

Participant F11

I: **Brilliant. So the recording has now started.**

R: Okay.

I: **So we're going to start at the very beginning, and before we get into things, I just want to ask you... We have noted down that you postponed the virtual programme, so perhaps you had some of the NERS programme, and then when it went to digital, or when it went to virtual, you decided to postpone your involvement.**

R: I did. I did.

I: **Okay, brilliant. I just want to make sure we're on the right track, so that's great. So, yeah, we're going to start at the very beginning and talk about how you were maybe invited onto the programme. So we're interested in understanding what that invitation process was like, and how it might be improved. So do you mind talking through with me, right from the very start, of how you found out about the programme and then from there, what sort of happened?**

R: Well, what happened initially was, I went to the doctor's because I had trouble with my knees, and exercise was one of the things that the doctor suggested would improve the stability of the knees, and that there was an exercise referral programme. And then nothing really happened for a while, and then I went into the doctor's surgery and took my blood pressure and they kind of said, no, you're going to have to come in and wear a 24-hour monitoring system to get average readings, rather than just a one-off reading from the machine in the doctor's surgery. And then when I spoke to the doctor with the results of that, she indicated that it wasn't really bad enough to warrant going on to medication, and that exercises was going to... Well, we agreed between the two of us, that the exercise referral programme would probably be more benefit to me in the immediate thing, than going onto the medication. So the sort of plan initially, back probably - it was probably 2019-ish, but that was what I was going to do. And then we were going to do the exercise referral programme for the year, which would have taken me to the end of 2020. And then we would reassess the blood pressure and everything, and hopefully the exercise would have done the trick kind of thing.

And so I was referred to it, and then when I got to the sports centre, the sports centre themselves said that they were going to do a health check. They did a health check, and they weren't happy with my blood pressure. I said, it is high, I said, it is. I said, this is one of the reasons I'm here, and so they referred me back to the doctor, who then said to them, no, it's absolutely fine, we've agreed this is the process by which we're going to do things. So they took me onto the exercise referral programme, I had the induction training, which was fine and showed me how to use all the machines, gave me a programme which we discussed. And I was going to the gym a couple of times a week, and I'd just got to the stage where they were upping the programme, so changing some of the exercises. Because they were doing two things, really, they were looking, not only was the exercise going to be beneficial for my health, but for my blood pressure, rather, but it was going to also... They'd also given

me specific exercises for strengthening the muscles and everything around the knee, because I've got arthritis in my knees, to help stability of the knees and that kind of thing.

So it was a bit of a double whammy, so they'd just upped the programme that I was on, and I'd just really got going on that, and then lockdown happened. So I've got a very limited experience of actually participating on a twice a week basis, at the local sports centre.

I: Okay. So it seems like you had quite a lot of experience there, and I just want to talk a little bit about when you were having that referral. So you were referred by your GP, and when you were having that referral and deciding what would be the best way to go forward with your blood pressure, how...? Did your referrer understand the programme, or did they explain it well to you? How was that experience?

R: I can't say there was a lot of explanation from the doctor's point of view. I mean, she was quite happy to go - I mean, when we discussed the results of the 24-hour thing, she felt the exercise was the best way to go. And she just said, I'll put you - I can refer you to the national exercise referral programme. So it was just like here's a referral to the people at the sports centre, and the people at the sports centre then managed it. They did all the correspondence before it, explaining that I'd have to have a pre-interview, a pre-exercise refer-...be allowed to go onto the programme. That I'd have to have this meeting, and then I'd have to have an induction, and then the programme would start. And they explained how often I needed to commit to it, and things like that, really. So the actual doctor was - well, there is a national exercise referral programme, and it was the people at the sports centre, in particular... Are you allowed to say names of people?

I: Yeah, they will just get kind of cut out, so it doesn't matter.

R: Oh right. So it was [name] [Genhead 06:12] at the sports centre, who did all my induction work, was my contact on a face-to-face basis, when I was actually there twice a week. She'd come around and check everything was all right, and we'd discuss... Because of my knees, there was a couple of exercises which I found really difficult, and so she would adjust things slightly, or tell me to use a slightly lower weight, or we stopped one exercise because we changed it for something else. So she was kind of like - she was the one, and the people at sports centre were the people, whose names now escape me, other than [name], who did all the contacting me and things like that.

I: Okay, that's great. So we'll come back and talk a little bit about your experience with [name], and her, as your exercise professional. But we - so it sounds like all the information has come from the programme itself, I guess. Were you sent any sort of invite letter in the post, or anything like that, or how was that communication given to you?

R: Yeah, so I did have an invite letter with - and I had to... Because it's so long ago now - I think I certainly had a letter with information about it, and the contact at the sports centre, and a request to contact [name] in order to make the appointment for the initial interview. I think that's how it went, and I think, yeah, I'm pretty that's how it went. And then [name] wasn't in, so I left a message, but she came back to me. She contacted me, and then she sent me a letter conf-...or somebody sent me a letter confirming the date of the initial interview. And

then once I'd finally been accepted on it, because they were... In fairness, I was a bit - I think, I suppose I was a little bit irritated that, in my mind, I was convinced and that the exercise was going to be the thing that would help reduce my blood pressure. And, initially, there were some barriers put up by the sports centre, because the readings were high and I said, well, I've got a blood pressure machine at home and it's showing different readings. And I said, I do suffer quite a lot with white coat syndrome, and I said, it's probably just because I'm anxious that I want to get on it and it's up.

So there was an initial little bit of kind of like, well, we can't take you on and you'll have to go back to the doctor, and the doctor will have to say, yes, it's definitely okay. So there was that little - it kind of got delayed, a little bit at the start because there was a bit of toing and froing. And, I mean, I felt - I mean, I know they have to be cautious and I know they have to have boundaries, but, I mean, I'm out walking miles every day with the dogs, and it was just something a little bit more specific I needed, because walking wasn't doing my cardiovascular fitness, because my knees are sore, so I couldn't run, if you see what I mean? It was a bit of a - one was like negating my ability to do the other, and so I needed to get on things like an exercise bike and stuff like that, which would obviously do cardiovascular, but would take the pressure off my... Because I could ride a bike, but I couldn't run kind of thing. I did request whether or not - I did ask whether or not swimming would have been an option as opposed to the gym, because I'm not a big... I must say, I'm coming from a background of being a PE teacher as well, so I did know a little bit about how things worked and how I felt, and any symptoms of high blood pressure, and that kind of thing. So I suppose, initially, I was a little bit like, well, come on now, let's get on and do this.

But, I mean, like I say, once it got going, it was fine and [name] was very good and she did explain, well, they did have sort of like parameters that they have to stick to. And it needed the referral back from the doctor, having been on this 24-hour thing, to say, yes, she's definitely okay to do that. So there was initially a bit of a delay, but once it got going, it was fine.

I: Okay. That's great. Thank you. When you initially, I guess, got referred and got going, what were your expectations of the programme, or was there anything you were hesitant or unsure about?

R: I wasn't unsure about anything. I was - obviously, my expectation was that I would... My general fitness levels would improve, and obviously as my general fitness level improved things like, hopefully, my blood pressure would then improve. And that also - and I understood then, also, that the specific types of exercises that I could do on the gym equipment would improve certain muscle areas around my knee, which would obviously help the knees, which would obviously help the stability of the knees, which ultimately helps with less pain from the arthritis and stuff like that. If you're not putting so much pressure on your knees and you're using your knees properly, as opposed to kind of like overcompensating because something hurts. So they were kind of my expectations, that specific exercises would improve muscle tone and the cardiovascular exercises that could be done at the gym, would improve general cardiovascular fitness as well.

I: Okay. And you said you weren't hesitant about anything or unsure, but did you have...? Did you feel like your questions that you had, were they answered by the GP when you were...? Or if you had any at that stage, or was it...?

R: I didn't really have any questions, to be fair. I mean, like I say, the only real kind of like sticking point, was the fact that I wanted to get on with it. And the people at the sports centre, because they've obviously got their parameters that they work to, were saying I had to go back a step and do the 24-hour monitoring on the blood pressure machine, before they would then accept me on. So, I mean, there was no point in me - it was just irritating, from my point of view. I mean, they were perfectly matter of fact about it, and they explained why they had it and stuff like that. I tried not to - and I just had to accept it, and it was just that I was irritated, because having made the decision that I was going to actually do it, I wanted to get on with it.

I: Yeah. Okay. So based off that, how would you sum up your overall experience of being invited, and do you think there was anything they could have done to improve it?

R: No, I don't think they could - what, you mean like the induction programme, could they improve that?

I: So that initial invitation stage, so when you were at the GP having the... And then getting referred on, being invited onto the programme?

R: I just think there could be a bit more joined up thinking sometimes.

I: Okay.

R: And I think - but I think that's the same with lots of things; I don't think that's something peculiar to that particular programme. I think there's lots of times when more joined up thinking between different departments in the health profession could happen. It's just I think everybody always seems to work in a bit of isolation from each other, and I think that just creates delay, really. But I think that happens - like I say, I think that happens in lots of different parts of the health profession, and I don't think it's anything peculiar to this particular programme at all.

I: When you mean joint up thinking, can you just kind of explain that a little bit for me?

R: Well, it's just kind of like - how can I put it? It's like you go to the doctor's, and they suggest you go on the exercise referral programme. They obviously must contact somebody, and then the letter appears. And then - but, I mean, had she said... Had, at the beginning, the doctor said, I've discussed this with this particular patient, and these are her blood pressure readings. But having discussed this, and I've examined this particular patient, I feel she's suitable to go on the exercise referral programme. Even if on your initial consultation, she falls slightly outside your parameters, or thinking with your parameters that you have for your blood pressure readings, because I've already discussed this with her. So had the doctor, say, maybe done that, then we wouldn't have had the like, well, I've gone to the induction, that's no good. So I'm just going to go back to the doctor, and it just takes a step out of it, and it smooths out the whole process. Because both the doctor and I were quite

happy with what we'd decided, and it just seemed to have this extra loop in it. Whereas had the initial referral gone through from the doctor saying this is what I'm saying, we wouldn't have had to go back and do another step.

I: Yeah. Okay. Thanks for sharing that with me. We're going to move on now to your exercise professional on that first meeting, and you mentioned a little bit beforehand about how it was with [name] in that first meeting. And we'd like to understand if it was how it worked, and how it could improve. So what were your initial thoughts ahead of going to your first meeting at the leisure centre, and did you have any concerns about it?

R: I had no concerns about going to the leisure centre, and I had no concerns about the fact that I was going to have... As I say, the times where I had the least concern, I did wonder at the time, whether or not, when I went for the initial thing, whether she would say, because in my mind, I'd sort of like thought I bet she doesn't... I bet she quibbles about the blood pressure reading, and it was just kind of something that was in the back of my mind. But, I mean, [name], herself was fine and she was chatty, she explained what she was going to do and everything like that. But I had no real concerns about it, other than in my mind I thought, I bet this is a sticking point; and so it proved to be.

I: And then when you had this sticking point, how did you kind of feel about getting onto the programme?

R: Well, I just said to her, I said, well - well, she just said to me... And in fairness to her, she gave me the opportunity to sit for a while and see if it would come down too, so she could get the thing, reading. And I just felt kind of like, oh, for goodness sake, this has already been discussed, and now I'm going to have to go back and just get the doctor to say, yes, it is okay. And it just - like I said, so maybe the initial referral had been in more detail from the doctor, it wouldn't have put [name] in a position where she'd have to have said no, actually, I'm going to have to say no at this point. I think that's the - I mean, I don't know where all the... Generally, where people get referred from, and I'm assuming most people get referred from their doctor, so it might help the people at the sports centre if the profile of the person... And I know it's also patient confidentiality and stuff like that, but there are certain times at which if you're just sharing base information about somebody, why leave it for somebody else who's doing a different, using a different blood pressure monitoring machine, to then come up with a different reading and then... Do you know what I mean?

I: Yeah.

R: It's - and I do understand patient confidentiality, like I say, but sometimes certain things need to be shared in order for the process to be smoothed out.

I: Okay. And you were saying how [name] was really good, and I just want to talk a little bit more about what that was like. So they - were they the... The person who did your first consultation, were they the person... Sorry, I've got - my words got muddled up there. I was saying, with your exercise professional, how supportive or encouraging, or friendly

were they in that initial meeting that you had? Did you get put at ease with anything, or...?

R: What, you mean after the - for the induction programme?

I: Yeah, that first meeting.

R: Oh, she was fine. I mean, she went around and she showed me all the equipment. She explained processes for each of the equipment. She watched me do each of the exercises to make sure that I was doing them properly, and that I understood how each exercise was to be done. She explained the importance of a bit of a warm-up, and cooling down at the end. And then she - what she did was, she had a sheet which she wrote the name of the exercise, the relevant piece of gym equipment to use. And she went through the repetitions that I needed to do for each one, and checked that I was doing each of the exercises correctly. So that was a one-on-one, and I can't remember how long it was, probably an hour, I suppose. I don't know, that's probably there an hour or so, going through everything and had plenty of opportunity to ask any questions, raise any concerns. It was just little things like when I was using the bike, and my...it was pulling on my knee, and she said, right, what we need to do is... And she'd like adjust the height of the saddle, so she made sure that I knew which... Because all the gym equipment, obviously, has its own adjustments on it, so I knew exactly which adjustment I was having to use, and so on and so forth.

I: Yeah. Okay. That's great. We'll probably come a little bit later on to a little bit more about how [name] was, but that's great to hear about the first meeting. And in that first meeting, do you think there's anything that could have been improved?

R: Not from my point of view, because, I mean, I understood everything she was talking about. And having done quite a lot of PE and stuff like that, I was reasonably well-versed in the use of quite a lot of equipment anyway. So there was nothing there that was overly new to me. All it was doing was reinforcing, and slightly adjusting things that I'd done 15 years previously. You know what I mean? So my background knowledge was there. And so, no, there was nothing that needed particularly improving from my point of view.

I: Okay, that's great. And we're going to move on to a little bit about the ex-...when the exercise sessions started happening. So, like you mentioned before, you had a bit of face-to-face and then the pandemic hit, and you chose to postpone your involvement until sessions weren't face-to-face, is that correct?

R: That is correct, yeah.

I: Yeah, rather than attending anything virtually.

R: Yeah, I don't like virtual teaching at all.

I: So we're first going to talk a little bit about the experience of those face-to-face contact sessions and just what went well, and what perhaps didn't go so well. And then we'll move on to the decision why you changed, why you decided not to do the virtual programme.

R: Okay.

I: **So can you tell me a little bit about your experiences of the face-to-face sessions, so how did feel...?**

R: Well, [name] was always around. And there was - after a couple of weeks, there was one particular exercise that I was finding was making me... I didn't feel I was getting anything out of that particular exercise, and it was using the treadmill. And so I said to her, look, I don't feel I'm getting anything out of this. And I said, to be honest, it makes me feel a bit dizzy when I use it. I said, it's this kind of like whirring thing and I said, it's not the walking, as such. And she said, well, you do a lot of walking anyway, so she said, we'll take you off the treadmill and they put me on another piece of machine, the cross-trainer instead. She said, I think that one would be more beneficial to you. She checked that I was doing the - I had to self-record the exercises that I did, and how long I did them for. And then she - I can't remember the timescales, if I'm being totally honest, but we'd certainly got to the stage where we discussed the group of exercises that I was doing. And some of them she increased the speed, which I had to do and then some of them she increased the number that I had to do, and some she'd increase, like, the intensity at which I had to do them. And so she was always there to discuss anything. Excuse me a minute. [Dogs barking in background]

I: **No problem.**

R: Sorry, it's my window cleaner arrived.

I: **No problem.**

R: It's all right, he'll come back in an hour or so. Yeah, so, I mean, she was always there and she was always approachable, and it was going quite swimmingly. I'd actually gone to the stage of not even liking the gym particularly, because it was something I'd never enjoyed doing, to actually quite looking forward to going to do the sessions.

I: **Okay. And you - what did you like most? So you said you started enjoying it a little bit more, and what did you like most or least about these sessions?**

R: Well, I liked the fact that I was actually beginning to feel fitter. That was amazing! And I also chatted to people there, so there was the social interaction of other people who were on the programme themselves. And I found that the other people who were using the gym just generally were very helpful. And it was just - it was more like I was going to the gym, and I was doing some exercise and I was having a bit of a social at the same time, and I was getting fitter. That was what I - and it was getting me out of the house, and it was making me do something. So that was what I really enjoyed about it. What didn't I enjoy about it? Some of the exercises I found difficult, and so I... But if - and this is where I... Because I found some of the exercise difficult, [name] would come along and say, come on now it and keep poking me. So I'm not one for - I'm not a great one for self-motivation, and if I find something difficult, I'll take the easy route out of it. And so having somebody on a face-to-face basis and right there, kept me motivated to do it. And also, like I say, other

people that I met there, we'd got chatting and stuff like that, so it was the social side of it, really, and I was beginning to feel fitter.

I: And you said, so you were beginning to feel a bit fitter, did you notice any other positive impacts during this time?

R: I felt like I had more energy, generally, more energy for day-to-day stuff. And, I mean, I know people talk about confidence and stuff like that, but, I mean, it wasn't really a confidence thing with me. It was just more I was up and doing something which I felt was being constructive, and it was getting me out and doing something.

I: Okay. And so did you attend - or how many sessions did you attend a week, really?

R: I did two a week.

I: And were those all the sessions that were offered, or...?

R: I think there was a bit of a - I think there was a minimum of two. There was a minimum of two when [name] was going to be there, but, basically, I could go in and do the gym whenever I wanted to, because the swipe card that we used to get into the gym, entered as your attendance register to go into the gym. So, say, I had something - I mean, there was no... After I'd got to the initial - through the initial couple of weeks, when I had to be there when [name] was there, there was no obligation for me to be there, specifically when [name] was there, because she would be able to check that I'd actually gone in at a different time. But if I wanted to speak to [name], then there were certain - she told me when certain times, when she was going to be around. And it was only when we - and then she said, we need to have the meeting to look at the programme that you're doing, because things might need changing and tweaking. So it was only sort of like - and that was almost like we sat in the gym, and we went through the sheet and she looked at my sheet, and she read what I'd been writing. And then she gave me a new sheet, and stuff like that to go on.

So it was like that, and like I say, the swipe card acted as my attendance register. So I did - I tried to get there once a week when [name] was around, but I then found it was slightly quieter to go on a Sunday morning, or something like that rather than 11 o'clock on a Thursday morning kind of thing.

I: Yeah. Okay. And how often were you having those sit downs with [name] to go over your sheet, was that once a week?

R: I don't think we were talking - I'd be guessing, at this stage, because it's like this time last year kind of, well, before this time last year. I think each sheet lasted about - it wasn't weekly, it might have been monthly. I think there was - I'd be trying to make something up to thing, and I can't honestly remember.

I: No problem.

- R: But all I know is, she was available if I needed to see her at certain times, and I think it might have been actually four weeks, because I think there was something like eight things on the sheet that I filled in, before we had our next meeting.
- I: **Yeah. Okay. And were there any - what were the challenges of attending, or was there anything that you thought made attending easier, or more attractive?**
- R: There were no challenges to attending. The obligation to do twice a week was an incentive to go. The fact that somebody was there, and was going to be checking up on you, or there to help you was an incentive to go. But there was no particular challenges, as such, to attending.
- I: **And you mentioned two things there about being incentives to go. Was there anything else that helped you keep motivated to attend?**
- R: Only the fact that I felt it was doing me good. And it's like with any exercise that you do, you get into a routine of doing something and it becomes easier to do it, and you see the benefits of doing it. It's the initial kind of like motivation to get up and do it, which is often the hardest part to anything.
- I: **And what - and you said that what kept you motivated was that you were doing better, but what was that initial motivation to get you up and get going? Was that the same sort of thing, or was there anything different?**
- R: No. The initial motivation was my knees hurt, and I couldn't run my dog in agility competitions. So I had that and, I mean, also I didn't want to go on medication.
- I: **Yeah.**
- R: So there was that desire to avoid having to go on to any kind of blood pressure medication.
- I: **Okay. Thank you. And is there anything else you'd like to say about those face-to-face sessions? How would you kind of sum it all up?**
- R: It was a good experience. I mean, it was - like I say, it was getting me out and doing something, and I felt it was doing me some good and the help was there if I needed it.
- I: **Okay. Thank you. And we're going to go on to now, about your decision to postpone the sessions. So how many weeks would you say, roughly, did you have before the first lockdown happened and when the [offer 33:53] was given?**
- R: Well, it wasn't long, because it was probably - I can't remember when I exactly started it, if I'm being totally honest, but we got locked down on March the 23rd, didn't we? And I think they'd shut the gym the week before, so I'd probably had not much more than three months on it. Like I say, I can't remember whether I started before the Christmas in... You don't have dates, or anything when we started it, do you?
- I: **No, unfortunately, we don't, but that's okay.**

R: Yeah. No. I mean, it wasn't a significant period anyway, it was just long enough to you're thinking, yeah, right, I'm getting going now, do you know what I mean? But it wasn't a huge amount of time, no.

I: **So what - around about three months, you reckon?**

R: Probably, I mean, yeah, I don't think it was much more than that.

I: **Okay. No worries. So we're going to talk through your decision to postpone, really. So what were you told about the new programme of what it was going to be like, and how did you feel about that?**

R: To be fair, there wasn't a great deal of information that came through, other than there would be the opportunity of online classes. And I had that information via an email, I think it was, but also [name] rang me, so about it and asked me if I wanted to be involved in it, and I said I didn't like the idea of online classes at all.

I: **Okay. So how did you feel about when they called you, and they had that conversation with you?**

R: Well, I felt it was good that they were keeping in touch with people. I mean, she did a lot of other stuff as well. She'd done little challenges, so there was like... They did a step-up challenge, which was to climb the height of Ben Nevis or something. They did - because we were obviously allowed out to exercise, there was a walking challenge that they'd done. And, I mean, I got involved in that kind of thing, recording steps and stuff like that, that I'd done. And so I'd got involved with those little challenges, but the idea of an actual online class, partly because I've only got a mobile phone, and I'm thinking it's just not feasible to do this kind of thing at home. So I felt pleased that they were keeping in contact with us, because I felt - not necessarily just from my point of view - but, I mean, it was very isolating to start with, wasn't it, the whole lockdown thing? And so it was good that somebody was just sort of like keeping an eye, because...so that was good. And it was good that they took the time to ring us to be - to... And [name] used to send around personalised emails about the different challenges and things like that, that, as a sports centre, they were putting on. So that was good.

I: **And so you took part in those little challenges, but not the virtual, actual continuation of the NERS programme?**

R: Yeah, I took part the challenges, but not the online classes.

I: **Okay. So what made you want to stick to wait until face-to-face sessions again? So what would...?**

R: I'm just one of those people who actually likes to speak to people face-to-face, rather than do online classes. I mean, I was involved in a number of things at the time of lockdown, and there were a number of online options available, but none of them... I just - I thought, well, no, I don't want to do it online, and I think it's just something that didn't appeal to me. I like the social interaction, the being part of a group, the... Somebody saying - and it's the initial...

And it's also the immediate feedback that you can get from being in a face-to-face situation. Whereas if somebody is doing an online class, you can't - you don't necessarily get that immediate feedback about what's right, what's wrong, what needs adjusting slightly or whatever.

I: Yeah. And do you see - and what sort of disadvantages or downsides of the virtual programme did you see? So you mentioned a little bit about not getting that immediate feedback, but is there anything else that you saw as like the downside to it?

R: Well, no social interaction. The difficulty of actually - well, I say difficulty, it's not difficult, is it, to join a Zoom meeting on a phone call, and that kind of thing. But it just seemed impractical to be doing - trying to follow an online class on a mobile phone, while I'm trying to do particular exercises in my house. So I just never really gave it the opportunity to try, and I never took the opportunity to try it.

I: And what do you mean by impractical?

R: Well, it's just like it's a small screen, and you've got - my internet reception isn't brilliant here. It's you've got like - if you've got... It's just like the delay of it all.

I: Yeah.

R: So that kind...

I: So you mentioned... Yeah, sorry, continue.

R: Yeah. No, go, go, I'm sorry.

I: So you mentioned a little bit there about IT, so you said your IT is a bit slow there. Is there anything else - well, is IT quite a big, was it a barrier for you?

R: The actual IT itself, no. I mean, I did Zoom piano lessons on a one-to-one, so it's not that I'm incapable of doing them. It just didn't seem practical to do a class exercise, a group class thing on an online platform.

I: Okay, thanks for that. Do you think that you could see any benefits of a virtual programme?

R: Not from my point of view, but certainly, I mean, some people might feel really self-conscious about going to the gym, so it could be something that they would be happier to get involved in, if it meant that they could retain some kind of distance from the really fit people in the gym, if you see what I'm saying?

I: Yeah.

R: So people who maybe have issues with getting from A to B, like the practicality of actually getting to the sports centre, it could be of benefit to people like that. People who are maybe at home with young children, and they're not having to find childcare facilities, while they go on the exercise programme. So, I mean, there are benefits to people, but it just wasn't... It's never been something that's floated my boat. I mean, I can watch an instructional video on

doing something, and after a couple of minutes, I'll think, oh, I can't be bothered with this. So it's because I can't immediately ask them - I'm very much a people person, who I like to speak to people, yeah.

I: Okay. Do you think there's anything that might have encouraged you to try a virtual delivery?

R: No.

I: Okay.

R: No, it was - it just... No, not at all, not in the slightest.

I: Okay. And did you discuss all of these kinds of thoughts and concerns with [name], when they offered you?

R: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah. I mean, [name], she - I mean, initially it had been quite a... We'd got to the quite chatty stage, [name] and I, and it was kind of like I was quite happy to say to her, well, no, it just doesn't float my boat, [name]. It's not something that I'm interested in doing, it's... And she was quite happy to accept that.

I: And then she was - so she was kind of able to address... Was she able to address these concerns for you?

R: In what way now? Sorry.

I: So when you were saying to her, oh, it's just not for me, I'm not going to do it. And you had all these concerns about going, it going virtual, did she address these concerns or what was the outcome of it, I guess?

R: Well, I mean, she just accepted my answer for what it was. She said, well, was I still interested in doing the little challenges that they were putting through once every six to eight weeks, different things came through. And I said, yeah, so, I mean, she didn't sort of like... There was none of the, oh, you're not going to do the online programme, so therefore that's it. It was kind of like, okay, I understand your reasons for not doing the online programme, how about having a go at a couple of these things?

I: Okay. Yeah.

R: So that there wasn't - there wasn't any... There was no judgement made about the fact that I didn't want to do the online.

I: Okay. That's great. Thank you. And we're going to go on to a little bit about relationships that you made, and talk about the different people that have maybe supported you during the programme. So we've talked a lot about [name] during the conversation, but I just wanted to know, how was that relationship with her? How well did you get along, and...?

R: It was a professional relationship. She was - she didn't hold back if she felt I wasn't doing it right, which was fair enough; I was quite happy with that. But I felt she was approachable at any time I needed to ask any questions, and she was... But, I mean, she was - to be fair, she

was the only person who I really had any contact with, on a regular basis, during the programme.

I: Okay. What was her style of - what was her style as an instructor, or as an exercise professional?

R: She was definite about what she thought you should be doing, but she was also... Showed enough empathy to say that if something wasn't right, she would understand the reasons and adjust things accordingly. And she was happy to listen to what I had to say, and she would... If she felt that anything I was saying - she would have been... I mean, to be fair, I mean, she was fine, I mean, it was I didn't feel intimidated by her. I didn't feel she'd put me down in any way. I thought that she was clear about what she was saying, but she was definite about what she expected us to do.

I: Okay. And was the amount of support that she gave you, right for you, or...?

R: It was right for me and, I mean, like I said, I didn't feel that I had to go and see her every week, and I didn't feel that... I mean, I was quite happy to go a couple of weeks without seeing her, because I was confident in what I was doing, so that was fine.

I: And how often were you seeing her, would you say?

R: Well, it was one of those things, she was around... She'd said she was around, and she gave us times when she was going to be at the gym. And so she was always available, twice a week if I needed to see her. And sometimes it was just a good morning, and sometimes it was a, I'm having difficulty with this, or I can't remember quite how to do that. And she'd just come over and spend a couple of minutes, and put that particular thing right. And then - so she sort of like floated, if you know what I mean? Around - I mean, I was never fully aware about who... That was the other thing, I was never - which I think is good - there was never any kind of differentiation between somebody who she might have been chatting to in the gym, who was a regular gym goer, or somebody who was on the exercise referral programme. If you see what I'm saying, and we were all treated as clients, there was no sort of like, oh, you're on the exercise referral programme kind of point made. It was you are a member of the gym. You know what I mean?

I: Yeah. And how did that make you feel when you were exercising, and being [over speaking 48:32]?

R: Well, it was fine for me. I mean, it depends on the individual, doesn't it? I'm not the kind of person who needs to be - have my hand held kind of thing, and I'm not the kind of person who needs to have constant pat on the back, you're doing really well there, and stuff like that. But, I mean - and I would guess if I'd wanted it, she would have done it, you know what I mean? So it's very difficult to say how she might have dealt with somebody else who needed, like, oh yeah, you're doing really well, there all the time. I've dealt with enough people, teaching people various things that some people, you can stick a thumbs up and that means a world to them, and some people you need to constantly pat them on the back and say, yeah, yeah, you're doing really well. And stuff like that and, yeah, that's absolutely

brilliant. And so what she gave me was fine for me, and I would guess that somebody else who might have been more needy of encouragement and things like that, she would have offered them that as well. But it was fine for me.

I: Okay. And do you think that your support and your exercise professional, was important to your kind of engagement in the programme?

R: I think once I'd got to the stage where I was beginning to enjoy it, and was even thinking, oh, I might go and do an extra session here, you know what I mean? Once I'd got to that stage, then I would do something more because I enjoyed doing it, than just purely for the benefit of the exercise, if you see what I'm saying?

I: Yeah.

R: So she was - the exercise professional was important at the beginning, but once I'd got into it and was doing it, then it was, it became more self-rewarding than anything. And it was...

I: Yeah. Okay. I'm just mindful that we've got about five minutes left of the hour slot. Are you okay to hang around for another ten or so minutes, or do you have to rush off?

R: Yeah, that's fine. I'll just take a drink of tea. Hold on.

I: No, yeah, of course.

R: Go on.

I: Okay. So talking a little bit about support still, so was there any support from friends or family outside of the programme?

R: Well, not - I mean, it was only people that I knew that I saw at the gym, and they'd say, oh, you're here again kind of thing. How's it going? That kind of very informal stuff. Friends asked me about it. I mean, the family is all the way up in [place] and places like that, so they didn't... It wasn't something we routinely chatted about, or anything like that. So it was more kind of like casual chat, rather than, oh, how many such and such a thing could be done this week, or how far have you been on the bike this week?

I: Okay. And were these chats, was that - what were they...? What were you chatting - in your casual chats, what were you sort of chatting about? Was this - did they provide support in any way, or was it just more of a chat?

R: It was just more of a chat, really. And it was - I know it's like random people as well, like just other people in the gym who I'd see, and I'd see them doing things and I'd so, oh hi, I didn't realise you came here. Oh, yeah, I've come for my knees, and just think how much money it'll save you when instead of going to the [name] for the private knee surgery or whatever, you know what I mean? It was nothing - there were no targets discussed, and it was just a very casual chat.

I: Okay. And did you make any friends during the first couple of months of your pro-...when you were doing the face-to-face?

R: I can't say I made any friends, because the - obviously, each of the equipment is very individual, and it's not like a group class or anything like that. So I can't say I made any friends, it was more like acquaintances, oh, hello, how are you today kind of thing. I see you're here again. You know what I mean? It was that kind of chat, really.

I: So did you meet any of them outside of sessions, or anything like that, or...?

R: To be fair, no, I didn't. I mean, the people who - I mean, there were a number of people who I knew when I got there, and they... I knew they were not on the exercise referral programme, and we would see each other outside of the gym environment anyway. But it was kind of like, quite interesting to see how many people I actually previously knew, who actually did go to the gym on a regular basis, which I wasn't aware of.

I: Do you think you saw these people, more or less, because of attending the sessions, or...?

R: No. I mean, there was no - it was about the same, really, and nothing really changed. I didn't sort of say, oh - we didn't have the, actually, are we going to go out for a coffee or something after the gym, or anything like that? I mean, it was I saw them more because I saw them at the gym; I didn't socially see them outside of the gym any more or less than I had done previously.

I: Okay. And were there any negative influences from either people on the programme, or negative influences of friends or family that may have impacted your engagement?

R: No, I didn't find it a negative experience at all.

I: Okay, brilliant. So we're going to go on to some overall reflections of the programme. How have you felt - so you said that the programme... You enjoyed the exercise as you kind of went along, and you said you'd found some benefits with it as well. I was wondering if you found any benefits with your wellbeing, or your mood or anything like that as well?

R: I just think I felt generally more motivated, because I was getting up and doing stuff, as opposed to sitting around, but that was it. I mean, I must say, since lockdown [?and it's opened 55:17], I haven't heard from the exercise referral programme at all. So I'm a bit in limbo with them at the moment, and I do know that the gym is open, but I don't know, I did have... I think I did have a letter or an email saying that, at some stage, they would be in touch again with regards to the exercise referral programme, but I haven't had anything recently from them. So, I mean, I keep meaning to say to [name] what's happening with it, and sending her an email and saying, is there anything happening with the exercise referral programme? But, I mean, in the interim, I've decided to go swimming while I'm waiting for them to contact me again. So I don't - I'm not 100 per cent sure where it's all up to at the moment. So I suppose you - yeah.

I: Yes. Sorry. Someone else was calling through my phone, but it's not... Sorry about that. So you said you hadn't heard anything about them yet, but you had done some swimming, so I guess do you think you'll continue to exercise after?

R: I think it would be - if it was offered to me, I would, because obviously swimming is an all-round exercise, but the gym work is really specific to certain muscle groups and that. And I would certainly give it a go again, to see if I could regain the same level of motivation to do it, that I had been beginning to get. I mean, I suppose in an ideal world, what I would like is something like swimming to become an integral part of the exercise referral programme, because I think gyms can be very... I think a lot of people - some people would go swimming, but they wouldn't go to the gym, because they see the gym as a place for people who know what they're doing. And so I think that swimming, they're missing a bit of a trick with not including something like swimming in the exercise referral programme, with it being quite specific gym work. Yeah.

I: I guess that leads quite nicely on to, if you thought there were any changes, what changes would you like to see in the NERS programme in the future, particularly maybe in terms of how it was delivered?

R: I think - well, make the initial thing from referral to acceptance on the scheme a little smoother, maybe by better dialogue between the person who makes the initial referral, and the people at the sports centre. So that would smooth out that programme. I think including something like swimming would be of benefit, or aquafit, or something, which is a non-weight bearing exercise. Other than that, I mean, allowing people to just mix and match the gym work with another type of exercise, because going to the gym, as such, isn't something which appeals to everybody. And, I mean, I know things like the little challenges and things like that, which they put together, they obviously needed monitoring and stuff like that. But I think sometimes people don't realise how much they are exercising, even though on a day-to-day basis. So to try and include kind of things which people might do more on a daily basis, like walking, to encourage people to record steps and stuff like that. So that they've got an additional - kind of like it becomes more of a lifestyle thing if you do that, rather than it just being a two-week session at the gym.

I: Yeah.

R: And, obviously, if you're going to go more out to the holistic lifestyle and things like that, there could be some information given out about things like diet, that kind of thing. Which, yeah, I mean, I assume people get onto the exercise referral programme for a number of reasons, and one might be weight loss. And so whether those people do get anything like that, but, I mean, I think a more holistic approach rather than just being it based around the gym.

I: Okay. That's interesting to say. Thank you.

R: That's okay.

I: And do you think there's any sort of different types of delivery that are, more or less, suitable for different people at different stages of the programme? So maybe, for example, are there certain bits of the programme that you think should always be face-to-face? I know that you aren't really in favour - well, not in favour, sorry, but you

didn't really want to go on to the virtual programme, but I just wondered if you thought there was areas, if they had to do a bit of both, what might be suitable for people?

R: I think it's really important that people meet at some stage face-to-face.

I: **Yeah.**

R: I think - but, I mean, there are people whose lifestyle would make it more manageable for them to have online classes. But I do - so I think, but I think that's only something really that can be done on an individual basis. I don't think one method necessarily suits everybody, and so in an ideal world, you would have the option for a number of different ways of something being delivered. But, obviously, the specialist equipment required - is going to limit what people would be able to do at home. But, for example, there are a number of people who've got an exercise bike at home.

I: **Yeah.**

R: So I think maybe also the more encouragement to look at people's existing lifestyle, and see how that can be integrated into the programme a little bit. Just because it kind of like motivates people, and they don't... Like, oh, they've been for a walk down to the shop to get a paper, that was a couple of thousand steps. Did you realise you were doing a couple of thousand steps by doing that? And then you can use it as a thing, well, therefore, if you do that along with, say, maybe some work on the treadmill, then you can very easily get up to your ideal 10,000. So it would just be to incorporate a little bit more of what individual people do anyway.

I: **Yeah. And when you said that you think people should meet face-to-face at some point, why would you think that?**

R: I think there's a lot of things which can be hidden. I mean, it depends, really why you're going on the exercise referral programme in the first place, isn't it? But, I mean, if you're going on there because of, say, mental health issues, then there's a lot of things that can be hidden by not seeing somebody face-to-face on behalf of the client. So I think there's a bit of a danger there that the persona on a screen is not actually what maybe somebody is feeling, and also just simple things like you could look at a yoga video, for example, and you could assume that you are doing the exercise right. And you could actually be just missing a key point about maybe the way your feet are positioned, for example, and then that's then detrimental to what you're supposed to be doing. Whereas if you've had the face-to-face person, and the person can physically see your feet and say, actually, you need to just do this with them. So it's - I think things can be missed by purely online, and I think we spend too much time on the internet cloud [unclear 1:04:53] space or whatever. I think there's too much - yeah, there's so much benefit by actually sitting and speaking to somebody, to just zooming them, or yeah.

I: **Yeah, okay. Yeah, sorry, were you about to say something there?**

R: No, no.

I: Okay. Yeah, thanks for that, and that's really interesting insight there. We - I'm going to go on to - sorry, one of my... A couple of last questions, really. So...

R: That's fine, yeah.

I: ...do you think that the NERS, the users of the NERS programme would be willing to pay for access to the digital content? And, if so, what do you think would be a reasonable amount for these live sessions, or recorded sessions?

R: I wouldn't pay.

I: Okay.

R: It just wouldn't be something that I would be prepared to do. And I think there's - I mean, it's an exercise referral programme, and I don't think... There shouldn't be any differentiation between paying for an online platform, or paying for a face-to-face, because it's an exercise referral programme, and the only differentiation should be made about what is suitable for the individual.

I: Okay, so if it was suitable for the individual, do you think it would...?

R: If it was - sorry, what?

I: If an online platform was more suitable for an individual, do you think then that would be an appropriate time for paying? Is that what you're kind of saying?

R: No, I mean, did I have to pay? I can't - I don't think I paid at all, because I was a member of the sports centre, so, obviously, I was paying because I was paying a membership fee. But I think it was only a nominal fee, something, if I hadn't been a member of the sports centre of about £2, I think. So what I'm saying is, if I can go to the sports centre for £2 and that suits me, that's what I pay. But if somebody wants to pay to do an online platform session, then it should be no more. The cost should be comparative between the two, there shouldn't be any differentiation in pay, depending on what platform you're using to access the programme.

I: Okay, I'm with you. Okay, that's great. Thank you. So moving on to costs for the user, so we want to understand any costs that you might have paid to participate in the NERS programme. And I know you just mentioned there that you had the membership, so what were you paying for the face-to-face exercise sessions? So this could be per session, or per month, so maybe perhaps that...?

R: I wasn't - I was paying a membership to the sports centre, which I think was something like £20 a month, which gave me reduced costs on anything that I did. So if I went swimming, I think it cost me, I don't know, it might have cost me £3, as opposed to £4.50 to go swimming or something like that. So if I did X number of sessions a week, it worked out that I was actually... It was cheaper for me to be a member, than it was to pay regularly. I can't remember all the details of it. And because I was a member of the sports centre, I didn't pay for my NERS programme. And I think I was paying £20 a month, so at that point, I could do the NERS programme and I could go swimming, and there were certain other things that I

could do at the sports centre. But I haven't renewed the membership since lockdown, because I just cancelled it when it came along, because I thought, well, this isn't going to be used for some time, once lockdown and things.

I: Okay. Yeah. Definitely. So, on average, how many sessions were you attending a week? You said two earlier, so that's kind of what I'm going with?

R: Yeah. No, I was doing two a week on the NERS programme.

I: Brilliant. And what was your main form of travel to your face-to-face sessions, or to the gym?

R: I drove up.

I: Yeah. And was there any cost for that, for parking?

R: Well, no, because you can get your car - there's a sports centre car park, and you can validate your ticket when you go into the sports centre. So, in effect, you park for nothing.

I: Okay. Brilliant. And then...

R: And, I mean, even the local council car park is, well, it's 60p for two hours or something, so it's not huge amount of money.

I: Okay. And approximately how many miles away did you have to drive from your home, to the venue?

R: Very lazily, it was only about a mile away.

I: Okay. No problem. And then did you have to buy any extra clothes to take part in the sessions? Any sort of...?

R: No, no. Well, you didn't have to buy it, she just said the only thing was obviously you had to wear some form of suitable footwear and just loose, comfortable clothing. There was no necessity to buy gym clothing. I mean, I had it anyway, so there was no other than loose, comfortable clothing and suitable footwear, was the guidelines.

I: Okay. That's brilliant. So you didn't buy anything especially for the NERS sessions?

R: No.

I: Okay. Brilliant. So those are all the cost questions, really. But, yeah, so those are all of the questions for you, from me, rather, today. I wondered if there's anything you'd like to add, or is there anything you were expecting me to ask, and maybe I didn't?

R: No, not particularly. No, I mean, [name] had asked me, asked permission... Asked permission to put my name forward for the thing, and she's explained a bit, they're going to ask you lots of questions. And I don't know what they're about, she said, but they're wanting to do this research, and I said, oh, that's fine. So, no, I thought it would be generally along those kind of lines.

I: Okay. Brilliant. So I'm going to just stop the recording now.

End of Transcription