



My workplace

Sadie Restorick is the co-founder of Wellity Global, a leading consultancy dedicated to improving mental health, wellbeing and performance in the workplace. Their work is rooted in the understanding that people don't leave jobs – they leave unwelcome cultures, environments and behaviours. She talks to **Nicola Banning** about her mission to help individuals and organisations reimagine what healthy, sustainable work cultures can look like

Sadie Restorick is co-founder of international training consultancy Wellity Global, and has been awarded an MSc with Distinction in workplace health and wellbeing from University of Nottingham. A global speaker, consultant, trainer, author and published academic scholar, she has specialised in the field of workplace wellbeing and psychosocial risk management for over 14 years, driving culture change and leadership development. Sadie is also the winner of Role Model of the Year and Woman of the Year at the Great British Businesswoman Awards 2024, and a winner at the Global Woman Awards 2025.
www.wellityglobal.com

NB: Where did your initial interest in the need to create psychologically healthy workplaces stem from?

SR: From a young age, I struggled with anxiety, perfectionism and a pervasive sense of not being 'good enough'. I was bullied at school and lived with the internal pressure to excel, which masked a more profound vulnerability. Later, I was formally diagnosed with generalised anxiety disorder, though for years prior, I simply thought I was just 'overthinking'.

In my late-teens and early-20s, I endured a series of traumatic events that would shape my path irrevocably, including a violent street attack and the sudden, heartbreaking loss of my father at the age of 21. At the time, I didn't have the tools or language to process these experiences. I suppressed what I was feeling, turning instead to unhealthy coping mechanisms – alcohol, distraction and a relentless drive to succeed.

When I entered the corporate world, I threw myself into work with the hope that achievement would soothe the gnawing sense of inadequacy. I equated productivity with worth, and busyness with importance. Inevitably, that trajectory led me to burnout. I felt

hollow, exhausted and defeated, diagnosed with depression but intuitively knowing that what I was experiencing went far beyond a chemical imbalance. It was existential, emotional and systemic. I wasn't just unwell; I was profoundly burned out.

It was through this unravelling that I began to explore the mechanics of burnout in earnest. I found Herbert Freudenberger's burnout model helped me to understand the stages of burnout and the risk posed by my working environment. The more I read and studied, I came to realise that what had happened to me was happening to countless others – people being driven to emotional exhaustion in workplaces that failed to recognise the human cost of relentless performance.

This awakening led me to build on my undergraduate degree in communications, where I had studied organisational dynamics and workplace relations, and pursue further qualifications focused specifically on work-related stress. My lived experience, combined with academic rigour, became the foundation of my mission: to help individuals and organisations reimagine what healthy, sustainable work cultures can look like.

NB: You previously worked in high-level recruitment – what did you learn about organisations?

SR: Working in high-level recruitment gave me a unique vantage point into the inner workings of corporate life, not just from the employer's perspective, but crucially from the employee's lived experience. Recruitment is, in many ways, the front line of organisational culture. It's where you see the disconnect between rhetoric and reality, between the glossy employer brand and the dissatisfaction simmering just beneath the surface.

I witnessed not only my fellow recruiters buckling under the strain of targets, KPIs and long hours, but also candidates who were actively seeking to leave roles, not because of pay or progression, but because of toxic cultures, poor management or the sheer toll their jobs were taking on their health. So often, people hadn't felt safe or supported enough to raise concerns internally. And when they did hand in their notice, the default response was a counter-offer; a pay rise, a promotion, anything to avoid the introspection required to ask why people were leaving in the first place.

This lack of curiosity, or perhaps fear of confronting uncomfortable truths, was a consistent theme. It exposed a blind spot in many organisations, the tendency to treat symptoms rather than causes, to focus on retention metrics rather than culture. What became clear to me was that high turnover wasn't a recruitment issue – it was a leadership one. And without psychologically informed leadership, no amount of talent acquisition could stem the tide of dissatisfaction.

NB: You've spoken publicly about your experience of domestic abuse and I wonder, in what ways does your experience of trauma inform your work with business?

SR: Trauma has shaped not just how I view the world, but how I work within it. We know from research that more people in the UK are diagnosed with PTSD than depression, and that around 70% of people will experience a traumatic event in their lifetime. Trauma alters the brain, particularly the way it responds to stress and perceived threat. And yet, the workplace is rarely considered a site of trauma-informed support.

The truth is, many people are navigating the workplace while silently carrying the weight of trauma. When those individuals are subjected to unmanaged stress, poor leadership, or a culture of fear and judgment, it compounds their suffering. That's why I believe so deeply in the creation of compassionate, psychologically safe work environments. My own experience has given me an acute awareness of what it feels like to mask distress, to feel judged and to question your worth. It's also made me fiercely committed to changing the narrative, to making workplaces spaces for healing, not harm.

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NB: What can you tell me about your business, Wellity Global?

SR: Wellity Global is a leading consultancy dedicated to improving mental health, wellbeing and performance in the workplace. What began as a deeply personal mission has grown into a global movement for cultural change. Our work is rooted in the understanding that people don't leave jobs – they leave cultures, environments and behaviours that make them feel unsupported, undervalued or unwell.

We operate across a wide range of sectors and industries, supporting organisations in creating psychologically safe, emotionally intelligent and high-performing workplaces. What makes Wellity different is our insistence that wellbeing isn't an 'add-on' or a perk, it's a fundamental pillar of good business. It affects everything from engagement and retention to innovation and bottom-line results.

Our work spans everything from strategic consultancy and psychosocial risk management to delivering employee workshops, leadership training and one-to-one coaching. But at the heart of it, our goal is always the same: to help people feel seen, supported and able to thrive, not just survive, at work.

NB: What kinds of organisations do you work with?

SR: We have the privilege of working with a hugely diverse range of organisations, from global financial institutions and law firms to NHS Trusts, universities and high-growth tech companies. Our clients range from Amazon and Warner Bros Discovery to UK Police Forces, NHS and SMEs.

One of the things we're most proud of is our ability to adapt to the specific context of each client. We don't believe in a one-size-fits-all approach. A law firm operating under high billable hour pressure will need different strategies to a tech startup dealing with rapid growth and uncertainty. But in all cases, we aim to understand the lived reality of people inside the organisation, and build solutions from there.

NB: And what services are you providing?

SR: With a catalogue of more than 450 evidence-based training titles, including leadership development, equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI), neurodiversity, mental health first aid, change management and financial wellbeing, we work as a partner to our clients to drive lasting change.

In a rapidly changing world of work, our innovative and future-focused sessions are crafted to meet the evolving needs of today's workforce, empowering individuals and teams through practical, inspiring and transformative learning experiences. We use a dynamic mix of methods to keep learning engaging and effective: AI scenes, live actor scenarios, co-created activities, experiential learning, case studies, simulated conversations and open discussion, all tailored to suit the audience and their learning styles. Peer learning is also a powerful

part of our model. Our sessions encourage open dialogue, shared insight and connection, helping participants explore new ideas, challenge perspectives and apply knowledge in meaningful ways. Every training is supported with feedback analysis, progress reporting and optional ongoing support, so our clients can measure what matters and embed change at every level.

NB: What are you looking for in your trainers?

SR: Our global network of trainers and facilitators is one of the most important aspects of Wellity. We're incredibly intentional about who we bring into the trusted network, not just based on credentials, but on character.

Of course, subject matter expertise is non-negotiable. We look for individuals who are highly qualified and deeply experienced in their fields, whether that's financial health, coaching, leadership, EDI, mental health or many more. But we also seek those who can deliver content in a way that is genuinely engaging, thought-provoking and human.

The ability to connect with an audience, to invite them to reflect, feel and shift their thinking, is a powerful skill. We're not interested in tick-box training or surface-level platitudes. We want our sessions to spark real, lasting change. That requires trainers who are passionate, purpose-driven, reliable and adaptable.

We also encourage trainers to facilitate an experience, where learning, introspection and emotional resonance happen simultaneously. Our ethos is based on action, not just awareness.

NB: You're co-founder of the Great British Workplace Wellbeing Awards. Why was it important to set up this award?

SR: My business partner Simon and I founded the Great British Workplace Wellbeing Awards in partnership with the GRC World Forums (a media and events company that focuses on governance, risk assessment and compliance) during the height of the COVID-19 crisis, a time when workplace wellbeing wasn't just a buzzword, but a lifeline.

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We saw so many individuals and organisations going above and beyond to support their people during an incredibly challenging time, but with very little recognition or support themselves. We wanted to create a platform to celebrate the change makers, the quiet heroes, and the businesses choosing to do things differently.

Wellbeing work is often emotional, difficult and underappreciated. The awards were our way of shining a spotlight on that effort, of saying, 'we see you, and what you're doing matters'. It's become one of the most special parts of our year.

NB: Have you discovered anything new about workplace wellbeing?

SR: What's been most striking about the awards is the overwhelming sense of community. I've been to many ceremonies in my career, but the energy in the room at the Great British Workplace Wellbeing Awards is genuinely different. There's this incredible atmosphere of mutual respect, joy and shared purpose.

Finalists are cheering for one another. Winners are sharing insights and offering support to others. Judges, nominees and guests all recognise that we're part of a collective movement, not in competition, but in collaboration. That spirit is profoundly moving.

If anything, the awards have reaffirmed what I already believed: that the most effective wellbeing work happens when people come together. It's not about one person or one company having all the answers. It's about learning from each other, lifting one another up, and building something bigger than ourselves.

The event reminds me each year that while wellbeing work can feel heavy at times, it's also full of hope, connection and transformation. And that's what keeps us going.

NB: What are the challenges you are witnessing in your work in terms of how organisations are behaving?

SR: We are living through a period of enormous volatility, geopolitical unrest, economic uncertainty, cultural polarisation and seismic shifts in working patterns. These pressures have had a profound impact on workplace dynamics, with organisations often scrambling to adapt in real time, while trying to preserve legacy structures and systems.

One of the biggest challenges I see is the erosion of psychological safety and trust. The post-COVID world has intensified this, particularly with the whiplash effect around flexible working. Employees were given autonomy and trust during lockdowns, only to find it retracted as some employers attempt to reassert control. This kind of behavioural inconsistency damages credibility and signals that flexibility was a temporary concession, not a cultural commitment.

In parallel, there's rising tension between generations in the workplace. Younger employees are demanding purpose, balance and inclusivity, while older generations may view this as entitlement

or lack of resilience. These are not just generational attitudes but reflect deeper shifts in identity, values and expectations of work.

Global political climates also matter. In the US, for example, we've seen how polarised rhetoric around diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) under the Trump administration has seeped into workplace discourse, creating hesitation or pushback around inclusive policies, even in the UK. In times of economic pressure, 'soft' investments like wellbeing or inclusion are often first to be scrutinised, when in fact they should be seen as fundamental to long-term business sustainability.

At the heart of it, organisations are facing an existential challenge: to evolve their internal cultures quickly enough to remain credible, ethical and sustainable in the eyes of a changing workforce. Those who ignore this are already feeling the consequences; attrition, disengagement and reputational damage.

NB: Why are organisations so often resistant to offering greater flexibility to staff?

SR: The resistance to flexibility is often less about practicality and more about power. Flexibility challenges traditional models of control and oversight. Letting go of that, and trusting people to manage their own time and energy, requires a mindset shift that not all organisations are ready for. There's also the myth that physical proximity equals engagement, which we now know isn't true. Productivity is not about presence; it's about purpose and clarity.

That said, flexibility also introduces complexity, in logistics, equity and communication. But complexity is not a reason to retreat. It's a reason to innovate. The future of work isn't about rigid models or binary choices; it's about adaptive intelligence and co-created agreements that benefit both business and people.

NB: How do you recover after an intense piece of work?

SR: Recovery is essential, not a luxury, especially in a field like mine that involves long hours, emotional labour and high cognitive demand. After an intense piece of work, I often seek solitude and space. I like to travel, especially somewhere that offers connection with nature, forests, coastlines or countryside. A long weekend tends to be ideal: just enough time to decompress, but not so long that I feel disconnected from my animals or home. Being in nature helps me recalibrate. It's a form of quiet restoration that doesn't demand anything from me, which is often exactly what's needed.

NB: Is there any one thing that you are most proud of?

SR: It's not a singular achievement, but rather the trajectory. At one point in my life, I genuinely couldn't see any light, I didn't believe things could

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get better, or that I was even worth saving. So, to stand now having trained over 100,000 people, won national awards and spoken on global stages, it's not the external markers that make me proud. It's that I made it through. That I kept going. That I now know I am strong, and I am worthy. That is what I am most proud of: that I didn't give up on myself.

NB: What's the best piece of advice you've ever been given?

SR: It came from my best friend and my rock, my mum. She once said, 'Don't complain about the darkness, light a candle.' That's always stayed with me. It's a quiet reminder that we always have agency, even in the smallest of ways. When life feels overwhelming, or work feels heavy, I remember that we don't have to fix everything at once, we just have to do something. Be the light, even if it's just a flicker. That mindset has helped me through some of the darkest moments of my life and continues to guide the work I do now.

NB: What would you say to your younger self?

SR: The most important relationship you'll ever have is the one with yourself, so invest in it. Learn to be your own safest place. Everything else stems from there. ●

Tell us about your workplace

If you have thoughts about any of the issues raised in this interview or would like to talk to the editor about your workplace, we would like to hear from you. Please email Nicola Banning: workplaceeditor@bacp.co.uk