

Participant M14

I: So for the first part, so we're interested in understanding your experiences of being put onto the NERS, to know what's working well, but also, how could it be improved? So could you talk me through that, so right from the start of how you found out about the programme, and what happened from there?

R: Yeah, okay. I underwent part-bypass surgery and so as a consequence of that, I was adopted onto the post-operative exercise regime and rehabilitation scheme, and from there on, then I went onto NERS. When I went onto the nurse scheme, my wife, who shared the same GP as myself, thought it would be good for her as well. We thought the exercise regime would be good. So she joined through our GP, so we're both on the same scheme. And, initially, we were going to a gym session, and we opted to go twice a week, so that's two hours a week, and that was very beneficial. That was about three miles or so from where we live, and we had a choice of different venues, and we chose this particular venue. And we obviously got introduced to the instructor, and got to know him quite well, and he got to know us quite well; and we enjoyed sessions. Then along came Covid, and we - those sessions obviously were halted. So what we did then was the instructor, [name], had already posted recordings, which he'd done at home, of the sessions, the warm-up, the actual exercise and the cool down sessions. And he'd produced three videos, sent us the links, and we used those from time-to-time, just keep the sessions going.

So we were very grateful when the scheme organisers in our area set up the online sessions with the same instructor, half-hour sessions this time, so not quite as demanding. But, to be honest, from our point of view, we've been doing these from the very beginning. From our point of view, because we run a business, and so it was actually better for us not to have to go to a venue. And we were perfectly happy continuing to do these from home online. And if, for example, if the instructor can't make it one day, or we had to drop out of the session, we can always go back to the recordings that [name] posted on YouTube. So we're - at the moment, we're very happy with what we're doing. That's about it! Oh, I've lost your sound there. I've lost your sound.

I: Oh, can you hear me now?

R: Yes, I can.

I: So I was going to say, do you know who referred you?

R: In my case, it was the Cardiac Rehabilitation Unit from [place] University Health Board, who were responsible for my post-op rehab course.

I: And did you understand why you were being referred? Did they communicate with you clearly, the reasons why you were being referred to this programme?

R: Yes, absolutely, yeah. Because after a bypass op, it's very easy to just become sedentary and we have office-based jobs anyway, and we spend a lot of time sitting on our backsides. So

from that point of view, it was good for us to - and me in particular - to get back into some sort of regime of exercise, which I hadn't done for a few years. I've lost your sound again.

I: Can you hear me now?

R: Yes, I can.

I: Perfect. What were your expectations of this programme, were you...? Did you have any at all?

R: Well, I - from my point of view, what I hoped it would do, would be to impose a requirement on me, that would force me to exercise regularly, and that was exactly what it did.

I: And was the programme explained clearly to you? So when you have been referred, did they explain clearly of what it will entail, so you had an idea of what to expect?

R: Yes, absolutely.

I: Okay, perfect. So now how interested were you, initially, in the NERS programme, in this exercise scheme that was going on?

R: Okay. It was - for me, it was - and back to my wife, and both of us - it was probably a case of necessity. I'm afraid neither of us are particularly athletic, sports-minded or energetic [unclear 05:17]. So we don't - we would walk occasionally, for example. We have fairly active lives with grandchildren running around after them, but no real exercise. So it was a discipline, really, that we were getting [unclear 05:34].

I: Were you unsure about anything at all? Was there anything you were unclear about?

R: No. We'd both been gym members in the long-distant past and hated it, but we knew what to expect, really. But, actually, we - what I didn't expect, is the level of instructions and the level of background information given by the instructor. So it wasn't just a case of going to the gym, [unclear 06:04] that's the phrase that we [unclear 06:07]. He explained why we were doing - why we were doing things, and what was a cardiac, what was a power exercise and so on. So that was unexpected, in a way, but everything [unclear 06:22], and we had no questions.

I: So it sounds as though you had a very supportive person who referred you; the person was very supportive and encouraging?

R: Yes, it was actually in [name]'s case - my wife - it was our GP, and she... But she specifically went in and said, well, I'm getting unfit and need to do something, can you refer me, can you put me on the scheme; which I was already on. But the cardiac team, who had referred me, they explained it well, and it was an option and you didn't have to go on to it. But it was - well, I think, actually, when Covid subscriptions came in, we were just about coming to the end of the period, there was a sponsored period where we literally just paid a pound for a session, which I thought was ridiculously cheap. But not everybody, of course, has got the funds [unclear 07:21] we're privileged to have. So we would have been quite happy to pay more, but we were coming to the end of that sponsored scheme, sessions, which I think was

12 weeks when Covid hit, and we went on to the online sessions; but we would have continued with the face-to-face.

I: Right. And so, obviously, you were doing it with your partner as well. So do you speak together in regards to this, like, did you discuss maybe this programme together? Was it nice to have that person who was also doing this with you, and was that encouraging?

R: Yes, it was. Yeah, absolutely.

I: And, overall, how would you summarise your experience of being invited? Is there anything that could be improved?

R: No, it was - no, I don't think so, I mean, the invite was there from the cardiac team. I knew I had to get into some sort of physical regime, which I hadn't done previously, otherwise, I would be back in theatre again in another couple of years' time. So, from my point of view, it was a must anyway, but there was no problem at all, it was all fine.

I: Okay. Now I'd like to know a little bit more about that first meeting that you had with your exercise professional. So, again, I'm trying to understand what works so well, and how could it be improved? Could you just talk me through that first, initial meeting with them?

R: Yes, okay. We went to this small - it's like an old person's, like a sheltered concept where they have a gym, and they have meeting rooms and so on. And as a council facility, it was ideal for this sort of thing, and it's like a little gym hall, really. So we chose the day that we were going to start, we chose the time and there were a number of sessions during the week. And on our initial visit, the course had already been running and, of course, people come and they go, and the course had run continuously with different people. So we were newbies, I think we were, but we were very soon talking to the other delegates there, to the other participants. They were nice, friendly people, so [unclear 09:57] always got a welcome. And then the instructor [unclear 10:03] explained to us what was going to happen. And the class started, and we just joined in the class. So the first thing that everybody did was a bit of marching on the spot, so that was great because everybody did it and it was nice and simple, and straightforward. Got over the initial inhibitions that you may have had. And that was great, because it was a group, and we were just literally joining in with the group of people who had done it before, and just watching what they were doing, listening to the instructor. No problems. Excuse me.

I: Are you okay?

R: Pretty much, yeah.

I: Are you okay? Sorry.

R: No. Yes. Yeah, no, I'm fine. Yeah, yeah, I'll just take a drink.

I: I was going to ask, so did you have any thoughts ahead of this first consultation? Did you have any concerns at all? Did you maybe consider not going?

- R: No, nothing would have stopped us going. All of these things, the first time you experience anything, you're a little bit apprehensive. And it's not quite so much [unclear 11:13] going, and you think what's it going to be like, am I going to make a fool of myself? Am I really going to be able to go through this regime? So lots of things go through your mind, but there nothing, no real barriers to get over.
- I: **Okay. And were you contacted by your exercise professional before this, in person? Did they make any contact with you?**
- R: No, I don't think - no, no, we just had the appointment from the admin people, and we just turned up. So, no, we hadn't had a conversation in advance, as far as I can remember, no.
- I: **Right. Okay. And would you have preferred that, and would that have maybe put you at ease?**
- R: I think it - yes, it would have been nice, and I have to say, I can't actually remember. It may be that [name] did give us a call in advance, and I really can't remember, I'm afraid. It's a couple of years ago now. But, yes, undoubtedly, I think in that situation, an initial call would have been good [unclear 12:26] I can't remember. Yeah, that would be helpful for sure, in general.
- I: **And when you met with your exercise professional, how supportive, friendly, encouraging and enthusiastic were they?**
- R: Oh, absolutely - absolutely dedicated. He's actually a very, very personable, young man, very friendly, quite a joker. No problem at all, and we really bonded [unclear 12:54] straightaway.
- I: **Perfect. And did this put you at ease when you met with him, and you saw that he's very welcoming and actually very enthusiastic, did that help you at ease?**
- R: Yes, it did. I think if I had any reservations, it was that we were going to meet with somebody who was super fit, and supports superstars, and [unclear 13:17] feel a bit old and degenerate. But, actually, he was quite the opposite, and [name] is a lovely guy and down to earth. No problem at all.
- I: **Did he explain to you what to expect from the programme?**
- R: Yes, he did.
- I: **Perfect. So, overall, how would you summarise your experience of this meeting? Is there anything that could have been improved?**
- R: I suppose the only one thing, is that perhaps if - and this is just a thing that you might do in a business meeting - it might have been helpful had everybody just introduced themselves, basically, around in a circle, but that's the only thing.
- I: **That's very valuable. And, at this point, could you tell me, so what were you hoping to get out of the programme, basically to improve your health and wellbeing, or were you also open to maybe making some friends along the way?**

R: I can see that that - I can see that making friends, in one way, would be valuable. We - because we were going as a couple anyway, we just made our own little bubble, as it were, and, of course, we spoke to everybody else, but we weren't specifically looking to build relationships or friendships. But I can see that it would be - in fact, [unclear 14:44] people there who I got the impression were going, not just for the exercise, but because it was a way of getting out of the house, so, yeah, it is a valuable... And, of course, if you're in those classes, the chances are that you've experienced some medical trauma, and so any interaction, mental support, whatever you can get from the other people, it would be valuable.

I: **Yes, I agree with you. And I understand that, obviously, you had some usual face-to-face sessions on the NERS exercise programme, but due to the pandemic you changed to receiving these virtually?**

R: Yeah, that's correct.

I: **Somebody who has experienced both types of sessions, you are in a unique position to tell us about the pros and cons of each, so this is fantastic. I'm going to ask you a bit about the face-to-face first, and then we'll transition to the virtual programme.**

R: Yes, of course. No problem.

I: **Perfect. For the face-to-face, can you tell me a little bit more about your experience of these exercise sessions? How did you feel before the face-to-face session, and so on and so forth?**

R: Okay, for us, we're not a very well-organised family, so we would always be rushing. We'd always just about get there on time. And it was, basically, it took a morning out of our week. By the time we'd got ourselves organised, dressed, got to the venue, gone through the exercises, had cooled down, had a little chat with everybody, helped put the chairs away, whatever else might have to happen. And then we'd always go to a little café on the Mumbles front, and we live at the seaside. We just go to a little café and have lunch, which was quite nice. But, actually, we felt we might have been undoing the good work that we'd gained while we were going to the classes. But we did enjoy going to classes, but I must say, I think... I don't know that we would have necessarily continued. We wanted to continue, but I don't know that we would have been focused enough to go twice a week, every week. Just because of the time it was taking us to get to the venue, an hour spent, and then all the stuff around it. But the course - the face-to-face sessions as well were great, and actually make you work [unclear 17:22]. For a youngster like you, it would be easy.

But they were good sessions, and [name], the instructor, was always watching you to make sure you were doing it correctly, and you weren't straining yourself, and you were regularly swapping from cardio to other exercises, and that was great. In the particular venue where we went the parking was a nightmare, but then we could have got taxis and whatever, if we had to, but that's just an incidental. So I've got to say, it did for us what we wanted and you

knew you had to go, we had to be somewhere, at a fixed time, and that forced us to do that, what we wouldn't otherwise have done [unclear 18:26].

I: Yes, I understand. Obviously, you received some support from your exercise professional, like you mentioned previously, they were very supportive towards you and your partner as well. And was the sessions work what they - what you expected at all?

R: I think, in many ways - I would have expected and I think, in my own mind, I'd got an idea that we would go through like a gym session, [unclear 19:02] ten minutes on a bike, ten minutes on a treadmill, and ten minutes on a [unclear 19:10]. And that's what I kind of expected, so it was actually much nicer that it was set up with a series of different exercises. And you'd basically do a couple of minutes on each, and then on to the next one. So there was much more variety than I had expected, and much less use of the machines where I think I would have got bored stiff.

I: So you liked the variety and the options?

R: That's right, yeah.

I: Okay. So now I'm just going to go on to the virtual delivery now, so approximately how many face-to-face sessions did you have before the first lockdown?

R: Sorry, before, you mean?

I: Yes, so how many face-to-face sessions did you have before the lockdown, and [unclear 20:03]?

R: Right, got it! Okay, we had 24 sessions then prior to lockdown.

I: Twenty-four sessions. Okay. Can you just talk me through the decision to switch to virtual delivery, and continue with NERS, rather than postponing and waiting until face-to-face was available?

R: Yes, of course. We - I think that the main point, which I tried to allude to a couple of times is, for us, it's the commitment that is important. Without commitment to a specific time, a specific day, we probably wouldn't be exercising at all. We'd probably just go back into our old ways. So when the classes closed down, we were at a bit of a loss, actually, to know what to do. [name] - give me a second - excuse me, I've also had a thyroid operation, and you notice my throat is weird. So when [name] kept in touch with us after the classes shut down, he let us know exactly what was going on. When he posted the videos on YouTube that he'd created, we ran those through, and we forced ourselves to try and do those. I have to say, we didn't do them as often as we probably could have done, but nevertheless, they were helpful, and they were pretty much exactly what he then translated into the online sessions, using the Microsoft Teams. So into the Teams sessions, pretty much the same sort of thing. So he would explain the exercise, film himself doing it, time it, give you a bit of encouragement and so on, and we used those.

But then we were very happy when a timetable came up so we could then, again, although we were doing pretty much the same exercises that we did from [name]'s YouTube videos,

we were then committing to a date and a time, and Microsoft Teams-willing, we'd be there with the other people from the... Well, not all of the other people from the class, but some of the people we recognised, and different people. So it was quite good.

I: Yeah, it sounds good [unclear 22:30] explained thoroughly. So did he provide some explanation prior to delivering the sessions online? Did you know what to expect online [unclear 22:38]?

R: Yes. What [name] did was, in a covering email, he explained what he'd done and that he'd produced three videos, which was warm-up, main session and then cool down. At the beginning of each session, he took great pains to explain what he was going to do, what he was going to do, and how he was going to do it, to make sure the [usual 23:00] medical advice was, if you're not feeling good, don't do it. If your medical conditions change, [unclear 23:06] if you don't want to do the exercises, don't [unclear 23:11] back out. So he spent a lot of time on the videos explaining those, and making sure that everybody was [unclear 23:21] going into it.

I: And did you foresee any benefit of having the virtual sessions?

R: Well, the obvious one is, from our point of view, time management, because we can still work from the house. And then ten minutes before the session, literally, we'd go and get some water, set the machine and get the laptop out, whatever, [you were going to use on 23:46] that day. We'd get some jugs of water, get some tins of beans to use as weights. And it does actually save us the time of travelling, getting ourselves organised, getting dressed, getting dressed if it's raining, and you have to get raincoats, and whatever else there is. So you don't need to do any of that stuff, and we're not tempted to go to a café and [unclear 24:16] after the exercise either. So, from that point of view, the benefit is, yes, we're doing less time, because doing the online took [unclear 24:27] a half hour. But you do spend less time, because you're not jumping between stations, and having a little chat, and [unclear 24:37] one exercise after another. So, actually, probably the impact is much the same anyway, but it does save... For us, it probably saved, by the time we'd [unclear 24:46] got ourselves organised [unclear 24:52] it probably takes two and a half hours a session, just by doing it [unclear 24:59].

I: So it was more convenient, in some ways?

R: Yes. [Unclear 25:05].

I: Yes, okay. And would you have preferred to carry on with the face-to-face sessions, if you could?

R: Well, actually, no, we're perfectly comfortable with the online sessions, but I do [unclear 25:19] obviously, there are some kind of drawbacks. Maybe it would be nice [unclear 25:25] every month, perhaps, if we did one face-to-face, and then [unclear 25:30] online. That would be [unclear 25:35] thing to do. But we have actually said that - [name] was explaining to us that the programme is pretty much oversubscribed at the moment and, of course, there have been a lot of people [backed 25:49] up [unclear 25:51] who have had

operations [unclear 25:53] who were really very keen to go. So what [name] and I decided, is that as we're happy with the online sessions and we're... They actually suit us quite well. But if the programme is oversubscribed, it would be better if we didn't do face-to-face anyway, because (a) we don't need to do it, really, and it would be better for somebody else who needs the instruction to be able to take those places. And we've got the videos, if we need to use them. We now know the regime, so, really, if everything [?fell to pieces 26:31] tomorrow, we could still do the exercises ourselves now, because we know what to do. So we've opted to go back to [unclear 26:42].

I: Right, okay. So can you just tell me how often - I'll come back to what you've just said there. But could you just tell me about your experience of the NERS virtual sessions, so already you've been doing some introduction to this, but I'll just ask you specific points. So how did NERS-related activities - so what did NERS and related activities did you get involved with?

R: Okay, well, apart from the - so the online sessions, obviously, are twice a week and we'd signed up for those and there have been a few sessions that we've had to miss, but we do find those very important. There's also the - excuse me a second, excuse me - there is also a walking regime set up over the last few weeks, where a group of people, and not just from NERS, but from other council-sponsored health and exercise teams, get together and do a walk around the local park [?sometimes 27:48]. And we did that one week, primarily, really, to support [name], I think, because it was the first time that he'd got the NERS people involved in it. And it was a nice, gentle stroll around one of the local parks and the university, the university in [place]. And it was very pleasant, but we didn't actually feel we were getting that much from it, so we've not been back to that. And that's it, really, [unclear 28:15].

I: Okay, and were they what you expected? So if - what were you expecting then, could maybe explore why was the case? So how suitable did you feel that they were for you?

R: Sorry, say that one again.

I: So how suitable do you feel that the exercise sessions, the online ones, were for you?

R: Oh, absolutely brilliant, yeah. Spot on.

I: So they were there what you expected?

R: Yes, they were.

I: Okay. And did you have any live online sessions? So I think you just said that you did? Yes, so what was the first session like?

R: The first session was very interesting, because we were all trying to use Teams the first time [unclear 29:00] the council site, they had a couple of issues in [unclear 29:11]. With Microsoft Teams, there is an option where you can go into the waiting room before the meeting. And what [name] found, and what we found was, if you use that option and the council IT team set it up originally that way, if you used that option, quite a lot of people

have difficulty getting in. And so some people were able to hear, but couldn't see. Some people couldn't get on at all. Sometimes it depends on what browser you were using. But then, and I believe this is the case, the IT team took that option off, so you now just go straight into the session, as you and I did this morning, and that was much more successful from a technical point of view. So the initial meeting, [name] did a pilot there on a one-to-one basis, he set up another session and then all the potential delegates could log in, and have a quick chat. That was through the technology, but actually what happened was, on the first session where he had multiple delegates coming in, it all fell to pieces. He did well to have any sort of session at all.

But from that point on, it's been fine and it's all been [unclear 30:28] what he does is, he sets the session up ten minutes or so in advance, so you can then join the session and you can just see his empty room. You can see, and you wander around getting your tins of beans and so on ready. Have a quick chat before the session. But that works well then, so everybody's got the chance to get one into session, and it's not just, okay, 12 o'clock you've got to log in, oh, it's all gone wrong. So that's really been useful.

I: Yeah. And how did you feel towards this first session? Obviously, it was a change from face-to-face to the virtual, so how were you feeling?

R: Well, we're a fairly technical family, so I kind of expected there might be a few odd glitches along the way. From the point of view of the content because, again, we were [unclear 31:22] the videos on the computer, we were pretty well [unclear 31:25]. So [unclear 31:33].

I: Okay. And were you given enough information and support from the NERS programme to prepare you for this, or from your exercise professional?

R: Yes. [Unclear 31:50].

I: Okay. And I don't think you mentioned about experiencing any difficulties to the initial...or in taking part in the programme. You mentioned that some of the people had, or were experiencing difficulties with logging in. Did you also experience any difficulties at all?

R: Yeah, I did the first time. The first session we had this problem of trying to get into the waiting room on Teams. So, actually, I think we did miss one of the sessions right at the very beginning. But, again, what we did was, we just said, okay, I'll send [name] an email [unclear 32:30], and it was about halfway through the session, at that point, and we had tried many times. Just sent him an email, which he picked up, to say we're not [going to join 32:38] the session. And we just did the online videos - sorry, the YouTube videos that he'd produced instead. So it wasn't the end of the world, but it was only a technical issue [unclear 32:50].

I: And you got the help that you needed to resolve this?

R: Yeah. The council IT bods sorted it out [unclear 33:02] the waiting room option [unclear 33:09].

I: Perfect. And did anything affect your ability to fully participate in the virtual sessions?

- R: No, [unclear 33:20]. We've got a room where it's big enough for the two of us to do the exercises. [Unclear 33:28] doing it at the time, and they've all been fine.
- I: **Perfect. And do you... Sorry?**
- R: No, I was just going to say [unclear 33:47].
- I: **Perfect. And do you feel differently about the actual session now, compared to how you felt before you had done it before?**
- R: We actually are as committed now doing the virtual sessions, as we were doing the original face-to-face sessions. We would be less committed to doing face-to-face sessions, for the reasons that I've outlined. Excuse me. One, the preparation and the time; and, two, the fact that other people now need that facility, and we don't feel we need it so much. We've had our time now, and let's let somebody else do it. But in terms of the virtual online [?sessions, we'd really like those to continue 34:41].
- I: **Okay. I'm glad you've had a positive experience with the virtual experience.**
- R: Any what? Sorry?
- I: **I'm glad you're having a positive experience with the virtual sessions.**
- R: Oh, yeah, absolutely. Yeah, they're great.
- I: **Perfect. So having experienced both face-to-face and remote sessions, how would you say they compare?**
- R: I'd say, given that, as I said, the face-to-face for an hour, the online at half an hour, probably the effect of the exercise that you actually do, is probably much the same anyway, if you balance out the time. I'd say the face-to-face sessions are probably more enjoyable. You do have some fun, of course, because there are other people there. You can help other people, and they can help you. So that is good, but from the point of view of, I would say, the majority of people, face-to-face sessions are tremendously valuable. One possible issue, is if you are severely disabled or you're wheelchair-bound, which we're not, by the way, but just observing other people in the sessions. If you have disabilities, actually getting to the session itself could be very difficult. And we know, because we've seen people in those categories, who have then go on to the online section. So it's much better for them to be able to actually undertake those exercises from their house, because they can still be in their wheelchair, and they haven't got to travel to the sessions. But, again, from our point of view, people were nice and friendly, and everyone was okay. Drawbacks was just the organisation of getting there, really, which sounds a bit mean, but from our point of view, we'd got a busy life and to be able to just drop into an online session, and then drop straight out and get back on with what we were doing previously, is really, really great.
- I: **Yes. And is there any that you prefer? So it sounds as though you prefer maybe the face-to-face a little bit more than the online, or would you say you prefer the online one more?**

R: The online is much more convenient. The face-to-face probably is a better experience all around.

I: **All around, okay. So what was your level of attendance at the sessions, and was it the same for both the face-to-face and online sessions?**

R: Yeah, pretty much the same. There are - of course, there are things that crop up from time-to-time, and you can't go to an individual session, but so that's been pretty constant, apart from the fact [unclear 37:46] a few operations, and so on. We have, well, I'll say 'we' - we've regularly and religiously attended the online sessions as in the face-to-face. That's almost true, because there have been a couple of times, probably three times, actually, three or four times, where I've known a session is going to be on in the day, I've started to do something in the house, and the time has just flown and I've actually missed some sessions, which is my fault for not putting reminders on phones, and so on. So, from that point of view, if you know and you get out of bed in the morning, and you think I'm going to go to exercise class today at whatever time it is, ten o'clock. You start getting yourself motivated and prepared, and you start getting ready, and you know at half past nine you've got to put a coat on, and go out the door. With the online sessions, you tend to just think, oh okay, I'll do this, do that and the other. I know I've got the online session at ten o'clock. Ten o'clock comes, and you've missed it and you've just continued to do whatever. So that's an organisational thing for us to [unclear 39:05], but it has been... Yeah, I've found myself apologising [unclear 39:10] for not turning up.

I: **And is there anything that would have made a difference? What would have made your attendance easier, or more attractive?**

R: Again, actually, the only thing is, when some of the delegates appear at the last minute, so dead on ten o'clock, 11 o'clock, whatever it might be, they'll switch on and they'll come online, and they'll just start doing the exercises. What actually would be quite nice, I think, would be if the delegates arrived five minutes or ten minutes early, and we all just made sure we knew who everybody was, just had a quick chat, a little bit of social chat before we got onto the exercises. Which sometimes happens informally, but I think it would be nice if that was a kind of, maybe one of the prerequisites. That you come online ten minutes, five minutes earlier, have a quick, informal chat before the exercises, then you can see who else is then on the class. You can maybe have a little chat with them, [unclear 40:23]. But that's the only thing I can really think of then.

I: **Yeah, and that's useful. And what - is there anything that would have kept you motivated? What actually inspired you to keep on coming for both of these types of sessions?**

R: Yeah, let me think of one. Because these aren't the type of exercises where you're building towards a specific goal, it's difficult to set a target and say, well, in three months' time I want to be able to do this. It's not like that, so it's very difficult to set up a marker, or an achievement that you're going to try to get to it. That's almost an incidental thing, and in six months' time I want to lose a couple of pounds. But that's got to be a personal thing, and you can't really introduce that into the framework, because everybody has their own needs, their own goals, and the prime objective is just to get you exercising. We still don't like

exercising, I have to say, but knowing that you've got to do it, you've got to be there, you're going to spend half an hour doing it, and you will feel better after doing it, is enough of an incentive. So it's very difficult to actually do anything that would make it more of a challenge [unclear 42:05] a challenge, really. And I can't think of anything that would make it more palatable.

I: [Unclear 42:14]. And is there anything that you could have - for example, is there any way you could have been supported better by your exercise professional?

R: Anyway we could have?

I: Been supported better by your exercise professional?

R: No, I don't think so. Excuse me. No, I mean, [name] is - particularly on the face-to-face sessions, obviously, although he does watch the cameras, he does watch participants, to make sure that they're not falling over, and they're still able to do the exercises and so on. But on the face-to-face sessions, those are really good and he would spend time with every individual, making sure they understood the exercises and knew how to get the best out of them [unclear 43:03] variations. Particularly for people who might be wheelchair-bound, he would find an alternative that they could do. So, no, perfectly happy with [unclear 43:13].

I: Do you think you made as much progress, fitness-wise, with the methods of delivery, or did you make more progress receiving the face-to-face, or more receiving it online?

R: I have to say probably the face-to-face was more effective, and my marker for that is have I put on weight, or not? Which, of course, the style of the sessions isn't the only factor there, because Covid has had an impact on everybody. And we've all, to some extent, I think become a bit lazy and distracted in more work. So it's difficult to make [unclear 43:58], but, overall, I think my impression is that the online sessions... Sorry, the face-to-face sessions are actually probably, for us, were more beneficial [unclear 44:13].

I: Right. And could that possibly be because you have that extra - also, not just bringing out a mat, or weight and putting it in your living room, but you're also travelling, just take into consideration the activity to do it extra as well. Because you're travelling to and fro, whether you're in the bus or you're walking there, so perhaps could be why, do you think?

R: No. From our point of view, no, I think it's purely that solid hour's exercise and commitment is probably more than the half hour. Now, although you're probably doing the same number of exercises, over the same time, it's easier to take it easy if you're online, so you maybe don't put quite so much effort into the exercises.

I: Right, I see your point.

R: It's easier to take them.

I: Yeah, I see your - yes, definitely, because the instructor can't actually physically see you, to see if you're doing the right thing or not. Yeah, that's a good point, a very, very good point.

- R: And because you're doing it on your own, you're not - there's not somebody next to you doing it faster than you, or with more energy than you, that you need to keep up with.
- I: **Yes, that's very, very useful. Did you notice any differences in the impact of your overall feelings, or of your wellbeing, or mood when you were experiencing both types of delivery?**
- R: I'd say they're pretty much the same, in that we would feel refreshed and certainly more toned up after the face-to-face sessions. After the online sessions, we do quite often say to ourselves, well, we'd rather do that [unclear 46:15]. It's a very difficult one to qualify, really, and so from a purely, from a sort of a feeling point of view, I think we probably felt better after the face-to-face sessions. But I really can't give you a concrete reason for that. Maybe, again, it's because it's a face-to-face session, because you can fake it as you go along, maybe we're not putting in so much effort, and perhaps that's not giving us the level of satisfaction and commitment that follows from that. Have you frozen, [name]? Has the session frozen? I don't know if you can still hear me, or see me, but you've gone completely dead on the screen. Oh, you're back now.
- I: **So sorry, [name], I mean, you were frozen for a while.**
- R: Oh, okay.
- I: **I missed all what you were saying.**
- R: Okay. I think what I was getting to, was that probably after the face-to-face sessions, we felt we'd achieved more than after the online sessions, but that's down to us, I think, in our level of commitment to the energy that you expend.
- I: **Right. Okay. And that's possibly because of what you've mentioned before, in terms of when it's face-to-face [unclear 48:44] can see you and they can... You feel more - not pressure - but when you see everybody around you working, it kind of motivates you to push yourself as well, and it's harder to [unclear 48:55]?**
- R: That's pretty much it. Yeah, that's how we found it.
- I: **Okay. And just to ask as well, so do you think the different types of delivery modes, so the face-to-face and the virtual, do you think perhaps it will be more suitable for certain types of people?**
- R: I think they're both very valuable. Yes, absolutely.
- I: **Everybody, or maybe some people would be better suited for face-to-face and vice-versa?**
- R: I think it's very much down to the individual, and their circumstances and what they want to get out of it. And, as you've said, I'm sure that those sessions are valuable for people from a welfare point of view, so it's a welfare point of view. So those face-to-face sessions are very important for certain delegates. The things like the walk in the park, again, they would suit certain people, again, a very friendly atmosphere and opportunity to meet people, to go and have a cup of tea, whatever, that some of you have not met before. Very, very valuable

indeed, from mental health point of view. For us, particularly for us, at the moment, because we're doing this as a couple anyway, that interaction isn't so important. So what's more important to us is getting that exercise done, and I'm sure there are many people who would find the online sessions as valuable as the face-to-face. And, in fact, as I said, in the case of people who have mobility problems, actually, possibly better.

I: Right. Yes. So did you notice any impact at all on the friendships, so your ability to make friends? You did mention that the face-to-face sessions, your expectation wasn't really to make friends, because you were doing it with your partner, and you formed a sort of bubble around you. So do you think the transition from the face-to-face or virtual, perhaps impacted your ability to make friends with other people on the same course?

R: No, it didn't, but because we weren't necessarily going to build relationships with any of the other delegates [unclear 51:23], we've got fairly active family lives as it is at the moment, and we weren't looking to do that.

I: Okay. So are there some parts of the programme that you think should always be face-to-face? So, for example, do you think it's important for you to have that initial consultation with your exercise professional on a face-to-face basis, before you transition to online?

R: Yes. That would be very important, yes, because although...

I: [Over speaking 51:54].

R: Although the instructor can show you the exercises, of course, online. If he's running a course where he's got a dozen or so people, he can't afford the time to show the people on one screen how to do the exercise, and he's got to explain it and he's got to get on and do it. Whereas face-to-face, because he'd spend that time, while the rest of the class is doing what they need to do, he can explain a specific exercises to individuals, if they need it. Excuse me a second, [name].

I: No worries.

R: Thank you.

I: And do you think also, that that face-to-face contact at the start helps to build like a rapport between yourself and the exercise professional? Do you think it helps?

R: Yeah, definitely. That would have been very important. So I suppose the quick comment, if the whole programme were to move over to online only, I would say it would be very important to have an initial session with the instructor. And then thinking about it, as you mentioned earlier on, perhaps even now, once face-to-face is possible again, we would probably like to say every month or so, we'll go back to face-to-face.

I: Right, okay. Did you complete the 16-week programme?

R: No, I think we did 12 - I think we did 12 weeks. We were - no, sorry, we were just about to come to the end of the programme when Covid hit, so is it a 16-week programme? It is. In that case, yeah, we did 16 weeks.

I: **Okay.**

R: So we just - just caught the end of it.

I: **Okay. And have you had your 16-week assessment?**

R: No, that all went by the wayside, of course, because the session stopped pretty much coincident with us getting to reach 16. So the session stopped anyway, and we were just about to go to a paid membership of the club, so that we could continue to go and use their gym facilities, but we didn't do that in the end.

I: **So on reflection, are you happy with your decision to continue receiving virtual sessions, or do you think that now, maybe perhaps it should have postponed to receive the face-to-face when it resumed?**

R: No, I think it was a great decision. I think the guys did really well to pull it together. They had to envision how are we going to translate these face-to-face sessions into online sessions? And they did it really, really well, bearing in mind that they actually had to record these sessions, and send them out from their own houses. So they had to set aside a room where they could do it, they had to organise how they were going to do the sessions, write all the introductory scripts and so on. I think they did remarkably well, and if we had not... We - the reason I had not had the online sessions, we probably would not be exercising again, and we probably would have slipped back to our old ways.

I: **Right, okay. So you mentioned before, earlier, that even though the face-to-face sessions are now back, that you still would prefer to receive the online sessions, so is that correct? So you'd rather receive online, even though face-to-face is now available?**

R: Yeah.

I: **Okay. So I know that we've passed the time to the one-hour timeframe, are you still good to continue, briefly, and we should be done soon?**

R: Yeah. No, I'm fine. Yeah.

I: **Perfect. Thank you so much for your time. So I would like to talk to you now about the relationships that you had with different people under the programme. So we've already spoken quite a lot, actually, about your exercise professional, and how they were friendly, very supportive. Do you feel as though they went at the right pace for you?**

R: Yeah, we probably - we were probably one of the most active, well, a couple of the most active people in the group, but it was fine. We probably could have pushed ourselves a bit more, but we're there for a reason, we're there because we had a medical trauma, so we

[?don't want to 56:31] overdo it anyway. But, no, it was fine, it wasn't too slow and it wasn't too fast. It was fine.

I: And do you feel as though they were appropriately skilled to deliver the sessions?

R: Yes, absolutely. Yeah.

I: And they offered you the correct amount of support, so there wasn't anything more they could have done?

R: No, I'm perfectly happy that the instructor made sure that he understood your fitness, your level of fitness, any issues that you might have, so he could deal with those in a specific way, where you're coming from and how much exercise, and what sort of exercise you've done before. So he did all that preparation, and he got to know you very quickly and made sure that the exercises you were doing were appropriate.

I: Perfect. And is there any way that the support he was giving to you could be improved, or you were completely happy with it?

R: I think it would be very difficult, bearing in mind that every user of the service is going to be different, [?is 57:38] going to have to complete the requirements. I think it has to be done individually, and I can't honestly think of anything that could be done to improve it.

I: Okay. And how often were you in touch with your exercise professional?

R: Oh, twice a week, and then maybe sometimes we have [unclear 57:59] emails as well, explaining how the Covid thing was unravelling. He would send quite a lot of emails out, so and he's always there and we've got his phone number. He always says we can get in touch with him at any time, [unclear 58:14]. So, yeah, his communication has just been great.

I: Perfect. Was it important that you had the good relationship with your exercise professional, in your continuation of the programme?

R: Yes, I think so. Had we not liked the guy, and not been able to get on with him, we wouldn't be so keen to continue, for sure.

I: Okay. And you mentioned that you were with this programme with your partner, so did they provide you any support? I'm sure that they did, but so could you just describe to me how the support...? What type of support [unclear 58:53] to you?

R: [Name] has some medical issues from a car accident, that she needs to deal with, so her physical levels are slightly different to mine, but we do the same exercises, and we encourage each other. And I suppose in that [unclear 59:22] we're lucky, in that when we come to do the online exercises, we can actually watch each other as well. But I don't necessarily think that there's any benefit, any huge benefit just working together on it. It's pleasant, but - excuse me - it's [unclear 59:48] family activity, another family activity, so that it doesn't really contribute to successfully exercise, really.

I: Right, [unclear 59:58] the support that she was providing was important?

- R: Well, yeah, I mean, yes, it would be, of course it's important if your partner can join in and you do things together, but I don't think it would have stopped me doing the exercises, and I don't think it probably would have stopped her doing the exercises [unclear 1:00:30].
- I: **And were there any negative influences around you? Maybe people dismissed your effort, maybe questioned why you were doing this, and maybe tried to maybe persuade you not to participate?**
- R: No. No, it's always been positive [unclear 1:00:46].
- I: **Okay. And regarding others on the programme, so did you make... I know you didn't go into the programme trying to make friends or expand your social network, however, did any come out of it?**
- R: No, I'm sure we could have, and there were a couple of people who we would meet at different times and so on, and have a quick chat to them. So I'm sure we could have built on those relationships, had we... It sounds a terrible thing to say, but had we had the time we may well have done that. But we've got the family business interests that we need to look after, and I'm afraid we don't tend to expand our circle of friends that quickly.
- I: **Right.**
- R: So the opportunity [unclear 1:01:35].
- I: **Yes. So that means you didn't really go out, you didn't meet outside of the sessions together with anybody, or together with anybody but your partner?**
- R: No, we didn't. I'm sure we could have, but we didn't.
- I: **Yeah. And did any of them provide any encouragement to you?**
- R: I can't, really. I suppose during the initial session, just being able to watch other people and say hello, and just [unclear 1:02:07] welcome, and this is what we're going to do. That's quite nice, but I can't actually remember anybody saying, just come on and get [?your knees up 1:02:16] higher than that, and whatever else and that's down to your instructor to do that.
- I: **Okay. Perfect. So was there anybody who - on the programme, who had a negative influence on you?**
- R: No. No. No, I'm sure. It's all - no, every... All the delegates and the staff are all there for a purpose, all there for a reason and, yeah, there was no negativity at all.
- I: **Okay, perfect. So we're nearly at the end of this interview. So through the programme, so have you developed an enjoyment for exercise? I think you mentioned before that you don't enjoy exercise, but you realise the importance of doing it, and how it makes you feel better and feel good afterwards.**
- R: Yeah, I have to say, I still wouldn't like to go to a gym and work out for a couple of hours. That's definitely not my thing at all, but I do now recognise that a few cardiac exercises do

certainly give you a more energetic view of life. So I'm - yeah, I'm less reluctant to do it, than I might have been in the past.

I: That's definitely a good start then of your progress.

R: Yeah.

I: Yeah. And obviously you find it beneficial to your wellbeing, and your mental health also?

R: Yes, in - yes, definitely. I think it's very easy, particularly as we've all experienced during Covid, it's very easy to get into a descending spiral and you become lazy. Maybe you find it's very easy to put things up, and find something else to do. So it has definitely helped not to go back into that spiral, and I do think had we had... We'd not been on the exercise programme, I definitely wouldn't have stuck to any exercise regime at all. I might have gone for the odd walk, but that probably would be it. I definitely wouldn't have gone back to the gym, as I used to go ten, 15 years or so ago, so I think I would now be less fit than I am, for sure. So I'm still not on Olympic superstar, but I'm [over speaking 1:05:02].

I: [Over speaking 1:05:03] Rome is not built in a day! So you're still... At the start of the programme, did you have any concerns at all about, let's say, your mental health and did you discuss this with the GP?

R: No. No. Yeah, I've been through a couple of nasty operations. I'm happy with life. I'm pretty happy going, I think, anyway. Unfortunate in my circumstances, so no, I don't believe I have any mental health issues or any unhappiness at all. But I have to say, the exercises do keep you on top, for sure, they do give you an energy in life.

I: Yes, exactly. I agree with you. And you've mentioned to me already that you're already continuing this exercise online with your partner. That's good, but is there - what changes would you like to see in the NERS programme in the future, particularly in terms of how it's been delivered?

R: Okay. [Unclear 1:06:24]. I suppose, from my point of view, the ideal situation, going forward, would be to continue with the classes as they are, the online classes, and to have a regular, but not frequent face-to-face sessions with [name], with people. And that's something that I hadn't really thought through before [going 1:07:06], but that seemed [unclear 1:07:09]. That seemed to me like that would be a good thing to do, so if we were able to, say, every month, every couple of months we'll have a face-to-face, but then we'll be able to continue the online, and that would be perfect. I think I would like to see the online continue, ad infinitum.

I: Right. And that's actually my next question, so I was going to say some content [unclear 1:07:32] delivered digitally, going forward, just maybe the online sessions or the pre-recorded sessions. How important do you think that this is to create and deliver it, by the same exercise professional you had that initial contact with, would it matter?

R: We'd like to continue with [name]. I don't think it would make a real difference if he was substituted by somebody else. But we've got to know him, and he's got to know us, so it

would be nice to continue, but it wouldn't be the end of the world if he were taken off to do other things. No problem.

I: Right, okay. So you wouldn't struggle to [unclear 1:08:14] with somebody new each time?

R: [Over speaking 1:08:17], yeah, I'm sure we'd be fine.

I: And how important is it that they are from your local neighbourhood? Is that important at all?

R: Yeah, I think that is, actually.

I: Really? Why so?

R: I suppose, because we can go to, if we need to, if we wanted to. And because we have met him, so if we were to join an online session - heaven forbid - that was being run from New York or somewhere, I don't think we would buy that so much.

I: Right, okay. And do you think - would you be willing to pay for access to this digital content?

R: Yeah.

I: Okay. So if so, what would you say is a reasonable amount to charge for the live sessions?

R: Okay. Well, we would - as I say, under the NERS, the sponsored NERS scheme, we were paying a pound a week to go to the session, which is just phenomenal, really, [?obviously 1:09:21]. I would have thought that - and, again, this is from... I have to say, just to emphasise, this is from our personal circumstances, and we are in a quite privileged position, which we fully appreciate others may not. But I would have thought that we would be quite happy to pay a fiver a session each.

I: Okay, so a fiver a session. What about for the recorded content, so not the live sessions, the one that's been recorded already?

R: That's a more tricky one. I suppose, I'd have to say, if it were a subscription, like, every time you view it, you pay for it or something, I wouldn't be so keen. But I wouldn't mind if it were a question of, look, here is a series of videos, you need to subscribe and there is an annual subscription for [?about a year 1:10:33], something like that [over speaking 1:10:36].

I: [Over speaking 1:10:36]. Okay, so we're nearly - and this is the last section, on the cost that's been incurred. So you've already spoken a little bit about paying £1 to attend for the week, was that per session, or was just £1 per session?

R: Yeah.

I: All right, okay. So did you have to - so for the face-to-face sessions now, did you have to drive there?

R: Yeah.

- I: And do you know how much that cost you driving to?**
- R: Well, it's only - it's about five miles, so [unclear 1:11:14] roads, what's that in terms of gas? Probably no more than a fiver [unclear 1:11:20].
- I: So £5 to get there, and £5 to come back?**
- R: I would think it just cost the fiver in terms of the petrol, at most.
- I: Okay. And did you have to park there as well?**
- R: There was on-street parking, so that wasn't, it wasn't a charge.
- I: Okay. And when you moved to virtual, did you have to pay for your broadband? How much did you pay per month for your broadband?**
- R: Oh, it's all - we have, we've got it anyway, so there was no more cost to us.
- I: There was no additional cost to your usual?**
- R: No.
- I: Okay, and since you transitioned from face-to-face to remote, how much have you spent on additional IT equipment to participate in the sessions?**
- R: Nothing at all. We've got a house full of IT stuff, because of the work we do anyway, so no cost.
- I: Perfect. So was the cost for the face-to-face sessions over both sessions? So, for example, in regards to the exercise equipment, s the mat, the weight, how was this cost like for the face-to-face and the remote?**
- R: Oh well, okay, on the - of course, on the face-to-face, all the equipment was provided anyway. In - when we're doing the online sessions, literally, it's just a tin of beans, a couple of tins of beans to use as a weight, and a glass of water. So, so far we haven't bought anything.
- I: Perfect. And did you have to buy any exercise clothing at all to be able to participate in the NERS programme?**
- R: No. No, it's a fairly lightweight exercise regime, so you're not pumping hard or anything, so you can just get away with jeans, a T-shirt and pumps anyway [unclear 1:13:14].
- I: What about for the face-to-face, where you had to actually be there physically?**
- R: We did actually - I did actually wear jogging trousers, I think, and pumps and a T-shirt. But, again, no real expense involved there.
- I: You didn't buy this because of the NERS programme, and you already had that?**
- R: No. Yeah, I already had it.

I: Okay. And you mentioned that you attended the face-to-face sessions, was it 16 weeks you said you attended for the face-to-face?

R: Yes, that's right, yeah.

I: Yes. And how many sessions did you attend per week, was it always twice a week that you attended?

R: We may have missed one or two for various things, but it was primarily two a week, mainly two we may have missed an odd time.

I: And for the online sessions, how many weeks have you attended for?

R: Ooh, well, that's been running the best part of a year now. I forget. I think. No, where are we now? July.

I: July.

R: When did [name] start then? Yeah, I think it's been running pretty much a year now, and we [unclear 1:14:25]. And, yeah, we've tried to attend regularly.

I: Could you estimate, roughly, how many weeks?

R: Crikey! [Unclear 1:14:38].

I: Fifty? Did you say 50 weeks?

R: I think it probably is, you know, yeah. It probably is.

I: And you've attended all sessions online? How many sessions would you attend?

R: We've probably attended 30 sessions online overall, thinking about it. We've sort of missed weeks, and Christmas shutdown and so on. Probably about 30 sessions, or more, I think. That's a difficult question for me, and I don't have a great memory for that sort of thing.

I: I understand, it's been quite a while. But thank you so, so much and we've reached the end. Sorry it went over by another 25 minutes. So is there anything else you think you'd like to add that maybe I didn't cover?

R: No. I'm sorry if I talk too much, but...

I: No, it was very interesting.

R: No, there's nothing I'd like to add, other than the scheme is, in our opinion, invaluable. We think it's a brilliant thing. We would be very sad if it stops. Certainly, the online sessions have been a real godsend for us. Face-to-face [unclear 1:16:05] anyway, but I think had the - had we been... Had the online sessions not been available, we probably would struggle to keep going to the face-to-face sessions. Excuse me. We probably would have run out of steam on those by now, I think. The face-to-face one is so easy to attend, so easy to participate in, and they were really great. So long may they live, really.

I: I'm glad you had such a positive experience. And just for your feedback, is there anything we can do to improve the interview, and there were some connection issues along the way, is there anything [unclear 1:16:48] to improve it?

R: No, that's been fine, hasn't it? The usual glitch you expect, but no worries. It's worked well.

I: Thank you so much. Perfect. So I'll just stop this recording now.

R: Okay.

I: As I mentioned, when I do...

End of Transcription