockportccg.org](http://www.stockportccg.org)

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## Ebony & Ivory Community Choir



We are a friendly and supportive Choir; EaICO is supporting young people with active participation within their community. We sing at festivals and so on, you can book us by using the address below. We are looking for young people who enjoy singing, and wanting to sing. You need to be over 12 yrs old. Practice will start in January for a Big Performance in March 2013 if interested, please email us at [admin@eaicostockport.org](mailto:admin@eaicostockport.org)

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## ANCHORPOINT



Is the local lead infrastructure Organisation supporting community groups to grow! Visit their website, lots of interesting information. [www.anchorpointstockport.org.uk](http://www.anchorpointstockport.org.uk)

## EVENTS

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### 'Organisational Improvement Programme'!!!



Greater Manchester BME Network announced details of the Programme for 2012/2013. The programme will provide information, guidance and support.

Whether you're looking at commissioning/contracting, setting up a social enterprise or setting up a trading arm for your organisation this programme will help improve your chances of securing a future.

For more information and an application form please go to

<http://www.greatermanchesterbmenetwork.org.uk/get-extra-support-for-your-organisation-from-the-gm-bme-network/>

**Please note:** - Deadline for application is **Friday 4th of January 2013.**

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### DRUG & Alcohol Abuse Training

For Community and young people

Contact [msigada@gmail.com](mailto:msigada@gmail.com)

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**Monitoring and Evaluation** are critical tools to measure an organisation's work.

12 December 2012 09:30 - 16:30 *St Thomas Centre, Ardwick Green North, Manchester, M12 6FZ*

The cost of the course is £65 and lunch is provided. Contact Karen Tomlinson on 0161 277 1048

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### Music production and song writing workshop in Brinnington

Rising Stars North West presents 'Brinnington Beats' an introduction to music production, song writing, rapping, and singing workshop for young people age 13 - 16 living in and around Brinnington and Stockport.

**Fridays Starting 4<sup>th</sup> January 2013 @ Brinnington Youth Centre 6pm - 8pm**

**Price: GOOD ATTITUDE & WILLINGNESS TO LEARN FOOD AND DRINKS PROVIDED**  
**Registration**

[www.risingstarsnw.com/archives/1103](http://www.risingstarsnw.com/archives/1103)

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### ACCA Christmas Dance

Hazel Grove Civic Hall

Stockport

Bring your own drink

Food Free

7.00-12.30

Tickets £5.00

Contact Tolu 07901 848 504

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### Nexus

"Valuing what we have"

Putting Nexus in the Frame for 2013

For more information and membership please contact us at:

[Stockportnexuscommunity@gmail.com](mailto:Stockportnexuscommunity@gmail.com)

or call us 01614771914

Changing Times is your local Equality Newsletter, if you would like to advertise, or write an article please contact us using our email address.

