



CURRENT CHALLENGES

Andreas has kept it a secret from colleagues, as he is now divorced. Former colleagues keep asking about his wife, Nina, and he can't explain he's on his own as he gets choked up. She's in Poland with their sixteen year old daughter. There are some colleagues who are new to him; they are more hostile than his old mates. They make lots of snide comments about Brexit, foreigners coming over here, taking our jobs and so forth. Andreas is not enjoying work as much as he did before. He's withdrawn, shy and quiet whereas he used to be quite outgoing. He doesn't want to take advantage of social occasions as he used to, although he could as he is triple jabbed and there are more freedoms now. His heart's not into socialising much and he really misses his daughter. Before splitting from his wife, he used to go back to Poland often and sometimes they would come to see him in the UK. Now no one visits him. He initially took work in the UK to give his family a better life.

ANDREAS

Welding Manager

AGE 47

GENDER Male

NATIONALITY Polish

FAMILY SITUATION Worked in the UK the last 5 years, but moved back to live/work in Poland near his elderly parents when COVID hit. Moved back to his UK job in Feb 2022, after restrictions were lifted.

JOB/CAREER Welding Manager at a road haulage firm in Newcastle, UK. Has no issue getting the job back after returning from Poland in Feb 2022, as is highly skilled and liked by colleagues.

PERSONAL THOUGHTS ON GENDER EQUALITY He is not very knowledgeable about employment rights or gender equality.

ATTITUDES AND EMOTIONS

- He wonders if coming back to the UK was a mistake. He is starting to feel anxious and is over-eating. As a teenager he had an eating disorder (bulimia). He is worried it's coming back. Andreas is a copier; he rarely has days off sick and he has never acknowledged that his anxiety is a mental health issue. He has started to experience some very negative thoughts which worry him.

MOTIVATIONS

- Andreas is normally a highly motivated employee. He was so excited to return to the UK, but things have changed. The people are different. He's lonely and work is not as interesting as it was before. He used to feel like 'one of the lads', now he feels like 'a foreigner' especially when they last went to the pub on Mick's birthday during Friday lunchtime.
- His male manager is a macho man and no-one would ever talk to him about emotions, difficulties or negative feelings. He sometimes talks to Lynn in the office, the lady who does the wages, apart from that, he's very lonely. He has no idea where his career is going now, he's lost focus. He's capable of more, but it just feels there's too much to deal with. He helped out in accounts one day and it was nice to get away from being a 'grease monkey'.

WORK SITUATION

- Andreas is wondering whether to stay in his role or leave the UK. He's lost motivation, feels depressed and lonely and has little support. He finds it hard to ask for help. He has even wondered about resigning without a new job to go to. His brother has suggested he can get him a job back in Poland at short notice.
- Andreas has enjoyed getting better English skills and he would miss using the language and there are many things he does like about the UK and working % years in this culture, he does question if it would be hard now to adapt to Polish ways - this confuses him further. He feels as if he has lost his identity.
- The manager has noticed Andreas' contribution. The quality of repairs is so much better since he's been back- far fewer breakdowns en route have been reported since he's been looking after the lorries.

Manager's questions

- What is this tension I feel in the team now?
- How do I manage all these political jibes now? (Pro and anti Brexit, pro and anti vaxxers- lots of division and no idea how to deal with it).
- I've never had to deal with the emotions of staff before- where do I start?
- I heard something about microaggressions- does that apply?
- Can Andreas leave and make any claims on the firm as his work colleagues can be quite playful-is this discrimination?
- What's the law on bullying?
- How do I learn more about managing people? Who is this escalated to and would I be breaking confidentiality? Where can employees be signposted to? Who can help me - I won't be able to sleep at night if I just leave it.

Peers/colleagues' questions

- How come he just swans back in here and gets a better paid job than us?
- Why is he so snappy and miserable? He used to be a nice bloke.
- Andreas seems a bit down-should we ask him about it?
- We've been asking for a proper pay scale and pay transparency for years-how do I know I'm being paid fairly?



Individual's questions

- What do I really want?
- Have I analysed what I want out of work in terms of environment, skills, colleagues, social connection, and general life satisfaction?
- What are the pros and cons of leaving and staying?
- Am I out of sync now in Poland too? Things have moved on there.
- Can I manage a dip in salary if I move jobs? Am I up to a promotion?
- I've been feeling down-can I have time off to see a doctor and how do I register?
- Are there health services for men? Could they discipline me if I admitted to mental health issues? I would worry about my job

Policymakers' questions

- How can managers in small firms be kept up to date on employment issues and employment law?
- How can managers develop collaboration and a productive culture in the workplace?
- How can mental health issues in men be addressed when men typically do not show help-seeking behaviour? How can we reduce the stigma around mental health issues, loneliness, divorce, isolation and create a culture where staff feel able to talk openly about these issues?

