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lessio Pagliano never shared stories of his weekends and holidays with his colleagues in Italy. He never felt that he could. “I could constantly see and hear comments and prejudice at all levels in the workplace. Coming out as gay would have compromised my career, so I protected myself.”

Pagliano left Italy for the UK 13 years ago, partly because of what he describes as the bad sociopolitical situation in the country, and partly because he wanted a new challenge.

“Knowing my country was doing nothing from an equality point of view was difficult for me. I was always reading about homophobic attacks in the news, but nothing was ever done about it. To read about these things, to see and hear the comments people were making as if it was okay – that was painful to live with.”

Pagliano was working as an IT consultant at the time and, after putting his CV online, was quickly headhunted by Aviva for an IT role in its Norwich office.

Pagliano is now a qualified accountant working towards his AAT Professional Diploma at Aviva (he gained AATQB in 2016 and passed his AAT Advanced Diploma with Merit earlier this year). He has thrived at Aviva, receiving a series of performance-based awards and a promotion.

“My promotion happened just 12 months after I’d started working on a trial basis for a financial transformation role,” he explains. “I’d been desperate to achieve a promotion for years. It was only [by starting] on the AAT career path that I achieved it. It felt incredible.”

In good company

Pagliano decided to train as an accountant when he realised he needed ‘financial acumen’ to further his career. He now works on Aviva’s Anaplan project as a specialist model builder/analyst for financial planning technology. Thanks to his promotion, he is now leading a series of complex, end-to-end projects while mentoring another colleague.

Aviva doesn’t just pay lip service to LGBT rights – the company is wholly committed. As well as launching Aviva Pride, its trailblazing LGBT network made up of 5,000 ‘allies’, it’s the only UK insurer to be an active LGBT-inclusive employer. This year, Aviva was the main sponsor of Norwich Pride.



“Having an employer that values diversity has given me the confidence to be myself at work”

Shorts

BOOK

Leading Transformation: How to Take Charge of Your Company’s Future (out 6 November)
A new approach to breakthrough change.

EVENT

AAT: Strategic management accounting (21 November; Leeds)
Learn traditional and modern management accounting concepts.

WEBINAR

AAT: Building a successful finance team (21 November)
If you are ready to create a brilliant finance team that makes a real difference, this event is for you.

EVENT

AAT: Bookkeeping skills update (23 November; London)
This is a great way to gain the knowledge and skills to meet evolving needs.

PODCAST

The Green Apple Podcast (biweekly)
This brash, fun podcast is about accountants and their hobbies, hosted by ‘recovering CPA’ John Garrett.

WEBINAR

AAT: LinkedIn Masterclass (27 November)
This free webinar will show you how to showcase your skills and experience on your LinkedIn profile page.



← **Pagliano found success on the AAT career path**

has given me the confidence to be myself at work.”

Two years ago, Pagliano married Rob, the love of his life, at Norwich Castle. Family and friends from both the UK and Italy were desperate to attend, so what should have been a small affair turned into a weekend of celebrations.

“Now I can talk about my husband at work. It’s the little things like this that make the difference. People will always ask ‘How’s Rob?’, and we’re often invited as a couple to work socials – it’s just natural to everyone.”

Rob fought in the Falklands, but was dismissed from the Royal Navy for being gay – he lost everything. When the ban was lifted in 2000, he returned to service and got his pension rights back. “I see his generation as the one that paved the way,” says Pagliano. “The diversity and inclusion culture in the UK is amazing now. Real progress has been achieved, not only within the company but in the wider community – that’s got to be a good thing.”

Now in a position to reflect on his experiences in Italy, and those his husband Rob endured not too long ago, Pagliano is philosophical. “UK businesses should feel totally inspired by Aviva’s approach to LGBT rights. Not every workplace is as forward-thinking, although things are improving.” ■

Pagliano believes that Aviva’s inclusive and diverse culture has made a huge difference to his self-esteem, productivity and career success. Although, by his own admittance, it took him a while to adjust to the ‘new normality’ of acceptance, not having to hide his sexuality was life-changing.

“I am no longer worried about adverse reactions to my sexuality,” he says. “I come to work as myself, relaxed and sure in the knowledge that there are procedures in place to protect me should there be any issues. Having an employer that values diversity and is passionate about LGBT rights

EVENT

AAT: Making Tax Digital (28 November; Birmingham)
Prepare for MTD – and learn how to make the most of it – with this comprehensive one-day event.

BOOK

The Signs Were There (out 29 November)
Accountant turned fund manager Tim Steer outlines the telltale signs of a company on the verge of collapse.

EVENT

AAT: One-day MBA (30 November; London)
A time- and cost-effective way to cover all the main elements of a full MBA course.

EVENT

AAT: Payroll and pensions update with CIPP (4 and 11 December; London, Birmingham)
A full-day update on all things payroll (and pensions).

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