

Participant F14

- I:** It should pop up in a second, but I'll wait for that to pop up before we start, so I know it's doing it. There we go! Brilliant! So just before I get into the questions, I just want to confirm, so when you registered, you'd click the postponed bit, and so were you offered...? Had you had experience with the NERS programme, and then offered it virtually and postponed it, the virtual delivery?
- R:** No. What I did was that - well, I went to I think it was one face-to-face class before the lockdown, and then there was a gap of, well, several months where nothing happened. And then the virtual exercise programme started, and then I joined that immediately and I'm still doing it now.
- I:** Okay. Brilliant! Okay. Thank you. I just want to make sure that I've got the right questions. That's brilliant. So just following on from that, we're really interested in understanding how people's experiences of being invited onto the NERS programme, so you said you had that one session, or a couple of sessions face-to-face first.
- R:** Yeah.
- I:** So could you talk me through, right from the very start, how you found out about the NERS programme, and what happened from there? So maybe who referred you, and that initial process onto the NERS programme.
- R:** Okay. I was at my GP surgery, and just for a separate appointment and on their noticeboard, I saw the NERS exercise referral scheme. So I had a read of it while I was in the waiting room waiting and thought, oh, this sounds good, because I've got chronic health conditions and unfit, so I ticked all the boxes. So when I went into my GP for the appointment, I also mentioned to him that I'd seen the poster outside, and did he think it would be a good scheme for me, and he said yes. So he said that he would refer me, so he sent a letter or whatever to NERS. And then I think it was some months later, they contacted me to say that a space had become available, and that I needed to go for an assessment first. So an assessment date and time was set up. I went along, and it was to [place]. I don't know how familiar you are with [place], I don't know where you're based, but I went to the building and I had an assessment done, and then they said I could start the classes the next week.
- So I started the class, and then the classes finished. So that was it, because of the lockdown. And then what did I do then? And then nothing happened, and they just said they'd cancelled, the lessons were cancelled because of the pandemic. And then I got an email then from the instructor to say that they were starting online classes, and would I be interested in joining, and I said yes. So as soon as they started - and I can't remember how long they've been going on for now, and they've been going on for a few months, so I started the online classes and I'll say up until, well, now.
- I:** Okay. Thank you. That's really nicely laid out your time with the NERS for me. So when you were initially referred, did you feel like you - did you understand all the information

about the NERS programme, when you were being referred? What were your expectations of the programme at that point?

R: When I saw your poster, it had that there was an exercise referral scheme for basically people with chronic health conditions, or who are unfit, or both. And I just thought, well, that kind of suited me. I'd been wanting to do exercise prior to me joining the NERS, and I'd been wanting to do exercise for some time, except when I'm left to my own devices at home, I don't do it, because I kind of always find something else that I need to be doing instead. I needed an organised class to actually get me motivated. Also, I'm not - pre-Covid, I wasn't keen on going to a gym, or anything like that because the standard is too high for me. I'm not kind of as fit as the others, and I just feel a bit like, well, a bit like an idiot. So that kind of turned me off, so when I saw the information, I thought, well, if everyone going there has got like chronic health conditions or are unfit, then basically that's my category. So I felt confident joining the scheme on that basis, and then after I spoke to my GP and he said he'd referred a lot of people, but he didn't actually know much about it, other than that it was for people in my category, and it sounded like a good idea, and why didn't I give it a try. So basically, that's the reason why I joined it.

I: And what were you expecting before that first meeting? Did you have any sort of expectations of how it was going to be, or anything like that?

R: No, I didn't have any expectations, other than I thought it was suitable for me, and that I would give it a try. If it didn't work out, and I tried it; if it did work out, great, but no expectations prior to joining, other than I thought it was suitable for people like me.

I: And was there anything that - you said you had no expectations, but anything you might have been maybe uncertain about, or hesitant about?

R: The only thing I'd be hesitant about, about joining any kind of exercise class, is that I wouldn't be able to keep up with the other participants, because I've got, like, respiratory disorders and things, that's vascular disease and osteoarthritis. And trying to keep up with people who are fit, and maybe a lot younger and things, that... Well, that does explain that kind of turned me off joining a regular gym, or anything like that. But I was kind of confident going into it, because of the information I'd read on the poster. And then I thought, well, as I said, give it a try, if it matches my expectations of what I thought the programme was about, then I would stick with it. If it didn't match my expectations, and I went in there and everyone was super fit and doing somersaults and things, then I thought, well, I've given it a try and I won't carry on with it.

I: So how was your experience of being referred, and getting invited onto the programme? So maybe any sort of invitation letters you got from the programme, or that overall experience of just before you got to that initial assessment, is there anything you think could be improved in that process?

R: The only thing with me, the actual correspondence was fine, and they actually telephoned me with an assessment date, but I did wait quite a long time, well, in my book, I waited quite a long time between the GP referral and actually getting an assessment date.

I: **And so you said that the - was it the exercise professional that called you to book you in for an appointment?**

R: Yes, it was the instructor I'm with now, I think it was him, because this was... Well, I think this was back in last February, March time, 2020, as opposed to this year. My memory is a little bit hazy, but I think, actually, it was the instructor that called me, but I may be wrong on that.

I: **And you didn't receive any sort of letters in the post, or anything like that, any invitation letters?**

R: Not that I can remember, no, it was a phone call, inviting me for the assessment. And then when I was at the assessment, I did a few exercises, mainly like walking up and down and getting up and down off a chair. And then I think I was there about, I don't know, half an hour, and then the rest of the time then he went on about the classes, and what times they were, and what kind of stuff they did in there? Yes, so it's just kind of general during the assessment.

I: **So you talked a little bit there about your first contact, so your first meeting with your exercise professional. Sorry, what was the terminology you were using for him?**

R: I used instructor.

I: **Instructor. So with your instructor, you had that first meeting and you said a little bit there about you did a bit of sitting down and up the chair, and some exercises. So we'd like to understand what worked well in that first meeting with your instructor. So can you talk me through - have you got anything else to add about how that session was?**

R: That was fine, it was just - this was a one-to-one assessment, so there weren't any other people there.

I: **Yeah.**

R: He said he just wanted to test my basic levels of movement, balance, that kind of stuff, which is why then I had to... I can't remember how many - how long it was, but I had to walk up and down for a certain period of time, and then I had to stand... Sit on the chair and then get up and sit down, get up and sit down. That's the only two exercises I can remember. If I did any more, I can't remember them. And then, as I say, then he just went through the administration and the times of the classes, and things.

I: **So before going to that initial meeting, after you'd had a conversation with your instructor, what were your initial thoughts before going along to that consultation, that first assessment. Did you have any concerns, or...?**

R: No, I didn't have any concerns, I just thought, well, it's just an assessment. I'll go there, and I didn't have any expectations or outcomes from it, or anything. I just went along and, yeah, no expectations, no concerns.

I: **And how supported or encouraged, or friendly was your instructor at this meeting, were they...? Did they put you at ease, or were able to answer any questions you may have had?**

R: Yes. He was - do you know who my instructor is?

I: **No, no we don't.**

R: Okay. Yeah, he was very good. He explained everything in great detail. He was friendly, and he came across to me as professional. That's it, basically.

I: **And did you - and questions that you had, was he able to answer those for you, or...?**

R: Because I hadn't been on the programme before, I didn't actually have any questions. I went into it with an open mind. I had it in my head that it was a programme that is suitable for me, or may have been suitable for me. And, as a result, I went into it with an open mind thinking, right, if this suits - marvellous - if it doesn't, then I won't go back. So, obviously, it did suit, because I kept going.

I: **Yeah. And what were your - when you went to that initial assessment, at that point, at that first stage, what were you hoping to get out of the programme? So was it to maybe improve your health, wellbeing, anything else? What were you hoping to get out of it?**

R: It was to improve - initially, it was to improve my fitness levels, which would have an impact on both my physical and mental health. Kind of fast forwarding a bit, when the online sessions started, because I'm in the shield group and I live alone, then I didn't have any contact with anyone for over a year, right? There were some people that came to the door for literally a few minutes, and that was it. And the rest of the time, I spoke to people on the telephone, like my friends on the telephone and things, and my family. But I had no kind of face-to-face contact with anyone, as such. So when the online classes started, that actually was an additional bonus for me, because it helped to alleviate some of the social isolation I had experienced. Because although the people on the class, I didn't actually know them, because I only went to, like, one class with them. But when the online sessions - like you get to know people on the classes, they kind of seemed to do the same kind of classes as me. And so even though it's online, it was still kind of a face-to-face interaction for me, so it also helped to alleviate the social isolation for me, as well.

I: **And did you - as you said there, people were coming along, the same people coming along to each of the virtual sessions. Did you feel that you were making, or building friendships from that?**

R: Yes and no. Yes, in that when we first logged on and just before we logged off, and even sometimes during the class, we'd have a chat kind of thing and say, oh, this is a difficult exercise, or my balance isn't great or whatever. So we had a kind of like general chit-chat

about the class, but, no, from the point of view with that, I haven't arranged to meet anyone for, say, coffee outside the class. But even though I'd actually got a shielding letter yesterday, to tell me that I'm no longer to shield, but to use my discretion and to go into places, and try to avoid certain places, blah, blah, blah. And I'm still taking it very, very easy, like, I go for a walk now around the block, but everyone is still banned from coming in my house, like, nobody gets through the front door. And there's a lot of other people on the class with health conditions, obviously, so I know a lot of them from my online class, because they started doing some face-to-face classes starting last week. So they've got now still a few online classes, but there's a lot of face-to-face physical classes.

And the people in my classes online, like we were talking, are you going to the physical class or are you staying virtual, and everyone will stay in virtual. And some of the people were saying, well, we've been shielding now for over a year, we don't really want to go into a building, even though the measures are in place, people won't be wearing their face masks, because they're exercising. There would be about 15 people or something in the class, and the people just were like myself as well, and we weren't comfortable with doing that. You don't go from staying in your house for like a year, a year and a half, and then suddenly think, oh right, okay, then, let's join a class and nobody's wearing masks. And, yeah, it didn't - well, nobody in my classes have opted for the face-to-face classes.

I: So do you think, going forward, you'd prefer to stay with the virtual classes then, as you've just said?

R: Yes. Well, as I say, everyone that goes to my virtual classes, everyone wanted to stay virtual. There's a slight issue, because of the now physical face-to-face classes before, virtually, we used to have one, two, three, sometimes four classes a day, so you could always find the class that suited you. Say you had an appointment in the morning or I don't know, whatever, you could find a class that suited you, but now it's gone down to three classes a week. Oh, no, four classes because one is back-to-back, but some, but they're all kind of quite early in the morning, which doesn't suit a lot of us. Because we all - all the people in my virtual class, we've all got health conditions, and so we're up half the night because we've got pain and stuff like that. So having an early morning class, we're exhausted. We tried - last week was the first week where it changed to early morning, these classes, and there wasn't the same atmosphere there, because we were all tired and half asleep, because that's the nature of chronic health conditions. At night, if you've got pain at night, it's worse and that's because there's nothing to distract you. You're supposed to be lying there sleeping, and your mind then is focused on the pain, which then is exaggerated, you can't sleep.

So I actually said to my instructor, would it be possible to space them out and have some... One day, say, in the morning online and the next day in the afternoon or whatever. But I think he had to fit in with the bookings in the buildings that they've... I think there's two buildings that they have it in. Now, my instructor did actually mention that there wasn't - this was last week - there wasn't actually much interest in the physical face-to-face, but it was starting new assessments, and they were hoping that new people would join, who would want to do it face-to-face. But I actually think, not just from my own personal wants, but I actually think that there is more scope, maybe for having the classes that suit the

online community, as well as the physical face-to-face. And, as I say, the classes have gone from three or four a week, to three times a week. There's four classes a week now.

I: So was it before they started introducing some face-to-face, were there more virtual classes than there are now, is that what you're saying?

R: Yes. There were - before last week there were three or four classes a day, and they were spread out over the day, like, some were morning and some were lunchtime, and some were afternoon.

I: And when you say that you think there's going to be - there's more scope for the virtual classes, what kind of groups of people do you think would be more suitable for those virtual sessions then?

R: Well, most people who have been on the shield list are very uncom-... Well, talking to my groups as well, in my exercise classes, where all of us - not just some - all of us were uncomfortable about going into a physical building, as I say, with people not wearing masks. And, of course, when you're exercising, you breathe in more heavily and things. So you'd be in a room with people not wearing masks, like, heavy breathing and things, and none of us were comfortable with that. Plus, although they're large exercise rooms, even 15 people in that, even if you space people out, they'd still be too close for my liking. So, basically, the people who would benefit mainly from the virtual programmes, would be people who have been on the shield list, people who are in the vulnerable group, which basically means everybody who is 70 and over. People who don't drive, because a lot of people, because most of us are unfit and with health conditions, we can't walk to the venue, because by the time you walk, they'd do an exercise and walk back, you wouldn't be able to do it. So if you don't drive, that means that basically you've got to get a bus or a taxi.

And, again, a lot of people aren't comfortable with going in taxis or buses as well. So there's an issue with actually getting to the venue. There's an issue with the venue itself, so, yes, it's basically people in the shield list, people in the vulnerable group and people who don't drive.

I: Okay. And you mentioned a little bit about why that would be. So, just to clarify, you'd said that the reason it would be the shield and the vulnerable and those who can't drive, it's because of those, getting to and from the venue, the spaces in the venue and how close everyone would be?

R: And not wearing masks.

I: Okay. We're going to take a step back and go back to your first session, I guess, exercise session that you did in face-to-face. And because you had that unique experience of having both face-to-face and virtual as well, in the face-to-face sessions, can you tell me how you felt before the very first session? So tell me a little bit about that very first exercise session that you had face-to-face, and what was it like and things like that?

R: No expectations whatsoever. I didn't know anyone who'd been on the programme, so I didn't ask anyone, because nobody I knew would be in there. When I went, I guess that my

only kind of, I don't know, concern was that perhaps people had been going there for years or something, and were quite fit. But as it turns out, when I actually went there, well, people have got health conditions and things, so we were all in the same boat. So no kind of anxieties or worries about initially going to the first class, and then when I got there then, I found that the classes kind of... I did feel as if I was definitely working out when I was actually doing the exercises, but it wasn't so much that I had difficulty breathing, or anything like that. And the instructor was good, in that he was always reminding people to drink some water, or if the exercises got too much, he would say, just sit down and kind of like move your feet or something for a little while. And then also he'd show two, sometimes three different versions of the same exercise, so people who were beginners could start, could do the exercise more gentler. And then people who had been going there for some time, would do the more difficult level of it. So I was comfortable with that, and I had an option of if I found an exercise too difficult, then I could do the more gentler version of it. Whereas if I found an exercise quite easy, I could do the harder version of it.

I: Did you receive any sort of encouragement or support from your exercise professional, your instructor during this?

R: Yes. He's very good. He's very encouraging, and he's - well, I guess it's his training, but he's very perceptive in that he's always kind of looking at people to see what they're doing. And if he can see somebody is struggling, then he'll say to... Or like me, say, if I was struggling with a certain exercise, he'd say to me, oh, try doing this or that, or whatever to try and accommodate the particular exercise for my circumstances and the same with other people as well. Yeah, he's very, very encouraging.

I: That's great to hear. Thank you. I know you mentioned a little bit earlier about when you initially had the face-to-face, and then you went to virtual. There was quite a big gap between the face-to-face and being offered the virtual, because of the lockdown. Approximately how many weeks was that? What was the timeframe between offering - for having the face-to-face being offered virtual?

R: Oh, gosh, I think it was a long time, actually. I think the face-to-face classes must have stopped around, what, about March, April time, maybe March time, last 2020. And then the online classes, they're this year, I think.

I: Okay.

R: Yeah. There was - oh, yeah, the reason why I was a bit late in joining the virtual classes, because I didn't have a laptop and I said, could I join? I've got a desktop, but I didn't have the camera and stuff working on it. And I said to him, is it possible for me to join the class and to just hear you or whatever, but not see you? And he spoke to his supervisor and she said no. So that was the delay in me - my sister actually managed to get this second hand laptop, which I'm speaking to on now. So as soon as I got the laptop, I got in touch with him and I started the class.

I: Okay. Can you talk me through your decision to continue with the virtual when it was offered, rather than waiting for it to be postponed to, or rather than postponing until the face-to-face began again?

R: Because I wanted to carry on with my exercise regime, because, well, I only went to one session face-to-face, so I didn't really kind of include that. And then there was this long gap then where they didn't have actually any classes, and then I didn't have the proper equipment and things to do the classes. So there was a long gap for me, and it was probably about, it was nearly a year, actually. And I thought in that year, I thought, oh, I'll do my own exercises and stuff. But, again, the type of person I am, I need a class to go to, and I think, oh, I've got a class now between 12 and one or something, and then I turn up for it. Whereas if I'm left to my own devices, it just goes out the window and I think, oh, I've got the housework to do, I've got emails to send, I've got this to do and the other to do and it just kind of falls by the wayside. So I need something structured for me personally. So, yeah, when I started back again, it was because of my original reason for joining, it is because I've got chronic health conditions. I wanted to get fit, and I wanted to at least help with my health conditions, so they didn't deteriorate even further.

I: Okay. And so when you were offered this virtual programme, what were you told about how it would be and what would it be... Sorry, when you were offered, what were you told about this new programme? Were you told what it was going to be like, or how it be delivered and how did you feel about that?

R: I was told that it would be through Microsoft Teams, and that... What else was I told? Oh, I was emailed a timetable of the classes and things of when they were on. And I was told that, basically, they would be exactly the same as the physical face-to-face classes, and that the instructor... Obviously, you can see me and I can see you, and it's the same with the class, so he can see what we're doing and I can see him. And when he's showing the exercises and things like that, then it's basically the same as the physical... Like for me, it's the same as the physical classes.

I: And so you mentioned a little bit about some of the sessions there, so what NERS-related activities did you get involved in? So you had the live sessions, or was it just live sessions or did you do some other things as well?

R: Well, I did the live sessions, and I normally do... Well, I do the strength and balance classes, and I do some of the circuits. About, I don't know, a month ago they started walking groups. I didn't join the walking groups, because, as I say, I'm not comfortable with going out. So I didn't join the walking group, so I've been doing the online classes. Yeah, that's it.

I: And so what were your experiences of taking part on the online classes, did you feel supported during the classes? Did you think they worked well? How did you feel when you were doing these exercise classes online?

R: The online classes, for me, are excellent because they meet my needs entirely. With me, infection rates, for me, are still too high. The number of hospitalisations for Covid is now rising again, so I'm not kind of confident. And my GP has already said to me, if I was to get

Covid, then it would probably be like fatal. So I'm very, very reluctant about going back to my kind of lifestyle pre-Covid, and probably will be for the rest of this year at least, because, again, I can see... Well, I envisage from September, October, when the cold weather comes again, the infection rates are going to go up again, and people are going to get like colds and flu and things like that. So and, of course, you can't tell the difference. So for at least the rest of this year, I'm going to be very, very cautious. So the online classes suits my needs entirely. For me, they're exactly the same as the face-to-face classes, but with the added bonus that I feel safe, and I'm not exposing myself to Covid, or potentially exposing myself to Covid.

I: And when you say they're exactly the same as face-to-face, virtually, what do you mean by that? Can you kind of explain a little bit how they're the same?

R: Well, we do exactly the same exercises that you would do if you were face-to-face. You've got the instructor, you've got your other people in the class that you can see. For me, they're exactly the same; there isn't any difference.

I: And do you feel that anything helped you keep motivated to do these sessions during this time?

R: Yes, as I said, when left to my own devices, I just don't do any exercises, and then having... The instructor sends around a timetable every week, and just saying what classes do you want next week, and then you email him back or telephone him and say, right, these are the classes I want to do. So, for me then, if I've got something in my diary, then I'll stick with it. So that's my motivation, and that it's kind of written in my diary that this is what I'm doing on that day, and so I turn up for it.

I: If there were no restrictions in place, what type of delivery programme would you choose for yourself, so it could be face-to-face only, remote only, a mixture of the two?

R: For me, personally, I would stick with 100 per cent online and I've done the face-to-face, and I've done the virtual and, for me, they're exactly the same. If Covid never existed and I had the choice of doing face-to-face or virtual, I would choose virtual. And the reason for that is because it's, especially in the UK, like we've got winter for nine months of the year, I don't... I can't drive, which means I've got to walk to the venue, or my buses are one every two hours, right? Very often, the bus does not coincide with my appointment time. During such times then, I would have to get a taxi. Taxis are expensive, because you've got to get a taxi there and you've got to get a taxi back. And if there's something big going on in Swansea University or something like that, you can't even get taxi. So, for me, going out in the cold weather, which affects my chest anyway, by the time I've walked to the venue, which takes me about nearly an hour to walk, I'm already... My chest is tight, and my throat is tight. I've got physical symptoms before I even start the class, and that's because of the weather as well.

So, for me, even if, say, Covid never existed, 100 per cent virtual, because I don't actually have to find my way to the venue or get to the venue, I can just be in the house or whatever and then just think, oh right, okay, my class is starting in 15 minutes, I'll put my laptop on and everything, and just go on and do it. And then when you've finished, there's no getting

back home and you're already here, and you can just put your feet up or do housework, whatever.

I: Okay. Thanks for that. Have you had any 16-week assessment? So how long have you been doing your virtual sessions for?

R: Virtual sessions, probably for - let's have a look, we're July, well, the end of July now, aren't we? I probably didn't start until about March time because, as I say, I didn't have a laptop or anything, so I wasn't allowed to join it.

I: So did you have any other sort of IT difficulties getting onto these online sessions, apart from your laptop?

R: No. I'd never used Microsoft Teams before the classes, so I was a bit nervous, first of all, about that. But I went on YouTube and I did a tutorial on it and I thought, well, okay, I'll try it. And then I got somebody that - one of my friends knew who knew how to do Teams. And so he sent me a link, and he chatted to me just to make... As kind of like a trial run kind of thing, to see if I could use it. And that was it then then, and it's pretty - well, I find it pretty straightforward. Once you do it like a couple of times it's - for me, it's all right.

I: Did you have any support from your instructor on doing this, or...?

R: No, I did that myself, basically.

I: Okay. So thanks for that, and we're going to move on to a little bit now about the relationships between you and some other people during the NERS programme. So we'd like to talk about how other people might have supported you on the programme. So can you tell me a little bit about - you touched on your instructor, and how he might have supported you. Is there anything else you wanted to add about maybe his support during your time on the NERS programme, and how that might have affected your engagement in the programme?

R: I found him good, and I've got no complaints about him. I think he's very good, he's - as I say, he's very perceptive in that he keeps an eye on what people are doing. And if he can see - even if people are carrying on with the exercise, if he can see they're struggling a bit, then he'll say to me or anyone else, he'll say, oh, why don't you try doing this, that or the other, or whatever. He always says, have a drink of water or something and, with me, I'm on inhalers and things, and he'll say, have you got your inhaler now near you, and things. Yeah, he's very good. As I say, I can't find fault with him at all. I think he's a very good instructor, and he comes across to me as very professional. He knows what he's doing. He's very, very helpful, very perceptive, I've got no complaints, yeah.

I: And when you say all of those things, and when he's very perceptive and he's very professional, how does that make you feel as a...? When you're doing the exercises, how does that make you feel, and what engagement does that...? Does that affect how you engage in the programme?

R: Yes, it does, because if you feel the instructor knows what he or she is doing, then you're more confident in doing the exercises. And because I actually went on a programme a couple of years ago, which was the pulmonary rehabilitation. And then they had - they did an hour of pulmonary rehabilitation. And after that, they did an hour of NERS exercise, but from a kind of pulmonary perspective. And I had a different instructor there, and they were both NERS, right? And the instructor I had before, I know is still with NERS, but I don't actually see her. Now, comparing these two instructors, they're like chalk and cheese. The one I've got now, as I say, is very, very helpful. The woman I had before on the pulmonary NERS one, she sat us down and we did a warm up with her for a couple of minutes, five minutes. And then we did - at the end, we did a cool down with her for a couple of minutes, five minutes. The rest of the time, she was chatting with... Chatting on the phone with her mate, and I was there, and we were there an hour, and the engagement we had with her was five minutes at the beginning of the class, five minutes at the end of the class and the rest of the time it was just like, oh, these are all the exercise equipment and everything, just kind of like work your way around, and that was it. She'd sit in the corner and be on the phone with her mate for the whole hour.

I: **Gosh!**

R: But that actually was appalling, like it was really, really bad. And I could see some people myself, because we all had respiratory disorders on that actual class. I could see some people really, really struggling and were going over what they really should have done. And she was too busy chatting on the phone, like she wasn't even looking at us.

I: **Gosh!**

R: And it was one time when one man, he was on oxygen therapy and he was like on the stationary bike, and he was going and I could see him, I thought, he's going far too fast, he's going well over and above his endurance level. And I was looking at him, and I was looking at her and she was like laughing and joking with her mates on the phone, and I thought something is going to happen to this guy. And, yeah, they had to call an ambulance for him.

I: **Oh, gosh! Gosh!**

R: So, yes, comparing these instructors, as I say, I've got no fault with him. But this other woman on the NERS pulmonary, it was actually appalling and I don't know why anyone didn't actually report her, actually. She was a very, very nice woman, and that she was very chatty and everything, but looking at it from a professional-only job perspective, appalling.

I: **Thanks for sharing that with me.**

R: Yeah. I hope my name isn't actually being attached to this now...

I: **No.**

R: ...because I don't want any bombs through my letterbox, or anything.

I: **No, no, your name will not be attached to anything, don't worry, it'll be all anonymous.**

R: Right.

I: **But that's great, so thanks for sharing that about your exercise professional, or your instructor. What about - I'm very mindful that we said about an hour, so we've got about five minutes left. I just wondered if you had time to go over a little bit, or do you have to sort of leave dead on three?**

R: No, I haven't got anything on.

I: **Okay, brilliant. So I'll try and not make it too much over time. What about any support from family or friends outside of the programme, did you have any support from them, and can you tell me about that, if you did?**

R: My family and friends, as I say, even my family and friends I've not allowed inside of my house. So I haven't actually had much, kind of like physical contact with them. And my family and friends, none of them know how to use Teams or Zoom, or anything like that, so I haven't actually seen them virtually. My sister, because I was told before by the Welsh government not to go out and they would give me priority shopping, delivery slots and things. But, and they were very good, but sometimes I just needed a pint of milk or bread or something, and I didn't want to spend £40 on online shopping, online delivery slot just to get my pint of milk. So my sister used to do shopping for me as well every week, or maybe twice a week, and she used to come to the door. I used to put my mask and my gloves, and my visor and everything on, and we used to have a chat then for five minutes. But she didn't hang around very long often, because sometimes it was winter and things, and it's cold, well, it's cold standing there. So I saw, well, my sister, maybe once or twice a week, but only for about five minutes. Then I've got my nephew, and he used to see me again on the door for about five minutes, when his busy social life allowed it.

The same with some friends who were going out and about, and sometimes if they were, I don't know, say, passing my house, then they would stop in, and just stop in the car. They would normally sit in the car and just shout out to me and say, how are you and things. But I used the telephone a lot to telephone my family and friends, and things.

I: **And were they supportive in your encouragement of going to the classes, or did they know about the NERS programme?**

R: Yeah, they did. Was it one of them, her husband did it a couple of years ago, but he only went a couple of times and he dropped out, and she said... Because I said I was starting this and she said, oh, her husband had done it a couple of years ago, but he had dropped out. And I said, why did he drop out and they said, well, basically, she said, she had forced him in to going because she thought he was unfit, but he didn't really want to go. And so after he went a couple of times, he basically said, don't force me into doing things that I don't want to do. So that was the only experience. None of my family have done it. My sister is quite active anyway, and she does, she likes, she goes horse riding and what else does she do? She goes to some exercise, or she does YouTube stuff. She's kind of a bit more disciplined than me. And when I said to them, they said, oh, that's good that you're doing some exercise and things. Some of my friends, I think the programme wouldn't be suitable for

them, because they're too advanced. But, yeah, they were all very supportive and nobody said, oh, why are you wasting your time doing that, or anything like that? They were all very supportive.

I: Sorry, continue.

R: None of them actually showed interest in actually joining, and that's because they're kind of split and either they're too advanced and they go to the gym or something like that, or basically, they don't want to exercise.

I: And so how important would you say the support was in getting you - in encouraging you to go and engaging in the programme?

R: It was self-motivation, for me.

I: Okay. And you said earlier on that you had a chat with some people online, on the online programmes and you said, in a sense, you made friends that you had organised, had coffee or anything afterwards. In what way would you say that these people maybe supported you during the exercise sessions, or was there any encouragement provided by other friends that you saw online?

R: Right. I think we all support each other, because we're all about the same level, because we're all in the same boat in that we've got... We may have different health conditions, but we've all got, or most of us have got health conditions, or unfit and/or unfit. So we all feel comfortable in that, as I say, there's nobody jumping around and trying to pressurise us into moving on to go at a more advanced level, we're kind of comfortable with. So we've all got that in common, in that we've got the health conditions and/or unfit. So that is a common ground anyway, but when we first log on, while we're waiting for the class to start, we might... We'll have a chat then, and we'll just say, oh, it's really hot today, or it's cold, or whatever. And then somebody will say, thank goodness I've got Netflix because I haven't left the house for a year and a half. Or then we'll talk about sometimes the exercises, like me, for example, when we're doing some exercises of standing on our toes, I can't do it because I'm like all over the place and things. And then like [name] and things will say, well, if that - you must hold on to the back of a chair, because I don't want you kind of falling over and things.

And then it's kind of like do half up on tip-toe, but if you get any pain, stop doing it. And then maybe somebody will say, oh, I had a hospital appointment this week or whatever, and the waiting room was kind of clear. Not like before when there was a thousand people crammed into the waiting room. Yeah, it's just general chit-chat and a chat about the class itself.

I: And how important was this sort of chit-chat and support during the time that you were engaging in the programme, or the virtual sessions?

R: It's very important for me, because, as I said before, for me, it helps to combat the social isolation. If you're maybe living with other people or another person, then at least you've got them to chat to and things, and it's just like you hate them, and then it's a bit of a thorn

in your side. But if you're living with someone, at least you've got somebody around and you have a chat to them and stuff like that. But a lot of us on the programme are living alone, so, for us, seeing people and having a chat to them and then doing the class, and having a bit of a chat afterwards and stuff like that. And getting to know each other on the virtually, that was a huge bonus. I'm putting my jacket on, I'm cold, actually.

I: Yeah, go ahead.

R: It's August tomorrow, well, a day after, isn't it?

I: Mm. Yeah. So you said it helped combat your social isolation, can you explain to me a little bit more about how exactly that was? I know you said that you've got a bit more conversation with some people, but I wondered if there was anything else that you could say to me about how these virtual programmes help with your social isolation?

R: I think I've covered some of it, because being on the shield group, I haven't gone out for a year, a year and a half. Nobody has been in my house. I don't have any friends or family who know how to do things virtually, and they don't stop long at the front door. So I've had a social deficit since Covid started, and because I haven't got any family living with me or friends, whatever, then just the actual seeing people and things. I think since the beginning of Covid, the virtual programme, for me, has been a bit of a life saver because it's got me into a kind of schedule in that I do my classes. So there's a kind of routine to my day, rather than... I read about some people who basically sat all day and watched Netflix, or did hardly anything. But at least now with these classes in my timetable, in my diary, then I've got a structure to my day. It's helped me get a lot fitter than what I was. It's helping me with my breathing and my health conditions. My osteoarthritis, I'm not so kind of like stiff now and things, although I still do get stiff. So, basically, overall health, like physical health, mental health, it's been a lifesaver for me.

I: And you said a little bit about your physical health for mental health, so have you found that the programme benefited your wellbeing and mental health? Did you have any concerns about maybe your mental health before you started the programme [over speaking 1:05:13] has this programme helped it?

R: It has helped a lot. I think - well, from what I read, poor mental health has been on the increase since Covid hit, but I think exercise and interacting with people goes a long way into helping alleviate that. And also, if you're physically moving, that actually helps the cortisol go down and things. So you're feeling less stressed, and then the endorphins and things makes you feel no good, and what have you. So, yes, I think overall health, physical and mental.

I: Okay. Thank you. And we're going to talk a little bit about, overall, how you felt in the programme, and do you think you've developed an enjoyment for exercises during the programme?

R: Yes. If the virtual pro-...I wouldn't go to face-to-face until at least next year, and then I would, it would be dependent upon what the situation is at that time. If the virtual classes

were to actually stop for me, personally, that would be devastating, because I know from past experience that I set out with good intentions and I think, right, I'll do yoga one day, I'll do an exercise class the next day. There's loads of things on YouTube, but I just don't do them, unless something is in my diary. I could put YouTube class or whatever in my diary, but then my mind then is like, well, I can do that later on. There's no - I don't have to be physically present at a certain time to do the class, or whatever. So I'll do that later, and then later becomes tomorrow, and then tomorrow becomes the day after and I just don't do it. I don't know - I think, well, at the present time, I think I would revert back to that, because there are some classes, like my sister or my friend recommends to me on YouTube. I think there's one called Yoga with Adrienne, and they said they've got like a beginners thing, and they're quite short, and they said they're really good. And I thought, oh, yeah, I'll try them and they've been telling me this now since probably last year. And do you know how many of those classes I've done?

I: How many?

R: None. So you see, I need a kind of structure and I need somebody live, to think, well, I've got to be there, I've got to there, the class is starting in ten minutes or whatever. Whereas left to my own devices I'm like, oh, yeah, I'll do it later, I'll do it tomorrow, I'll do... And just don't do it. That's my own fault, and I take full responsibility for that. But I think a lot of people need a structured class to get motivated, and to actually do the class.

I: Okay. Yeah. Thank you. And do you think that you'll continue doing exercise after the programme?

R: Oh, after the programme? I don't know. In my head I'd say yes, but when it comes down to it, whether I have the motivation or not, I don't know.

I: Okay. And what sorts of things would help you with motivation?

R: Having a structured class, actually, and I need a class to go to. Yes, I need a class to go to and, as I say, for at least the next year, I'm not going to any physical... Like even outside of NERS, I wouldn't go to any physical classes just because of my health conditions, and I don't feel confident about going there. So, yeah, it would be just trying to get myself motivated to actually carry on with doing the exercise. I know it's good for me, there are no disadvantages for me doing an exercise class. In my head, I know it's good for me and it makes me feel better about myself, it makes me move more easily, it makes me breathe more easily, it helps me sleep more easily, there's all benefit. And yet I just must be idle or something because, say, when I'm left to my own devices, I just think, oh, well, I'll do it later because now I want to vacuum the carpet. Now I'll make dinner. Now I'll do something else, or now my TV programme is on. And I just think of everything to do except for exercising, but that's something that I've got to try and work out myself.

I: Okay, thanks for that. And if - what changes would you like to see for the NERS programme in the future, particularly in terms of how it was delivered?

R: I would say that - well, thinking in my own, from my own perspective and from the people in the classes that I do, 100 per cent all of us want to stay virtually. But there may be people outside the classes who actually need the physical face-to-face, and are confident about going to the classes. Some people don't even believe Covid exists, for a start, so they go out and about as normal and just do whatever they want. So I would imagine that you've got a percentage of people who want to stay virtually, and a percentage of people who want to do it physically. So I would say, if I was an organiser of NERS, then I would say to do it 50/50 and then over a certain period of time, maybe even six months say, right, these are the... Oh no, you can't do stats for that, because on the virtually you're only allowed, I think it's eight participants.

I: **Okay.**

R: So you can't see what the volume is virtually, and the volume is physically because the numbers are going to be limited, I would imagine for the rest of the year, both virtually and physically, so you can't see which is more popular. But I think there is a need for both physical class and virtual classes, for I would say at least the next year, because you've got the winter coming up and everything. So, yes, I would - I think it's a good idea to have both, but since last week the virtual has taken a back seat to the physical. And what I actually suggested to my instructor about two weeks ago, because there are other NERS instructors, but we don't have any interaction with them, we just have interaction with the one instructor. So I said to my instructor, are there any of the other instructors doing virtual classes and he said, yes, they're all doing virtual classes, except for one instructor. I don't know what that other one instructor is actually doing, but there we are. But so he said there was, I don't know, about three, maybe four of them and I think some of them work-part time, and some of them work full-time.

And I said, are they doing virtual classes and he said, yes, they're all doing virtual classes, except for this one person and one instructor. And I said, well, for the online classes, would it not be possible to speak to your colleagues and do a virtual timetable for the week, but with all the instructors who do virtual classes? And I said in that way, it would give the participants more choice of class, because I'm sure some of your colleagues, like we would more be doing it early in the morning, I'm sure some of them would be more spread out over the day, which would then be more useful for the participants. Because I know a lot of people on my classes, they've kind of gone, oh, my God, these new timings are way too early for us, so if it was like instructor one, ten o'clock on a Monday, virtually. And different instructor two, Monday, two o'clock, a virtual class. Instructor three, Tuesday morning virtual class. Instructor four, Tuesday afternoon virtual class. And instead of sticking with the one instructor, because all the instructors, as far as I can see, are all trained to help people... Oh, my God, it's raining heavily! All the instructors, as far as I can see, are professionally trained, they're used to... They're dealing with people with physical health conditions, or who are unfit, whatever, so they've all got very good training.

So it doesn't matter which instructor you kind of go with, because they've all got very good training, apart from that woman that I went with some years back [unclear 1:16:40] go to her classes. I wouldn't know what she would do virtually, stay on the phone and just...

Anyway, so he said that he would have a word with his colleagues to see if kind of an amalgamated online timetable would be better, because at the moment, the virtual is taking a backseat to the physical. All the kind of attention is going on the physical, and they're getting all the best slots. And we have got around the edges, early in the mornings, which for people with long-term health conditions is not, is good, but it's not fabulous, because we've all got sleep difficulties. And then, say, like last week now, when it first started, we're all there at 9.30 in the morning, kind of going [unclear 1:17:48] like kind of Sellotape my eyes open kind of thing. And then your body is stiff as well, because you're tired. So I don't know whether an amalgamated instructor timetable will come off or not, it's a suggestion I did actually put to him, but it's up to him after he talks with his colleagues whether it comes off or not.

I: Okay. Thanks for that. We're going to move on a little bit now, and we'd like to understand if there are any costs that the service user - you, as a service user - has to pay to participate in the NERS programme. So you - correct me if I'm wrong - but you had... How many weeks of the NERS exercise sessions have you had in total? So this could include face-to-face and virtually, do you think? How many weeks of the NERS programme?

R: Well, one face-to-face.

I: Yeah.

R: Virtually; I started in, I think it was around March time, April, May, June, July. So that's four months, one, maybe two classes a week, so...

I: How many weeks do you think that is, sorry?

R: Oh, how many weeks? Well, what happened is - was it last month? I think it was last month, the instructor said that we had to go back to the GP to get a new referral, because there'd been such a long gap where there weren't any face-to-face classes, and there was a long gap in the virtual classes as well. So we're all now starting from basically scratch now.

I: Okay. So when did that start?

R: Well, he's going through the process now, actually, for about the last month.

I: Okay. Apart - so including the last month, where you had to get the new referral, and how many months, how many weeks would you say you've had in total of exercise sessions?

R: Well, only about three or four.

I: And then how many weeks before the GP referral?

R: Before that, March, April, May, June, so about 12 weeks.

I: Twelve plus. So around about 15 weeks, if you included everything?

R: Around there, yeah.

I: Okay. And this was both face-to-face and virtual, and you had one week of face-to-face?

R: And the rest virtual.

I: And you had one session of the face-to-face as well, didn't you?

R: Yes.

I: And then you had about - and how many... In a typical week, when you were doing the virtual delivery, how many sessions were you attending, or are you attending a week?

R: Right. Anything from one to three.

I: Okay.

R: But like this week, because the classes have been on at my crack of dawn, even though they may be normal for instructors, I haven't attended any.

I: Okay.

R: Because the first time - well, there's a couple of times when I actually got up, and was moving around and set the whole thing up. And I just felt very nauseous, because of lack of sleep and everything, so I didn't do them.

I: Okay. What did they pay - sorry, what did you pay for the face-to-face sessions?

R: Two pound per class.

I: And did you pay anything for the virtual programmes?

R: Right. What I was told was that the virtual programmes were free for the current time, but the supervisor was on leave for a couple of weeks at the present time. And when she got back, she was going to look into charging people, and trying to install some kind of, I don't know, credit card or debit card system, but she would look at that when she got back from leave.

I: And would you be willing to pay for these virtual sessions, and, if so, how much do you think?

R: With me, money is very, very tight. I think a lot of us on the programme don't actually work, because of our health conditions and things, so money is very tight. I think that even if you did two classes a week, that's two, four... Well, say, there was four weeks in a month, that if you did it twice a week, that's what, £16 a month. And it'll probably be even more, because there's normally four or five weeks in a month, isn't there? Yeah, I would probably have to amend the classes, based on what I think I could afford.

I: Okay. Thanks for that. What was your main form of travel to get to face-to-face sessions, when you did that one?

R: I actually walked there.

I: Okay. And did you have to buy any extra clothing, or anything like that for the NERS sessions?

R: No. I got some tracksuit bottoms, and stuff like that and T-shirts. I just wore them.

I: And you didn't have to buy them for the sessions, you already had it?

R: Yeah, I already had them.

I: And what about any footwear or trainers, or any equipment that you had to buy?

R: I did buy equipment.

I: Oh sorry, I can't really hear you there.

R: I bought these, so the bands. I bought them. I bought this, the weights, yeah.

I: So how much did you spend on that equipment?

R: Oh, not very much, yeah. I had a look on Amazon and I looked in the sale and things, and I just bought the stuff that was in the sale.

I: How much do you think you would have paid, roughly?

R: Less than £10.

I: Yeah. Okay. And then so you had to get that laptop to be able to take part in the virtual sessions?

R: Yes.

I: So how much did you spend on that laptop, because you said it was second-hand, roughly?

R: My sister got it for me and it was - it's second-hand, and I was there for a long time. She - well, how it came about, she actually, she knew that I'd gone to the face-to-face NERS class. And then I said to her, oh, they're starting up the classes again virtually. And she said, oh, are you going to rejoin them, and I said yes. And then when I got in touch with my instructor and I asked to join, he said that I couldn't because I didn't have a camera, and because he couldn't see me there was like, I don't know, safety elements with or something, in case I fell over or whatever. So then it went on for a couple of weeks and my sister said to me, how are you finding your virtual classes, are you managing them all right? And I said, oh, why don't you get one, and I said, because I haven't got any money to get one. And so not - shortly afterwards, a couple of days, she called me up and she said she knew somebody who was selling a second-hand laptop cheap, and she said did I want it. And I said, well, I can't even afford a second-hand at the present time, so I said. So what she said was that she would buy it for me, and then when I had a bit of money, I could start paying her off in instalments. Well, I haven't started paying her off yet, because I haven't had no money.

I: Okay.

R: So I don't even know how much it is, actually. She just said to me, to let her know when I did have some money and when I wanted to start paying it off.

I: **Okay. No worries. I will just note that down. And what's the main way that you connect virtually, so is it through wi-fi, or is it through 4G, or signal?**

R: Wi-fi.

I: **Yeah. And how much, roughly, do you pay for wi-fi a month?**

R: I've got a package, it includes my wi-fi, television, telephone. Yeah, so it's a package bundle, and I pay for that, it's about £80 a month. I don't know how much the wi-fi would cost individually, because it's a whole package.

I: **Okay. No problem. Right, so those are all of my questions...**

R: Oh, actually, it's about £70 a month, because I pay £10 a month for my Netflix, so it's about £70 a month.

I: **Okay. Perfect! Well, those are all of my questions for you today, but I just wanted to know if there's anything else you would like to add, or anything else you were expecting me to ask, really, in this interview today?**

R: No, there's nothing I would raise. As I say, the - again, I didn't have any expectations of this interview, I just thought, well, whatever questions you ask, I'll answer. I think that the instructor that I've got, as I say, I can't find fault with him. I can't say, oh, he needs improvements in this, that or the other. He's very good, even to reminding us to drink water and to make sure our medication is close to hand, in case we need it. Modifying exercises for individuals, going through different levels of the same exercise. My only concern with the virtual, is that it's being overshadowed by the face-to-face classes, only since last week. And I wouldn't like that to happen, because what may happen is that because it's too early for most of us virtually, people like me, this week, have missed classes because it's too early. And then the attendance will drop off, and then they may say, oh, there's no kind of need for it because there's not many people attending. Well, the reason the people are not attending is because the classes are not held at suitable times, or spread out throughout the day.

I also think that I haven't met any of the other instructors, so I can't comment on them, apart from the one lady, like some years back now. But there may be different standards in different instructors, well, I know from the two that I do know they're like chalk and cheese, and they're very, very different standards. I think if somebody - if I was attending... Well, when I did attend the class, the only reason I stuck with the pulmonary rehab, was because the first hour was talks, lectures, how to use your inhaler, dietary and I found that very, very helpful, but that was with different people. Excuse me. But for the exercise, I actually wouldn't have continued with that. The only reason I continued with that exercise, is because I had the first [unclear 1:33:02] lecturer, and then basically, I was there.

I: **Okay. Well, thank you for sharing all of that with me, and what I'm going to do now is stop the recording.**

R: Which is just as well, because I'm coughing now.

End of Transcription