An eye-opening week in Westminster – Dr Aravind Vijayaraghavan and his pair Lucy Powell MP

In 2013, Dr Aravind Vijayaraghavan, Lecturer in Nanomaterials at the University of Manchester was paired with Lucy Powell, MP for Central Manchester. Aravind's research involves the development of graphene based sensors. Graphene, the world's first two-dimensional material, was first isolated at University of Manchester in 2004 by Prof. Andre Geim, FRS and Prof. Kostya Novoselov, FRS, subsequently earning them the Nobel Prize in Physics in 2010 for their investigations of graphene. Aravind works in the newly established National Graphene Institute at Manchester, and develops chemical sensors, bio-sensors, pressure sensors and optical sensors using this new wonder-material.

Read more about Aravind's experience with the scheme below:

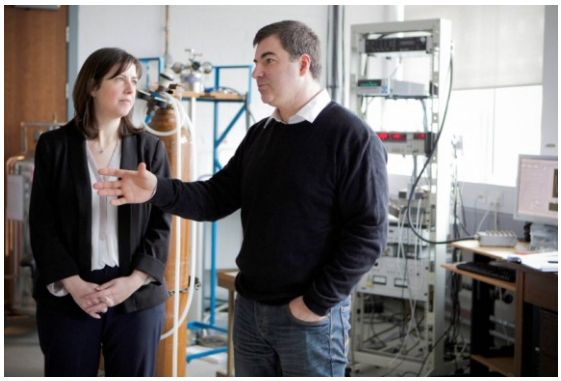
"The week I spent in Westminster with Lucy was certainly eye-opening. As someone who has only lived in the UK for the past 3 years, I learnt a lot in those 4 days shadowing Lucy. It was fortuitous timing that the week coincided with the Chancellor's Autumn statement, which Lucy was able get me a ticket for, and I also had the opportunity to attend PM's Question Time and a number of select committee meetings. I was particularly impressed with how Lucy managed to juggle her days in Parliament, in her constituency, and her role as a mother of 3 children, and still manage to keep her wits about herself.

Dr Aravind Vijayaraghavan and his local MP Lucy Powell

When I had the opportunity to invite Lucy to visit The University of Manchester, I was able to show her the clean-rooms and labs were graphene was first made and all the exciting research we have been doing with it since then. The UK government and the EU have recently invested over £60 million into establishing the National Graphene Institute, and I was able to show Lucy the rapid progress being made in the construction of the new building that will house state of the

art facilities for graphene research starting in 2015, and will be a flagship building in her constituency.

Lucy also had the opportunity to meet with Prof. Dame Nancy Rothwell, the vice-chancellor of the University of Manchester, Prof. Novoselov, and Prof. Colin Bailey, the dean of the faculty of Engineering and Physical Sciences, among others, to learn more about the university's long-term vision and plans for taking graphene from the laboratory into the market-place and into homes. We are actively seeking partnerships with national and international industries as well as start-up companies to establish research and manufacturing bases in the UK, particularly in Manchester, and Lucy was able to meet with some people from our industrial base as well. Overall, I hoped to introduce Lucy to the broad spectrum of graphene-related activities at the University.



Lucy met Nobel Prize Lauterate Professor Kostya Novoselov FRS during the lab tour at her reciprocal visit

After her reciprocal visit Lucy commented: "It was great to meet Aravind and to hear more about the interesting and pioneering work that it being done with graphene at the University of Manchester. The scheme gave me a chance to form a relationship with Aravind which I hope will continue into the future and also dialogue about the interesting work that is taking place in my constituency."