

Harry Bliss

At a glance, Harry Bliss's story seems to be one of positivity and inspiration. Over the last 18 months, he has saved at least 4 lives through his work driving positive mental health outcomes across leading UK businesses.

But scratch beneath the surface, and you'll see that his achievements are deeply intertwined with a heart-breaking reality.

If you ask Harry what one thing drives him every day, what keeps the fire in his belly roaring, you will only get one answer. Harry is driven by a desire to prevent more tragedies like one that touched him incredibly personally: the death of his friend and mentor, James, who tragically took his own life.

For a long time, Harry has been aware of the importance of mental wellbeing. After experiencing his own mental health struggles during university, he graduated determined to use his knowledge to galvanise change in the way people view, approach and deal with mental wellbeing in the workplace.

At the age of just 24, he took a leap of faith, and founded his own company: Champion Health. Champion Health would work with organisations to help them be proactive about looking after the mental health of their employees. In doing so, they would ensure that struggling employees could quickly get the help they needed.

As any entrepreneur will tell you, establishing a business is incredibly difficult. Harry knew he had the drive, the idea and the vision to make a real difference, but he was also aware that he lacked experience in how to run and scale a business from an operational side. Without that, he would not be able to get the Champion Health platform into the hands of the organisations who needed it.

To address this issue, Harry approached a friend, James, whose children he had coached at the local cricket club. James was the director of a global organisation and, according to Harry, knew business like the back of his hand. Despite being one of the most time-poor people Harry knew, James agreed to guide Harry through the early stages of building a company. The two began to meet up regularly, and the relationship quickly developed into a mentorship, as well as a close friendship.

James was the sort of person who looked to have it all. He was a husband to a wonderful wife and father to two amazing children. He had cultivated a successful career and lived in a lovely house in a lovely area. He was an incredibly well-liked member of the local community and had an extensive network of friends and loved ones. He was also a brilliant mentor. Harry really looked up to James, not only as a businessman but also as a person.

All of this made what happened 6 months into Champion's journey even more heart-breaking for Harry.

James, who had become such a huge part of Harry's life, tragically took his own life, due to a short but acute bout of workplace stress.

Their story

Receiving the news was devastating for Harry. Even now, three years later, he still finds it difficult to talk about the day he found out that James had taken his own life.

But alongside the grief he was experiencing, Harry also found a new level of drive. Not only was he going to ensure that James' legacy lived through Champion Health, he was also going to do everything he could to prevent what happened to James happening to others. Champion Health's guiding mission had now been clearly established: to change and save lives.

Harry knew that this would take time. The sad truth is that one in five working-age adults contemplate taking their own life. Harry knew that saving even one of these lives would take an extraordinary amount of hard work and sacrifice. Champion Health was barely an established company and Harry would have to work through the grief he was experiencing, whilst being acutely aware of the absence of his mentor.

This didn't stop him. For the last 3 years, Harry has worked tirelessly, directing any available resources towards improving Champion Health. These resources have included an incredible amount of his own time. By Harry's own admission, there are important areas of his life which have had to take a back

seat. But the hard work has paid off emphatically, as Harry's commitment, motivation and clear vision have translated into life-saving work.

In the last 18 months, he has been informed that the platform has saved at least four lives. The first time Harry was told this news, he was brought to tears.

He is now responsible for a team of 10 with an additional 40 professionals and academics working with Champion Health, all of whom were made aware of the "why" behind Champion Health the minute they joined the company, all of whom are committed to the mission of changing and saving lives.

Harry's story is inspirational because it is an example of someone flipping adversity into opportunity.

Harry has led the Champion Health team on an incredible journey since 2018, not only in terms of business, but more importantly in terms of impact.

Throughout all of this, Harry has ensured that the legacy of James is never forgotten, and that the "why" behind what Champion are doing is always made clear. The mission always comes first.

Nothing proves this more than the actions Harry took during COVID-19. As the pandemic took hold, Harry could see the negative impact it was having on the nation's mental health. He responded by offering Champion Health's online mental health training free of charge to anyone who wanted it.

It was a huge risk for such a young company to take, but Harry knew Champion Health's platform could make a real difference to people's lives at this much-needed time. The training reached tens of thousands of people and over 400 organisations across the globe, including the NHS.

The Champion team, led by Harry, have also worked hard to raise awareness of suicide, and to stimulate conversation about it. Their Suicide Prevention guide (find the link below), which they released on World Suicide Prevention Day 2020, drew widespread praise due to the effectiveness with which it tackled such an important topic.

Champion Health has grown significantly over the last 3 years and the company now works with key clients including the NHS, Honda and Rabobank. The company was successful in achieving significant investment in 2020 to support its fast growth. A product of his own success, the workload on Harry has not eased yet. However, despite often working 6-day weeks, Harry is always willing to make time for others, and to talk to them about mental health.

He has drawn on his own experiences to deliver guest lectures about mental health to students in various UK universities, as well as some local primary schools. It is an impressive feat for someone so young to be trusted with guiding others on such an important issue, but Harry is incredibly capable and keen to share his expertise to help others succeed. He is unafraid to be completely open and vulnerable about his own mental health, and that

inspires others to do the same. In this way, he has been ahead of his time. Leaders everywhere are starting to realise the advantages of talking to people about their mental health. Harry has been doing this for years.

Harry and James' story is also inspirational because it is an example of something so tragic being used to drive something incredibly positive. James' story will always be intertwined not only with Harry's story, but also with the story of Champion Health, and the people they help. His legacy lives through Harry, and lives through Champion Health.

What Harry has achieved was made possible because an incredibly busy person made time for a young man who needed a mentor. He has never forgotten that, which is why Harry always makes time for others, and particularly those who were close to James. He makes it clear to everyone the role that James played in his life, and the role James played in the journey that Harry and Champion have been on. Recently, he took the decision to sponsor Holmesfield Cricket Club, the place where he met James.

Having worked with Harry for a year now, I am very aware of how busy he is, and how hard he works. You'll often find him still working late into the evening, or on a weekend. One time he does not work though, is 5pm until 6pm on a Thursday. That is the time he spends coaching cricket to James' kids. No matter how busy he gets, Harry will always make time for James, just as James did for him.

Testimonials

On Friday, March 13th 2020, I walked into The Starling Cafe in Harrogate, North Yorkshire, for a meeting with Harry Bliss. His LinkedIn profile photo was pretty small and somehow, the name Harry Bliss conjured up expectations that I might be meeting with an ageing 1960's Michael Caine movie character. Imagine my surprise, when sitting waiting for our meeting was a young, fresh-faced, twenty-something, armed with a laptop, who told me how he had founded a tech company to support the mental and physical wellbeing of thousands of company employees in the UK. Within days of our meeting, I joined the Champion Health team and with eyes wide open, I have since been part of a journey, that, at times, has taken my breath away, as Harry and the young team at Champion have developed a platform of wellbeing solutions, which is fast becoming the envy of all other wellbeing solution providers globally and has already been dubbed 'The Netflix of Wellbeing'. Technical abilities, ambition and drive, should all be prerequisites to enable Harry to have achieved what he and Champion has in just a couple of years. However, I have rarely seen such inspiring, compassionate, value driven leadership in any entrepreneur, let alone one so young and I have known and worked with many over my 40+ year career in consultancy. Without question, Harry has great business acumen, but he has something else that you can't teach, he cares about people and is passionate about making a difference in this world – he's already achieving this, and the future of workplace wellbeing is going to see a seismic shift in the next 5-10 years as Champion Health continues to deliver on its mission.

Steve Phillip

Founder, The Jordan Legacy

Harry came into my school and spoke to the whole year group, not directly about death, but about personal wellbeing and how to look after your own mental health. Harry was brilliant at relating his message to a group of 9/10-year olds and his interactive, caring approach allowed them to feel at ease at once. The children Harry spoke to have regularly asked me about different aspects of the message Harry shared. It clearly stuck with them and I can't thank him enough for his help in a situation that I would otherwise have found incredibly challenging.

Joe Cooper

Teacher, Birkdale School

Since meeting Harry I have rarely seen someone so driven by the mission they are on. A mission to change both the conversation, awareness and attitude towards mental health and wellbeing for everyone. When you then understand the backstory of what happened and how his life could have taken a very different path, you realise how unique he is. I hear many people talk on this topic, but few take action. Harry is the exception, not only has he taken massive action but he is making the world take notice. I can't think of a more worthy tribute to his friend and mentor.

Matt Macri-Waller

Founder and CEO, Benefex

I was introduced to Harry through our late friend, and Harry's mentor. From the early stages of Champion, you could see someone who wanted to make a real difference. However, following our mutual friend taking his own life, you could see that it lit a spark for Harry and the team at Champion to go that step further. Flipping adversity into opportunity is something that I admire the team at Champion Health for, and it's been wonderful to see Harry grow and have the impact that he's having.

Leon Taylor

Olympic medallist, BBC commentator and mental health advocate

Having worked with Harry and Champion Health across a number of different projects it is totally apparent how clearly the company's mission and purpose are built on Harry's powerful experience of losing his mentor to suicide.

Everyone at Champion is infused with a passion and energy for positively impacting the health and wellbeing space and ultimately saving lives and this shines through all their content and interactions. It is hard not to be inspired by spending time with Harry and his team and I have every confidence that they will continue to make real and lasting human change.

Jamie Broadley

Staff Wellbeing Lead, People Services: Derbyshire Community Health Service
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Harry Bliss is the embodiment of turning tragedy into purpose. When you meet with Harry you can instantly tell that the business he has grown has come from a genuine and passionate mission to do good, to help others, and to prevent others suffering. Harry has ensured that when building Champion Health its culture keeps true to this mission, even if it makes it more challenging for his business to grow. Harry is what I would consider as ‘productively dissatisfied with the status quo, always pushing to do better, do deliver more, and to reach more people who need help’. He not only delivers a service that does good, but one that actively transforms the mindsets and actions of the businesses that work with him. I can speak from personal experience, that after working with Harry and Champion Health, neither I nor our business will ever be same.

David Angrave

Chief Operating Officer, Twinkl

Some people just have something special, and this is Harry. I came across Harry on LinkedIn and was instantly enamoured by his personal mission to support others’ wellbeing through his young company Champion Health. I reached out to see how I could get involved as I lost my dad to suicide when I was young so mental health, wellbeing and suicide are deeply personal issues close to my own heart. It was clear that Harry was (and remains) incredibly

mission-led and how much he cares about supporting people. When he told me he had just made Champion's online mental health training free, to keep support free for people for as long as possible throughout Covid, I knew he was a credible driving force. There is no doubt that his friend and mentor James' legacy will live on via the work Champion Health is doing. Harry has built an incredible team and he is a natural, authentic leader, leading from a place of vulnerability. I challenge anyone not to be moved when hearing Harry speak about his mission which I've absolutely no doubt will be a success.

Ellie MacDonald

Founder and managing director, MacComms

Life changing events can make you stop in your tracks. Life gets put on hold for a time as you take stock, re-evaluate, and move forward again often in a new direction, with a different focus and drive. Whilst Harry Bliss was already on the road with Champion Health and knew the general direction he was travelling, tragically losing his friend and mentor has focused his journey. His destination is now very clear, to make a positive difference to as many people as possible and to save lives. I have been travelling with Harry from the early days of his journey and am privileged to be a part of his trip. His bus is filling up nicely as he surrounds himself with a remarkable team. Champion Health are, and will continue to make an impact on so many people's lives. They have only really just begun.

Jonathan Daniel

Director, Fitback

I met Harry when I was working as Head of Wellbeing for BBC Studios. What immediately strikes you about him is how open and honest he is, how clear his vision is, and how driven he is to achieve it. When you hear the “why” behind Champion, you understand where all of this comes from, and you can’t help but buy in to Champion Health, and Harry. I’m delighted to now work alongside him as we strive to drive positive mental health outcomes across UK organisations.

Jack Green

Olympian, Mind Ambassador and YoungMinds Ambassador

Harry spoke to Rachel (my colleague) and I at Sheffield College about 18 months ago, he told us his inspirational story and his passion to make positive change and to support others understand and find ways to improve their mental well-being immediately shone through. Since then, Harry’s company, Champion Health, and the Sheffield College have become firm partners and Harry continues to ensure tragic events remain a catalyst for positive action. He has supported many of our students during particularly difficult times through numerous innovative initiatives.

James Smythe

Vice Principal Student Experience, Sheffield College

Harry's passion shines through in everything he does. He's trailblazing in the mental health space turning adversity into opportunity and changing the well-being landscape for the better.

Jodie Hill

Managing Partner, Thrive Law

Harry has taken his own personal experience and turned it into his Purpose. Most businesses struggle to define their mission and vision and yet Harry has achieved this from day one. This is what attracted S&G Response to partner with Champion Health since 2019 and their intuitive online evaluation tool has been a central plank of our employee mental health support strategy.

Andy Whatmough

Managing Director, S&G Response

I met Harry when he was 23, full of energy, enthusiasm, and a passion to make a positive difference. Whilst Harry's experience and knowledge in how to run a business was lacking, you could see he truly cared about the mission he's so clearly set out on – to change and save lives. It's no surprise to see where Champion Health are now, and having the true impact that society needs. When James ended up taking his own life, I could see an additional level of drive in Harry. The business had turned from something that he wanted to work to something that he needed to work. Harry had set up the business from

scratch with no experience, and to see them working with global organisations now it gives me a huge amount of pride to say I supported him at a time when Harry needed such support.

Maurice Miller

Adviser to Harry

“When I first started struggling with mental health, I was really lucky that a close friend recognised the signs and helped me get the support I needed. However, this isn’t the case for everyone. It is because of my own challenges that I was so keen to take Champion Health’s online mental health training course during COVID-19. If you haven’t already, I really recommend taking course. Thank you to Champion Health and Harry Bliss for empowering me and giving me the confidence to be ‘that friend’ to someone else should it be needed.”

Amelia Selby

PR Executive, Twinkl

“We chose Champion Health based on a number of factors, mainly around the credibility of the co-founder, Harry Bliss, and the story which sits behind the foundations of the company. Harry is a seriously impressive young entrepreneur, with huge amounts of integrity and an excellent product offering.”

Chloe Dekowski on behalf of the Executive Committee at Rabobank

Media coverage

<https://www.covermagazine.co.uk/news/4026744/ons-reveals-january-saddest-record>

<https://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/business/why-mental-wellbeing-should-be-mission-critical-firms-harry-bliss-2920923>

<https://www.unilad.co.uk/featured/60-of-companies-have-adapted-approaches-to-mental-health-during-pandemic/>

<https://techround.co.uk/interviews/interview-with-harry-bliss-co-founder-at-mental-wellbeing-platform-champion-health/>

<https://www.deadlinenews.co.uk/2020/09/08/mental-health-firm-creates-guide-to-mark-world-suicide-prevention-day/>

<https://www.dailystar.co.uk/news/latest-news/dad-who-shared-sons-final-24132913>

<https://www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/news/19296061.you-always-think-things-wont-come-knocking-door—dad-shares-story-sons-suicide-police-reveal-mental-health-incidents-rising/>

<https://www.prolificnorth.co.uk/news/appointments-and-recruitment-news/2021/05/olympian-appointed-head-performance-champion-health>

<https://bdaily.co.uk/articles/2020/08/06/yorkshire-wellbeing-platform-receives-new-investment-to-expand-platform-after-increase-in-enquiries>

<https://www.uktechnews.info/2020/08/06/champion-health-secures-pre-seed-investment-from-twinkl/>

<https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/uk-news/dad-shares-last-message-son-20621396>

Supporting evidence

The why behind Champion

<https://championhealth.co.uk/our-story/>

Champion's suicide prevention guide

<https://championhealth.co.uk/insights/suicide-prevention-guide/>

A LinkedIn post from Harry Bliss, about James

https://www.linkedin.com/posts/harry-bliss-44b479136_in-2018-i-received-some-news-that-changed-activity-6777969092990124032-cq6p

