**Video interview: Dr Seema Patel**

**Transcript**

This interview was conducted by the Knowledge Exchange Unit in Summer 2021.

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**Please introduce yourself and tell us how you engaged with the UK Parliament.**

My name is Dr Seema Patel, I’m a Senior Lecturer in Law at Nottingham Law School, Nottingham Trent University. I’m an international expert on gender discrimination in sport and I’ve offered extensive global media commentary on the legal implications of gender eligibility rules.

The House of Lords select committee on the National Plan for Sport and Recreation invited me to take part in a private seminar covering relevant aspects of sport and recreation policy. I was asked to talk in the topic of the UK legislative framework in regard to sport and comparative international models. But I was also given scope to expand upon inclusion issues and they welcomed suggestions from me. I was then invited to submit written evidence as an academic expert on discrimination in sport offering a legal and regulatory view on issues concerning barriers to participation, accountability of sports bodies, and inclusion.

**How did you find out about the opportunity to engage with Parliament?**

The clerk to the House of Lords select committee on a National Plan for Sports and Recreation emailed me to invite me to the private seminar. Having reviewed my online profile, they identified my experience in global sports law with an experience in discrimination issues and I was shortlisted for this seminar based on my sports law experience.

**Why did you engage with Parliament?**

Well I engaged with Parliament because my contribution to gender discrimination in sport research isn’t tokenistic. I really want to influence and promote change in sport and Government policy to develop meaningful and effective frameworks for inclusion in sport, and this was really a perfect opportunity for me to do this.

**What did you do which you found worked well during this engagement with Parliament?**

Well, I think the seminar brought together a diverse and rich range of speakers in the field of sport and it was really useful to gain an insight into other perspectives on the sport issues. It became really clear during the seminar that the committee required short, sharp, punchy presentations from the speakers, rather than a traditional academic delivery which I was accustomed to. And it was highlighted actually from the outset that this would be relatively informal, approximately ten minutes with questions from the committee after. And similarly the written evidence needed to be adjusted to suit a non-academic, non-law audience, speaking directly to the questions presented in the Call for Evidence, and cutting down any irrelevant waffle.

**How did you feel about engaging with Parliament before you got involved, and did that change after you engaged with Parliament?**

Well I was very honoured and excited to engage with Parliament and offer my expertise. It’s really important to me that my research influences and promotes change in policymaking to ensure inclusion in sport. I was really nervous about interacting with notable Members, but the Committee were extremely welcoming and receptive, the questions after the talk were manageable and they really challenged me to speak concisely and precisely.

**Was there any support for you to engage with Parliament, either from the parliamentary team that you engaged with, or from your university or employer? If so, how did that help you?**

Well, Nottingham Law School were extremely supportive of this engagement and the guidance from the Parliament clerk was incredible throughout. Any silly questions I had were answered promptly and thoroughly and they really made me feel very comfortable.

**What impact did your engagement have for you as a researcher and as an individual?**

My engagement has really enhanced my research profile and expanded the reach and depth of my research and personally it was a career highlight to engage with Parliament in this way.

**What’s your one top tip for any researcher looking to engage with Parliament?**

I would say, know what you want to say, or contribute, in a few key bullet points, and have practical examples of recommendations for the Committee.

**What message would you give to encourage other researchers to engage with Parliament?**

Well, this entire experience is incredibly enjoyable and valuable, and the team are really welcoming and friendly, and there is an overarching sense that what you are doing is making a real difference by contributing.

**Would you engage with Parliament again as a researcher?**

Absolutely, if the opportunity arises I would love to.