

# Government staff charity marathon spans the globe in 24 hours

UK government staff around the world are set to complete a unique 24-hour global marathon relay to help mental health charities across the world.

Diplomats and other overseas staff working for the UK government, as well as their Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office colleagues in the UK, and their families, will take part to raise funds for mental health charities, including [Mind](#) in the UK.

The Globalmile challenge is a repeat of the [DiploMile challenge](#) first completed last year at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Staff from more than 230 British embassies, high commissions, governors' offices and consulates – from Vancouver in the west to Samoa in the east; from Wellington in the south to Reykjavik in the north – will take part. This follows the effort of 158 posts, which took part in the first year of the event.

Saturday's Globalmile starts at 9am on Saturday in Apia, Samoa (9pm on Friday night in the UK). It will finish at 1pm in Vancouver, Canada (9pm on Saturday in the UK).

Two Foreign Office ministers – the [Minister for European Neighbourhood and the Americas Wendy Morton](#) and [Minister for Middle East and North Africa James Cleverly](#) – will join in.

Ambassadors to Moscow, Berlin, Brazil, Tel Aviv and Nairobi are also taking part, as well as the Foreign Office's most senior diplomat, [Permanent Under Secretary Sir Philip Barton](#).

Participants at each post will each run or walk a mile, before video-conferencing or tweeting with the next mission to pass the virtual baton on – sending it through the 24 time-zones over the course of a day.

The global marathon is the brainchild of Dr Ian Collard, Ambassador-designate to Lebanon, and his wife Tamara, who as part of the [Diplomatic Service Families Association](#) supports British diplomatic families overseas.

In 2020, with global flight restrictions, Ian's previous assignment in Afghanistan meant a 3,500-mile separation from Tamara and their children, which forced them to find creative ways to stay united as a family during the first months of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The pair knew their situation was not unique in the department, then the Foreign & Commonwealth Office, before its merger with the Department for International Development last September.

The Collards decided the marathon would be a good way to unite the



department, and its families, and improve mental and physical wellbeing. It would also allow staff to virtually connect with their colleagues while social distancing measures were in place.

Last year's inaugural event went so well, raising more than £50,000 for charity, it is running again this year.

Dr Collard said:

After the success of our [global marathon in 2020](#), demand was high to undertake an even bigger Globalmile in 2021. The COVID-19 outbreak sadly continues and has meant a shift in the way diplomats – like many others – are communicating, engaging and operating, particularly with new technologies. Globalmile makes best use of those ways of engaging.

Last year's event was an incredible boost to all those who took part and we are pleased to be able to raise money again for charity, this year to support mental health initiatives.

Embassies across the world are raising funds for local charities, and Ian and Tamara have set up a Virgin Money Giving for donations to the UK's mental health charity Mind.

Dr Collard added:

As staff of the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, our day job is to serve our country including by safeguarding and promoting our values overseas and being a force for good in the world.

Doing so as a newly merged development and diplomacy department makes our role – and the expansion of Globalmile – even more exciting.