

Participant F15

- I:** Okay, the recording has started now. So we kind of want to start from the beginning, really. So we're interested in understanding people's experience when being invited on to the NERS programme, and what worked and went well, or how it can be improved. So could you talk me through that process, so from the very start, how you found out about the programme and what happened from there? You mentioned a bit before the recording started, about your referral.
- R:** Yeah. Well, I have some back problems, and I had been referred a few years ago, and through the GP, and it was something I wasn't aware about. But I went to the GP with pain, and I've had physio, and after the physio sessions you were then offered this gym referral. But I'd done this a few years ago, and I found it did help. But at the present time, or last March, was when I was enrolled, my partner [name], he has sleep apnoea and the specialist has encouraged him to try and lose a bit of weight. And so on a doctor's appointment for [name], I asked the doctor if he would consider referring [name] to the gym referral, and as my back problems were sort of ongoing, would he mind referring me and we could encourage each other to actually go. So it was something that really was suggested from physio that I was aware of, and then this particular time I asked to be referred, from my GP.
- I:** Okay. So initially, a couple of years ago you've had some back pain, and you went... You were referred by the physio?
- R:** That's right, yes. It was like a follow-on session, because you'd attended all the appointments, and they offered to go to the gym, which I did the course. I mean, it really did - it helped, but life takes over and you stop going to the gym, and things creep, the pain crept back, really. So I have arthritic hips, and I slipped a disc last, end of last year and it's just took me back so much, so it really helped having that gym referral, definitely.
- I:** And when you were referred the second time, and the first time, I guess, did you have a good understanding of the programme, and how it was described and explained to you?
- R:** Not particularly the first time, other than this was before I attended the sessions, and I didn't quite know what to expect. But it was explained on the initial sort of consultation at the gym. It was explained fully, well, you have like an assessment and you explain, you have to go at least twice a week to the gym, and commit to that. And then several weeks later you can have a lesson in the gym still with the instructor, and then they encourage you, to help you pick a class that would benefit your certain issues. And, of course, the second time round I knew what to expect, and nothing had changed. But I don't think it's advertised very well, I don't think I would have known anything about it, if I hadn't have been referred that initial time.
- I:** Do you think there was anything they could do to improve that advertising, and get people more aware of it?
- R:** I think it could be improved, and I'm not too sure how, especially nowadays when people aren't visiting their GPs as they were. I mean, as things get back to normal, maybe if they

could have posters or something within the GP surgery, or certainly in the leisure centres and things, that I attend, that if you're interested, speak to your health professional, maybe.

I: Yeah. And I'm going to draw on your experiences at the first time referral, just a little bit, because when you... Initially, you were referred that very first time, you said you were a little bit hesitant and didn't know what to expect. Can you talk to me a little bit about that, and how you were feeling when you initially got referred?

R: Like I said, I'd attended the physio course, and went on to a back physio course, and then that gave me the opportunity to follow on with the gym referral. And, like I say, I was a bit nervous what to expect. You expect gyms to be a little bit full of weightlifters and things like that, but the gym instructors were lovely, and you were taken into private room and then within five minutes, I was quite relaxed and it was all just chatting, what you could get out of the programme and what they could do for you. So after that initial consultation, I was fine after that, and it was explained fully. So it was just about a little gap in between being referred, really, and having that initial assessment, I'd expect.

I: And so what - when you say there was a little bit of a gap there, was the gap because...? Can you explain where that gap came from? So you'd got referred from the physio, and then what happened in that space of time before, from a referral and initial consultation, I guess?

R: I think what it is, once you're referred, I'm not sure whether the... Yeah, the physio referred me and then you have to wait for a letter from the leisure centre, and then you have to apply to the leisure centre within a certain amount of weeks; I think it's two weeks. And then somebody from the leisure centre will contact you at some point, and that will take two or three weeks to make an official appointment. So I suppose you're just sort of not too sure of the timeframe, so I expect over the first referral, it probably took about, probably six weeks before I actually... From the physio saying they'll refer you, to actually having an appointment at the gym.

I: And during that time, did you have any contact from the NERS programme, or was it you were just waiting?

R: No, you're just waiting. You're just waiting, really.

I: Okay. Thank you. And then so you had - you talked a little bit about your first meeting with your exercise professional, or gym instructor, can you talk me...? So you said a little bit about it already, when you initially went for that first consultation, can you talk me through that first meeting again? I know you've done it twice, but if you could probably draw on both the experiences, that would be great.

R: Yeah, of course. I was lucky to have the same instructor, so we're talking initially, like I say, about four years ago to then last March, when I was referred, and it's the same lady. And, like I say, you go into a private room and she sits and explains to you what she's going to talk about, so you know what to expect and it's all confidential. She weighs you. She takes your waist measurement, and she took my blood pressure, and she noted that down and she

wanted to know all about any medication I had. She had a brief outline of why I was going there, because of my back issues, so she did know that. And she asked you questions, like how you think your physical health is at that time on a scale of, say, one to ten. And then she'll ask you the same about your mental health. And then she'll ask you, what do you expect to achieve after x amount of weeks. And between all that discussion, she sort of plans the programme and where she can help you in the gym. But then I think it's after halfway through the course, let's say six weeks, you go back for another consultation and you review your first answers. So she'll say to you, how is your pain today on a one to ten? And then she'll say to you, well, six weeks ago, [name], your pain was a lot more, and you're sort of realising you are doing well and you're achieving your goal; and it just makes you feel better in yourself.

And then that was the first experience, because I did it for twelve weeks. And then this time, like I say, I was referred last March and it's the same instructor, and I did go into her room for the same conversation and it was basically, more or less the same, but a little bit more relaxed because I knew what was going to happen. And she planned a workout for me and took me around the machines to... But she stayed with me on every machine, and how you [unclear 10:22].

I: Oh, sorry, you're breaking up a bit there, [name].

R: Oh, sorry. I'm wandering around my [unclear 10:29]. So she wandered around the gym with me, explaining how the machines worked, and I actually [unclear 10:38] the machine. She'd get me to work a certain - and a set level that she thinks [unclear 10:46] for me. And she would write a programme [unclear 10:53].

I: Sorry, your connection is still a bit - a bit off, and I'm kind of getting every other word.

R: [Over speaking 11:01]. Am I any better now?

I: Yeah, that's perfect. Sorry, do you mind...

R: That's better, is it?

I: ...repeating what you said?

R: There we are! There we are! I'm not quite sure what you heard there, but I... On the second assessment, I knew what to expect and she took me around the gym, and went on every machine that she wanted me to go on. And she would write down a programme, what level she wanted me to do. And there was [unclear 11:29] stretches, and it wasn't all machine work, and she [unclear 11:33] different movements and stretches, floor work that would help with my back and hip problems. And then after that we went straight into lockdown, and never actually visited the gym for [unclear 11:47], and that was that.

I: And so when you initially went into those meetings, what were you hoping to get out of the programme, at that point?

R: Well, I was hoping, like any sort of exercise, you hope to lose a bit of weight, that would help with your joints and just to have an extension of the physio, really. Certain exercises

that were honed in to my particular problem, and that I could continue to try and be pain-free, to be honest.

I: Okay. And you said a bit before that you - it helped you in that first round.

R: Yes, definitely.

I: Yeah. And I just want to know how supportive or encouraging was your EP at that initial meeting?

R: Oh, very, very and she put you very much at ease, and you could ask her anything, really. And that's - really, that's why I wanted [name] to go on it, because I knew he would benefit if somebody sent him there, but he just wouldn't go on his own.

I: I'm sorry, was that with your husband, did you say?

R: My partner, yeah, [name], yeah. That was, yeah.

I: Sorry, it broke up a little bit when you were speaking about him going as well, do you mind just repeating it for me, please?

R: Yes. I mean, it's meant to be confidential, but [name] is the instructor, and she put me very much at ease the first time. And that's why, when we went to the doctor's, a good few years later, for [name], I knew he would feel confident going there, because of how it is, really, so I had recommended the process of the...to [name].

I: Okay. Thank you. And so we understand that you - well, as you said, you did a whole kind of round of the NERS programme face-to-face, and then you wanted to do it again. But, unfortunately, lockdown happened and you decided to go against the virtual sessions. And I'd just like to ask you a little bit about your experience of those face-to-face sessions, and...

R: Yeah, I did that - sorry, I did actually do virtual ones.

I: Oh, you did?

R: I did, yes.

I: Oh, okay.

R: We went into last March...

I: Hello?

R: Hello?

I: Hello. Sorry, I lost you there.

R: Oh, no, I'm - honestly, I'm standing still. I think it was - it must have been the end of last year, October, November time, I was contacted by my gym instructor to say they were offering the virtual ones.

I: **Oh, okay. So you postponed for a while, and then had the - did some virtual sessions?**

R: Yeah, and the virtual started all because of the lockdown. There was nothing happening in the gym, from that initial assessment last March. And then, yeah, like I say, [unclear 15:46] you haven't had any sessions, and they started, managed to this virtual one, and would I like to participate, and I did.

I: **And you did. Okay, that's great. I mean, I'm - that's great, so what I'll do is, we'll... If you don't mind, can we - we'll break into two bits, I guess?**

R: Yeah.

I: **So if you don't mind, can we talk - can you tell me a little bit about your experience of the face-to-face sessions that you had?**

R: Yeah. So that would have been the first time around then. Again, I turned up at a set time; I had an appointment. [Unclear 16:34] would be there, which was... She gave me the piece of paper that she'd written down everything I needed to do. She'd even drawn a diagram, just like little stick people, and you can remember which way I've got to stretch. And she was there within the gym looking after, I don't know, probably about eight people, and keeping an eye on us, any problems to go to her. And so I continued to go to [unclear 17:09], and asked her...

I: **Oh, sorry, I've lost you again. I don't know...**

R: Oh gosh! I tell you what, let me [unclear 17:20] bedroom, and see if that's... Hang on a second.

I: **Thank you.**

R: Hang on.

I: **It's okay.**

R: I'll keep talking, and you tell me when you can hear me [?not too bad 17:32].

I: **Okay.**

R: Right, here we go, let's see.

I: **Oh, that sounds a lot better.**

R: Is it?

I: **Yeah.**

R: Right, I'm going to sit on the bed and see if you can... Right, how is that? Is that a lot better? [Hello 17:48]?

I: **Oh, hi.**

R: Hello?

I: **Hello. It's a little bit better, but you broke up a bit there.**

R: Right, how am I now?

I: **Yeah, that sounds fine. I'll let you know if it goes again.**

R: Right, okay. I won't move a muscle. So halfway through that initial course, let's say, eight weeks, I think it was, you have another meeting with [name], the instructor. And, again, you reviewed all the questions you did on the very, very first meeting. And then I think it was at that point that she'd expected one session in the gym every week, and you could then choose a session within the leisure centre that she thought would benefit you, and that you obviously enjoyed. And I did sign up to go swimming, so I went [and joined for 18:47] the eight weeks one session in the gym, and one session swimming. And then after these [unclear 18:59] 16 weeks, I think it is, 12 or 16 weeks, I took out a membership and carried on going to the leisure centre. But I didn't go to the gym; I don't particularly like it. And I enjoy the swimming, so I used [unclear 19:18] through my membership. But the referral ended up - led on to a normal membership.

I: **Okay. And then you con-...did you continue exercising after those 16 weeks?**

R: I did, like before, I took on a normal membership after that time, and I carried on swimming. I didn't live near the leisure centre, I lived about 25 miles away, so it's a bit of a distance. But I did continue probably for about a year, I think, in that membership and I don't think renewed it again after the year.

I: **Okay. Is there any reason why you decided not to renew it?**

R: I had - I've got elderly parents, and I moved house to be nearer them and to look after them, basically, so my spare time, well, didn't exist anymore, to be honest.

I: **Oh, okay. Thank you. Thanks for sharing that with me. And so you had a full course a couple of years ago, and then you've come and re-referred yourself, and can you...? And then you had your initial consultation, and then what happened then, it was...? You were told it was postponed, is that correct?**

R: Yes. I think I had an email saying everything is just on hold at the moment - so this was 2020. Everything was on hold and because the gym was shut, and as soon as anything happens within the guidelines, they would contact us. And then it must have been - I think it was October time of the same year, 2020, I had another email from [name] to say that they'd started a virtual class up, the class that I was interested in doing. And it went from there, really, and I attended that for the full course. And I think I actually went over it, to be honest, and I hadn't realised, and as many of us in the group did. And then obviously the

gyms reopened, and [unclear 21:56] actually took on a membership and I'm using the gym as a normal membership now.

I: Okay. So what was the - what factors did you kind of weigh up in making the decision to do the virtual sessions, when they were offered?

R: Well, the class I was interested in, was - it was Tai Chi, and it was all to do, obviously, with gentle movements and, like I say, I'd slipped my disc at that point. And gentle movements, but it was also to do with sort of relaxing your mind as well [unclear 22:38] course. And both of my parents died last year: one in March, and one in October, and when this course came along, I was in quite a bad place mentally. And the thought of having these little snippets every week [?of me 23:01] trying to have gentle exercise and breathing, and the mental side of things [unclear 23:09]. So I did, and I wasn't too sure about the technology, but I managed to download the correct apps and things, and away we went!

I: And how did you find the doing the Tai Chi, and how it affected your wellbeing, I guess? Because you said you need - you... It came up and it was the perfect sort of things for you to do at that time, when you weren't... When you were in a difficult time. Did you - how did you feel the sessions were for you in terms of that?

R: Very, very good. It took me to a different place, and where I was at the time. And not only that, when you finished the session, she encouraged you to - it happened to fall on a day I wasn't working - and that she encouraged you to take that mental attitude throughout the rest of your day. Like taking my dog out for a walk after, and I'd appreciate my surroundings more, in how lucky I am in lots of ways. And it just - the session carried on for the rest of the day, certainly, and it lifted me very much.

I: That's great. Thank you. And did you see any benefits from doing these virtual sessions at home?

R: Well, the fact that they were available was a benefit, and we said it was at the right time for me. And because I was a little bit nervous in life, in general, you had to do it in your own surroundings, it was quite, quite nice. But then when I got used to what we were doing, and saw the same ladies on the screen every day, every week, it was quite a nice little community, really. But it led on to me exploring more with yoga, so it's led on to other things as well.

I: Okay. And can you tell me, did you just get involved in that Tai Chi class, or did you get involved in other virtual sessions?

R: No, it was just that one that was offered to me, because I think I showed interest in that, at the initial consultation before we went into lockdown.

I: And you said you had a little bit of difficulty with the connection, were you able to sort all of that, and were you helped by your exercise professional to do that?

R: I managed to go on [unclear 26:27] and my partner helped me to do that in preparation for the first class. But once I'd used it the one - the first time, it was quite simple, but you can

always see the instructor on there, and she would say to you, I can't hear certain [unclear 26:49], or press this button. So she'd go direct to you, if you were stuck. But I didn't have - once I'd downloaded the app, I didn't have too much difficulty after that.

I: And do you think there was anything that affected your ability to fully participate in the virtual sessions?

R: Not really, no.

I: Okay. So nothing - were there any sort of distractions at home, or anything like that?

R: No, I always made sure I was in the room [unclear 27:26] my partner and our little dog. Sometimes my little dog would come and sit on the sofa, but we'd all have a bit of a laugh at that, all the different ladies. But, no, it was - for me, it was good, good surroundings.

I: And so thinking when you initially started the virtual sessions, do you feel any differently about virtual sessions now that you've had them, than you might have done before you started, or before you tried them?

R: Yeah, I think if it was offered to me initially, I would have said, oh no, I need to have that - not excuse - but that bit of force to go somewhere, that commitment [unclear 28:16]. But because there was no other options, I felt very open about it, let's give it a go. And that actually worked out well; it did work out well for me, and if the sessions were to come up in addition to what I'm doing, because they don't actually do the Tai Chi at the leisure centre now. If the sessions were still online, then I would try and pay and go for them. So I think they did suit [?some people 28:50], yeah.

I: Okay. Thank you. So you mentioned a little bit there about staying motivated to keep exercising online, and things like that. Is there anything that's helped to keep that motivation, and you attending your weekly Tai Chi lessons?

R: I think I've really enjoyed them to be honest. In the first few minutes of everybody getting together, logging on and things, then you can see the other ladies there. And you did feel like you were part of a group, even though you weren't there. So it was nice - that was a bit of a push as well, I think.

I: And so do you mind just expanding a little bit about that community feel? So did you - did the group allow you to build friendships and get, maybe change any feelings of isolation because of lockdown, or anything like that?

R: Well, I didn't realise my - one of my close neighbours was attending the course, and so it's got us a little bit more together, and we walk our dogs a bit more together now. And there was another lady that I knew as well, so I got her email address and we do keep in contact that way as well. So I suppose it did open up a bit of social - the social aspect of things, especially during the lockdown.

I: And how does this sort of compare to perhaps when the sessions were face-to-face?

R: Well, I've never done face-to-face Tai Chi, but I've started doing yoga now. Oh no, sorry, face-to-face with the gym referral, isn't it? I think when I was in the gym previously, I didn't really talk to anybody. Everybody moves on their own sort of mission, and I suppose the same in the swimming pool, like you would acknowledge other people, but you wouldn't really talk. But in that sort of session of the virtual Tai Chi, there was that little aspect of everybody settling down in that first few minutes before the class started, which you may not get when you're in a room. I know now when I go to yoga, we're all in the big room, and you don't particularly talk to each other you're just waiting for the class to start, but when you're looking at each other on the screen, you do tend to chat a little more, its strange!

I: **Yeah. And from your experience of the virtual sessions, do you think there's any types of delivery or [?most of the 32:02] delivery, so face-to-face or virtual [unclear 32:06] more or less suitable for different people, and perhaps at different stages of their programme?**

R: Well, I think certainly for mental health, where you may not want to, say, leave the house. The fact that you could click a button at any time on the virtual thing, and you wouldn't have to have that [unclear 32:33], is probably beneficial. But in the flip side, it could lift you as well, if [?you're seeing those same 32:44] people. So on a virtual side - mental health, it's probably more beneficial to have it virtually, at least to start with, than actually going to the gym and you think, oh, I can't face it, I can't face it. So it's plusses and minuses of both, really, but the virtual one could be a good starting point, if people are a bit unsure of what they're doing, and a bit nervous as well.

I: **Okay, thank you. And you said that you'd completed a whole course of Tai Chi. So did you complete your 16-week assessment? So I know you'd had the standard programme a couple of years ago, and you'd had that 16-week assessment. Similarly, when you were doing it virtually and completed that whole course of Tai Chi, did you have a 16-week assessment remotely then?**

R: We had - I had a lot of contact with... I think it actually went past 16 weeks, but the instructor had said she was looking at everybody's sessions, and she didn't realise we'd gone over. She said that if you want to join me, just keep coming, if you want to, if there's space and there's nobody else, you can have so many [unclear 34:10] a session. Then I felt, well, I could be taking somebody's place, so I stopped the virtual after about 18 weeks, I think it was. And [name] then assessed everybody, and she sent me an email to say that they'd discussed in the leisure centre how they were going to continue with people, and just to wait and see what was going to happen. So I didn't really have an assessment, as such, like I did with the first face-to-face round, when you look at your improvement and things like that. But she was - I think that was more [?vital 34:51], because the leisure centre had opened up, and I wanted to get back into the pool, to try and help my joints a bit more. Whereas if I'd have been referred, I would have to commit to go to the actual gym, and I prefer to go in the pool. So I think that was more my fault, rather than [name]'s, to be honest, but there was [unclear 35:20] official closing assessment, like there was before.

I: **And that was because you - correct me if I'm wrong - but was that because you didn't attend it, or was it because...?**

R: No, there wasn't really one offered, as such, and because they were waiting... The leisure centre were waiting to see what they could offer to people, as things were starting to open up a bit. But I know the pool had opened up, so I said to [name], I've started, and I'm feeling a lot better now physically and mentally, and I've actually joined the gym as anybody else would, and she was really pleased at that, that I was actually still going. But, at the same time, my partner was on the [unclear 36:14] scale of in referral, and he didn't have any virtual lessons. And then he was contacted by them to say, we'll update your referral with the GP, would you like to come back to us? And that's what he's actually done. So I think I probably would have had a continuation to go back face-to-face, but I think it was my choice not to have another referral and just go to the leisure centre when I could, really.

I: And can you explain why you decided to not have another referral, and just kind of go with going straight back to the leisure centre?

R: I think it was because I know I had to commit to eight weeks in the gym, before I could then start [unclear 37:17]. But I was quite interested in doing yoga and body balance, which was like a follow on from the Tai Chi, and to get into the pool. So I decided not to have a referral, and I felt well enough, I suppose, to actually use the gym as a normal - not normal - that's not good, is it? As a standard membership.

I: Okay, thank you. And so, on reflection of your experiences, were you happy to take, decide to take up those virtual sessions, rather than postponing - like your partner did - to the face-to-face, wait for a face-to-face?

R: Yeah, I was quite happy to do that. Yeah, I wanted just to move on a little bit by paying, I suppose.

I: Okay. And so if there were no restrictions in place, what type of delivery would you choose for yourself? So this might be remote only, face-to-face only or a mixture of the two, and why would you choose that? Why the delivery that you thought was best?

R: Right. Well, I think you could call [them 38:41] how - why [unclear 38:44]. If you're - as I was - really struggling with my back and my hips, I've not had a person there with me to show me what stretches to do correctly, I think I may not have benefitted as much. So if you were that hands-on with people, then it's obviously better with face-to-face. But if you're a bit apprehensive, and don't really want to mix with people and your class allows you to do it at home, I've found great benefit from it being at home. But probably the answer is a bit of a mixture, depending on your conditions, but certainly having that option of the virtual, and last year was fantastic for me.

I: Okay. Thank you. And we're going to move on a little bit now talking about you, and how different people have been supported, have supported you during your programme. You've mentioned a little bit about your exercise professional beforehand, can you just tell me about your relationship with your exercise professional?

R: She is very - she is professional, but she is very... She does watch you when you're in the gym, although she's standing next to you when you're having a normal programme, she's

aware of what people are doing. And it's funny, today I've been into the gym as a normal member with my partner, on his gym referral. And it's the same lady there, and she shouldn't be doing anything with me, but I've gone to get on a machine that I'm not familiar with, and she said to me, oh, [name], this does, this twists you. And she said you've got a bit of a bad back, she said, I wouldn't do that if I were you, she said. She's got a good memory, and she cares about people, but she is very professional, but open to questions, and you can ask her anything.

I: And when you had her in the programme, did you feel like she gave...? Was the amount or type of support offered right for you, and would you have needed more or less support?

R: Personally, she gave me the right support. She gave me the tools to help myself, basically. And as I progressed, she changed my programme to that, so I still get the same benefit out of it. And then she wanted for me to carry on that habit of going to the gym, so she encouraged me to take on a membership when it had all finished, and I was very happy to do that.

I: So do you think that your relationship with your exercise professional, and the way she was, was an important...? Important in your engagement in the programme, and with your progress that you made?

R: Yes, I believe so. She really did put you at ease and, I mean, I'm in my fifties, early-fifties now and it's not the sort of natural environment to be sort of in the gym, as such, but I never felt like that when [name] was there.

I: Okay. Thank you. Did you have any support from any friends or family outside of the programme?

R: When I did it, initially, because, like I say, I didn't live very close at the time, my partner would always drive me there, which was a bit of an issue for me, but he would always make sure [unclear 42:57] very supportive to do that. He wouldn't come in with gym with me, but he would always drive me there, so I had support that way.

I: And then was there anyone who was a negative influence on you, or...?

R: Any what, sorry?

I: Were there any negative influences around you?

R: No, not really. No.

I: Okay. And you said you'd - don't worry, you said, you've already mentioned about your making friends on the programme, and you said that you didn't make as many friends face-to-face, because it was a gym session, and you didn't really speak to anyone. But the virtual Tai Chi gave you that community, and friendships...

R: That's right.

I: ...and you went, were walking with your neighbour.

R: Neighbour, yeah.

I: Yeah. Do you think - so how important is all that support for you in participating in these sorts of programmes? May it be friends, or the exercise professional?

R: That is part of it, I suppose, isn't it? If you get on well with your professional, healthcare professional, then you're put at ease to get on and improve. And then this, like I say, [unclear 44:30] expected friends at the virtual one, that sort of improved your quality of life too, so very important for both, really.

I: When you say improved your quality of life, can you sort of expand a little bit on that?

R: Well, I could say I used to sort of - we'd then start walking the dog together, with my friend, with my neighbour. And that's funny, we hadn't done before and we'd just crossed paths now and again. So that started up a new friendship, and that's good for your mental health as well, and we've been able to support each other. She doesn't work, but I work in a pharmacy, and I'm still working and when people couldn't get out and about through the lockdown, I'd bring medication home, or does anybody want this? And it just sort of brings you closer together, really, to help each other.

I: Yeah. Thank you. And do you find - have you found that the programme has benefitted your wellbeing and mental health?

R: Yes, very much so.

I: At the start of the programme, did you have any sort of concerns about your mental health on either referrals, or was this something...? Sorry.

R: Not the first referral, not the face-to-face one, a few years ago. But, like I say, when I did the virtual one, which must have been at the end of October, my dad had passed away in October. And I'd had looked after him for the last six months, and in our house, and he died of cancer. And my mum had died in the March of last year, so he was caring for her in their home, as I was with him. And then she died, and a month later he was diagnosed with cancer, and given a few weeks to live, and he just basically moved in with us and we cared for him. So he died at the beginning of October, so I was in a very bad place. I was in - on the verge of losing my job, because I'd not been able to work to care for him, and so it wasn't very good. But having that bit of time to myself, like I say, I'd locked myself away - not locked myself - but went in a room. My partner knew I was doing my Tai Chi, and I did like the community, and the gentle, the gentle exercise has helped an awful lot with my back, and hips as well. So I - that has improved vastly. My mental health has improved vastly since then, but it came at the right time, put it that way.

I: That's great. I'm sorry to hear that, and thank you for sharing that with me.

R: Thank you.

I: And what changes would you like to see for the NERS in the future, if you have any particularly, and how it's delivered?

R: It's hard to think. I think having the option of a mixture of the virtual and face-to-face could benefit some people, that could be something, really. And maybe the wait time at the very beginning, like I say, it's about sort of six weeks or so from when your health professional refers you, to when you actually go and see anybody. And [unclear 48:40] on my waiting, because obviously there's lots of things within the NHS, but I think maybe have like a starter pack sent to you at home or something, and that could say, right, this what's going to happen in your first appointment. Just to explain it a little bit more, so you know what to expect while you're waiting for your appointment maybe. But, other than that, it's a brilliant scheme, I think, definitely.

I: **Okay. Thank you for that. I'm just going to move on to a little bit about costs, so we would like to understand, as that... We would like to understand any costs that you, as a user of the service, paid for to participate in the programme. So I'm just going to run through a few questions for you. So approximately how many weeks of the NERS sessions did you have in total? This - and if we could do this from your referral, your latest referral, please?**

R: Latest referral. I had my one initial consultation face-to-face, and then I didn't start any sessions then until the virtual. And I think it went - well, it did go over the... Did you say it was 16 weeks normally, the course?

I: **Yeah.**

R: I think I probably had 18, between 18 and 20 weeks. Just because I didn't realise it had gone past that.

I: **Yeah, okay. Thank you. So you said about one week of this was face-to-face, when you had the initial consultation, and you attended once. Approximately how many times - how many of the 18 weeks were virtual? Well, sorry, they were 18 weeks - 18 weeks, yeah.**

R: Yeah.

I: **And during a typical week you said you were attending about once a week?**

R: Yeah. There was only one virtual class - no, I lie, there were two virtual classes a week, but I was working on the other one. I could only attend on the Monday, once a week.

I: **Okay. And did you pay for any face-to-face exercise sessions?**

R: No, the assessment is usually free, and then you start paying on the first gym session, which didn't happen, so I didn't pay for any.

I: **Yeah, and did you pay for any ex...the virtual ones?**

R: No, there was no - it was all free, apparently.

I: **Okay. And so what is your main form of travel when you do do face-to-face sessions?**

R: What's my - oh, face-to-face? So I can show you, we have moved, so I would be driving there. But I do actually work now next to the leisure centre, so if it was near... When I had

my first - not my first - sorry, I'm getting confused. When I have my second referral and that one face-to-face appointment, I actually walk there; I walk from work to there.

I: Okay. So I will put tradition-...if you were to continue face-to-face again, would you walk there then, do you think?

R: No, probably not, I would be - I would be driving.

I: Okay. And so how many miles approximately do you have to drive from home?

R: Now, a round trip of about - a round trip of about ten miles.

I: Okay. And how much - do you have to pay for any parking there?

R: Yes, there is parking there. There is paying meters. No, no, no, no, there isn't - no, there isn't any in the leisure centre, no, it's free parking.

I: Okay, brilliant. And did you have to buy any sort of extra clothes for the NERS sessions?

R: I didn't particularly, no. No, I just - very casual, which was nice. Just general jog bottoms and a T-shirt, and that was fine.

I: And any sort of particular footwear, or any exercise equipment you had to buy?

R: No, I did have a decent pair of trainers, so I suppose if you didn't, that was one thing that was quite important that you'd got good supportive footwear.

I: And did you have all the exercise equipment that you might have needed, when you were at home?

R: Well, yes. Yes.

I: Perfect. And did you buy any devices or anything like that, that - so you could take part in virtual sessions?

R: No.

I: Okay. And what was the main way you connected to the virtual content, so this could be via a phone or a tablet, so through 4G, or did you connect through wi-fi and broadband?

R: Through wi-fi and broadband on my tablet. I'm just going to wander into the kitchen a second. I'm just turning something off, so you might lose me, but I'll go back in the bedroom to finish it off, sorry.

I: That's okay, we're almost finished anyway.

R: That's fine. That's fine. I just remembered I had - oh, I think my partner has been out and he's turned it off. Right, I'll head back into the bedroom then now. Running along my corridor. Right, I'm back in the bedroom now. Sorry.

I: That's okay. So how much a month, roughly, are you paying for home wi-fi?

- R: Oh, it's all mixed in with my BT package. I think the broadband is, I don't know, let's say £50, I'm not too sure.
- I: **Okay. I'll just put approximately £50. I know everyone doesn't really know, and this is quite... It sounds to be quite difficult. Perfect. So those are all the cost questions. So that's kind of everything that I - all the questions I wanted to ask you today, but is there anything from me that you were expecting me to ask, or that you'd like to add?**
- R: No, I think you've made - you've covered a variety of things. The only thing that I would say, when we were talking about costs at the end, is when my partner goes to the sessions now he pays £2 a session. And if the virtual ones - if we had to pay for the virtual one, at the same range or whatever, I still would have paid for them, because it is a good service, so don't be afraid to ask sort of thing, I suppose, is what I'm trying to say.
- I: **So if you were to pay for the sessions, what would you say would be a reasonable amount for the live sessions? So those ones, the Tai Chi ones that you did, and also maybe if the... If you were to access a recorded content, so how much would you be willing to pay for those, I guess?**
- R: Well, I know it's subsidised, if you were to attend the gym, they're around about £5 a session. So if you're doing the NERS courses, they're £2, so I think if you carried on with the £2 for the virtual, I think that would be perfectly acceptable for people on the scheme.
- I: **Okay, that's great. Okay. Thank you. And so is there anything else you'd like to add?**
- R: No, that's fine, thank you. It's been nice talking to you.
- I: **Yeah, I'm just going to pop the recording off now.**

End of Transcription