

Inspiring lives



“Be true to yourself. Don't let anybody stand in the way of who you are or aspire to be...”

Brian Quinn came out as gay when he was 17. Now a director at one of Merseyside's leading training companies, he spends his working life encouraging young people to be confident within themselves, as well as helping them complete successful apprenticeships.

“My sexuality has never been in the way of what I have done with my life,” Brian tells me. “And I've never regretted a single step.” We have met at Training Plus Merseyside, which is based in Lime Street in the city centre. After a quick tour of the building I'm already confident that these guys know what they're talking about.

It's clearly a friendly group, proven to me as the lift doors open and the entire cubicle is decorated in 'happy birthday' banners and balloons for a member of the staff.

“You can guess it's someone's birthday today,” Brian says laughing at my surprise. As he shows me around the various offices he introduces me to most people by name, proving again what a close knit team it is.

In his 20s, Brian had already opened his own hair salon after completing an apprenticeship himself.

“I loved it but I was very young, and hadn't yet lived. I wanted to see the world and do everything.”

After making a friend in the airlines, he embarked upon a career in cabin crew. “I decided to leave hairdressing and had the greatest fun being an air steward. It was the most wonderful experience, I learnt so much and experienced culture that I never thought possible around the world.” Brian was an air steward for 12 years, 9 of which he spent with British Airways. Due to personal reasons, he had to make the decision to leave as he couldn't be away from home for long periods of time.

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Following his high flying, Brian's feet touched the ground and he worked in social services concentrating on health promotion.

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He also volunteered at Sahir House in Liverpool in HIV education, before being made chair.

“It was a lot of work, but I did enjoy it. Working with young people in social services and teaching them about sexual health made me want to work with them more.”

Later on he took over Training Plus Merseyside along with two business partners Jean Haram and Paula Hayes. “We are a really great team,” he says. “The three of us specialise in different areas and it makes us work really well together.”

“At the time we took on the business it was a huge risk – but I believe if your heart doesn't beat a bit fast sometimes you'll never know you've lived.” One of Brian's roles is equality and diversity, which is a subject very close to his heart.

Brian has been in a civil partnership with his partner Kevin for four years. They have been in a relationship for 20 years. “I am so blessed to have Kevin,” he continues. “We totally support each other and he is really great with me, especially considering the amount of time I spend at the office! “I don't know where I'd be without his love and encouragement throughout the years. He is very understanding.” Although the pair have no children, Brian feels he gets a great part of the parenting process in his work.

“I love encouraging young people to come out of themselves, and be who they really are. It can seem daunting to be true to yourself when young, but there's no better feeling than seeing a person grow inside and watch them accept themselves and go out there confident with who they are.”

“I may not have any children with Kevin, but when I'm at work I have 300!” Brian's sexuality has never been an issue for him in work. “I can't name one incident in my career where homophobia has arisen directly towards me. There have been times when I feel I may not be taken as seriously as a businessman due to being gay, but I

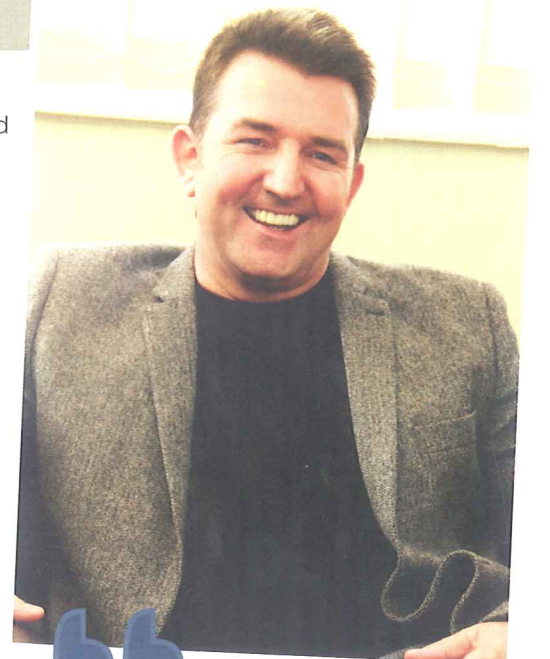


see right past it. I don't feel victimised because I am confident with who I am.”

Everyday life is something else that Training Plus Merseyside prepares their learners for; “There is a lot that goes on in the world that they need to be prepared for, good and bad. We do our utmost to give young people the skills to deal with everyday life, both in and outside the workplace.”

And what tip would Brian give to any young person out there today? “Be true to yourself. Don't let anybody stand in the way of who you are or aspire to be, and always know that no matter what you want to achieve in life there are places like Training Plus Merseyside where you can get the support, education and work experience you need.”

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