

Participant M11

I: Okay. So I'm interested to know your experiences of being referred to the NERS programme, in order to understand what's working well, and also how it could be improved. So could you just talk me through that? So right from the start about how felt about the programme and what happened from there?

M11: Right. The programme was explained to me when I was on a cardiac rehabilitation course, after I'd had a bypass operation. It was initially a nurse, or I think it was a nurse spoke to me and recommended me to my nearest fitness centre, or it was a gym. After a couple of weeks, the gym got in touch with me and I went down there for an initial meeting and they told me, and they put me, they started me on the programme then of a number of weeks, in which I'd be monitored through exercise; and this was all in the latter part of 2019. That's right, it took me up until Christmas. 2019, was the initial programme where I started with circuit classes and using gym equipment. And then proceeded then to when I finished the initial programme, I started using the gym by myself, but they did keep in touch with me for a few weeks later. So that was my experience of it.

I: And did you understand why you were being referred to this programme?

M11: Yes. Well, obviously, I'd mentioned that I was worried about my health and my condition, and my wellbeing. And it was suggested to me that I should - recommended to me that I should do exercise, but do exercise in a way that was safe for me to do.

I: Did you have any expectations at all?

M11: Not as such, I just - well, my expectations were is that they would educate me better in how to live a healthier lifestyle through exercise.

I: What interested you about this programme, like what appealed to you?

M11: What appealed to me was actually getting out and about, and being healthier and helping, using exercise to help me lose weight as well, so yeah.

I: And was there anything you weren't sure about the programme, that wasn't really addressed fully?

M11: No, it was all explained to me on the cardiac rehabilitation course, and when I went down for an induction at the local gym.

I: And how supportive was the person who referred you?

M11: Oh, they were very good, they were very supportive. Yes, they were.

I: And did your friends or family know about this, and how supportive were they?

M11: Yes. Yes. My immediate family knew about it, and they encouraged me to do it as well, because I wanted to do it as well.

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

M11: It's a good experience. For me, I got all the support I needed and perhaps some people might need a bit more to have their hand held a bit more, as I would say. But, for me, every question I asked and every doubt I had was addressed, and I felt although they asked... Although they wanted me to improve, I wasn't pushed into doing things that I wasn't comfortable with, because I remember they were always asking me, how do you feel about doing this exercise? How do you feel about doing that exercise? And they also explained what part of the exercise, what part of me it was helping and assisting with various exercises, where to stretch and would help me relax, and so on and so forth.

I: So I'm happy you had a pleasant experience, and got signed up. Now, I would like to know a little bit more about the first meeting that you had with your exercise professional. So, again, we want to understand what is working well here, but also how could it be improved? So could you just talk me through this first meeting?

M11: Okay. The first meeting at the gym, was with a lady from the council called [name], and she explained the course. She explained it thoroughly, and explained what they would do. I was given the option of using the gymnasium, or doing circuit classes. She also said I could have had a tour of the gym, and she could have showed me how things worked, and how things were arranged. Now, if there is one improvement, that could have been explained to me when they invited me to the meeting, because I was under the impression it was just a short ten-, 15-minute meeting and then I'd start again, and they'd give me a date to start. If they'd actually asked, this meeting would include me walking around and looking at the facilities, I think that would be a slight improvement. Because, as it happened, I didn't have the time to do it, and had I known I'd have made the time to do it, okay?

I: Yes, I understand. And what were your thoughts ahead of this first consultation as well? Did you have any concerns?

M11: No, no. To be honest, I did have a heart attack 15 years ago and I was put on a similar course. So I knew what to expect when I went to a gym, so I wasn't that concerned, really. But they got in touch with me by - first I'd had an email, and I'd had a letter, and I'd had a phone call with them. So, really, I was - I had no concerns, as such, it was just to turn up and chat with somebody.

I: Okay, so you just mentioned that you had an email, and you had a phone call with your exercise professional. Was that preferred to have an in-person contact with them?

M11: I don't mind [unclear 09:01]. Probably, these days, because I'm the sort of person that checks their emails regularly, and I don't check my texts regularly. So perhaps, for me, an email, but maybe for other people another way of messaging. But I enjoyed speaking to her, because she was very nice and a very pleasant person.

I: And did this influence how you felt ahead of this meeting, if [over speaking 09:29]?

M11: Yes, I was - I was relaxed about meeting her, because it was a friendly, welcoming voice that I'd spoken to. And, yes, not replying to an impersonal email or text message, yes, I would probably say is better, having spoken to [name], I believe her name was.

I: You mentioned that speaking with your exercise professional at the start, they were very friendly and helped you to... Or this helped to put you at ease right ahead of the first meeting?

M11: Yes. Yes, it did.

I: Okay. And did they discuss with you as well, of what to expect from the programme?

M11: Yes, they told me they - obviously, they prepare, and they gave me some little booklets. And when I actually started the gym, they gave me the list of exercises that they'd like me to do, and where they'd like me to start off and see how I could improve over the next couple of weeks, before I finished the course. So that was good, and they helped me to, first of all, get my confidence back after having the operation, and then to try to tell me I won't make myself ill if I start working out.

I: Okay, so, overall, how would you sum up your experience of this meeting? Is there anything that could be improved? So you mentioned that perhaps they would then inform you beforehand of what... A structure of the meeting would entail, just showing you around, so you would accommodated more time for that?

M11: Yes.

I: Is there anything else?

M11: No, everything else was fine. I was welcomed there, and I didn't have to hang around. I was given some information, so I think there were three of us there at the time. I think I was the second person arriving, so I was given something to read, as I recall, while [name] greeted the last person to arrive. So, no, I have no problems with that, and the only thing I would have liked to have... If I'd have known to have more time, I could have stayed there and looked around the facilities.

I: And what were you hoping to get out of this programme, at this point, so after the first meeting, and what were you hoping to get out of it?

M11: Well, get my confidence back. Being able - because after having a heart bypass, I was worried whether I'd be able to do any exercise, or what kind of life I could live. And they assured me, they said we'll get you back to where you were, so I was quite positive afterwards.

I: Perfect. And were you hoping to perhaps maybe make some friends on the course as well?

M11: Yes, we did the circuits class. Yes. And she said - she explained that that was a very social, friendly sort of class. Yes, so it was open to meet people, who were probably in the same situation as me.

I: Just to summarise, so you were hoping to obviously have improved health, as a result of attending, and to improve your confidence as well, in order to develop some friendships and meaningful friendships with people, who have a similar experience to you?

M11: Well, more acquaintances for me? But, yes, it would be nice to meet people.

I: Perfect. Thank you very much. So now we want to understand - so you first had some initial face-to-face exercises, and then when the pandemic hit, so you chose to postpone your involvement until the sessions were face-to-face again, one of the ten sessions online. Is that correct?

M11: I didn't have any sessions online.

I: Yes, you chose to postpone until the face-to-face were available again?

M11: Yes. Yes.

I: Yeah, okay. I would like to first ask you about your experience of just initial face-to-face sessions. So, again, we want to understand what is working well, and what's working less well. But I will then move on to asking you about your decision to postpone, if that's okay?

M11: Right. When you refer to the face-to-face, you refer to me at the gym with my instructor? Yes, okay.

I: Yes. Yeah, sorry, I should have clarified earlier on.

M11: No, no, that's all right. That's all right.

I: So could you tell me, so now I'm going to be talking about the face-to-face sessions, so that was at the gym face-to-face sessions.

M11: Okay. Well, the course - yes, it was two days a week, and there were two separate teachers. I did the circuit class with one lady called [name] and that was good, because on my first one she more or less... Although there was a class of 20 of us, she did give me a bit more attention, because I was the new boy, so that was good. And when I did the gym sessions, I would be shown each machine. She didn't want me going on the machines without speaking to me first, so she put me on each machine, or each piece of equipment or apparatus. I'd work on that, and then she'd see what was good for me, and what was not so good for me. And then she'd work out - she'd customised my own programme for me then. And that was pretty - for the first couple of sessions, they were very attentive to me with that. Afterwards, I was quite happy to go on my own with the instru-...with the programme that I'd been given. But, obviously, if I wanted to try something new, I'd have that explained to me as well. So it was a very positive experience.

If there was anything - I don't know if there's set number of people for each person to supervise, because I do... On very few occasions, there seemed to be quite a lot of people in the class or in the gym session, and some people were a bit more needy than others. So they would dominate the time of the instructor for a long time, and if I wanted something that I felt I'd have to just stand around and wait, because I wanted to use a new machine. I

don't know what the solution is to that, but maybe smaller numbers in sessions, perhaps, I don't know.

I: That's useful, yeah, useful information. So how did you fill as well before your first session? So how did you feel?

M11: Nervous again, because I hadn't exercised for over a year, because I'd been feeling ill, and I had an operation. And I really didn't know how it was going to go, but I was started... I was started off doing the cardiac exercises, and I was put onto the walking machine, the treadmill, but I started off very slowly. I started off no better than walking pace, and just built me up, built me up. And after a while, I started to get my confidence back. I knew how far I could go, or how far they recommended I could go, so I did that, and I did improve over the weeks.

I: Yeah. Did you receive any encouragement or support from your exercise professional, that attended by session?

M11: Oh yes, yes, she was very good, because she'd go around to each person every so often, 'How are you doing?' she'd ask, and do you want to slow it down a little bit sometimes, or say, or she'd say, you don't need to work so hard, or just... Yeah, she was very good, really, or she'd say, do you want to try a different exercise, or something like that? So, yeah, they were very good, they were very good. Perhaps they didn't have as much time as they wanted to, because of the number of people on the course.

I: Right. That's possible. And how useful, or how suitable did you feel that the sessions were for you?

M11: They were good in getting me back to - because I'm back at work full-time now. So, yeah, well, with me, it's just a matter of confidence to know that I can do these exercises without making myself ill, and that was a good thing. It was a confidence thing, mainly, yeah.

I: You've mentioned before that you did enjoy the sessions, so what did you like the most, or what did you not like at all?

M11: [Unclear 18:17] the most? I - the cardiac, the weights, I don't like. I don't like lifting weights, but I did like the cardiac exercises, because you could... Because there was three separate machines which you could use, so you wouldn't get too bored with them. So, yeah, that was it, really, and the atmosphere there at the gym was quite nice.

I: Yes. So it's nice when you work with other people as well, because it encourages you, doesn't it?

M11: Yes. Because you're seeing the same people, and you always ask how are you doing today, and, yes, I've done this, I've done that, I'm getting better, I'm getting stronger. Yeah, so I enjoyed chatting with people, or just saying hello. It was just nice to get out.

I: [Unclear 19:07]. You've already mentioned some benefits from attending. So you mentioned about your confidence improvement as well, so was there any other things

that you noticed? Perhaps maybe you were becoming more fitter and physically your stamina increased, were there any other benefits?

M11: Yes. Yes, I think I was happier, definitely. Definitely it had a sense on my wellbeing. Yeah, I was getting fitter, and I was starting to lose weight as well, combined with my diet. So those were the benefits, is that I was feeling better in myself, I was more confident. And, obviously, I was healthier, which enabled me to do other things outside the gym. I like to go for long walks, or mountain walk, yeah, hillwalking, I should say, and things like that, and I realised now I can do it.

I: Exactly [unclear 20:05] benefit. And you mentioned that you attended [?both 20:08] sessions in the week, did you experience any challenges to attend on them at all?

M11: Not for me. I mean, the only challenge I got was getting up in the morning, in the middle of winter and icy roads. But, no, my work shifts suited it perfectly, because I was working. I'd just started back to work in the afternoon, but sessions were arranged in the mornings. But, consequently, if I worked mornings, I think they also offered evening sessions as well. So there was no problems with getting to the sessions, and, as they told me in cardiac rehab, it's the case of you should really make time for things that will improve my health, so and that's what I did.

I: All right. That's really admirable. So was it just a continuation in improving your health that motivated you to be attending on a regular basis? Was it because you had made such an improvement, you wanted to continue that?

M11: Right. Yes, there is a feel-good factor about it. When you come out of the gym, I mean, you do feel, I do feel good about myself after I've had a good session in the gym. But also, yeah, my health was on my mind because of my heart condition, and I have to try and stay as healthy as I can. So, yeah, that's a driver as well, because leading up to my operation, I was... There wasn't much I could do, and I couldn't lift much, I couldn't walk very far and I don't want to go back to that place, if I can help it.

I: Yeah, definitely. Overall, how would you sum up your experience on these face-to-face sessions? Was there anything at all that could be improved? And besides, you mentioned about your exercise professional spending more time with some people who had more needs?

M11: Yeah, that's it, I mean, I suppose that's for the - my supervisor or instructor, and it's something they have to identify. I think it was me and another chap on the course, and we were quite happy to be left to our own devices, and once we knew what we could do, we were quite happy. Well, also I know there were a few people who perhaps they were lonely, I don't know, but they liked a bit more attention. I don't know, you can't really quantify that, you can't order somebody to spend 15 minutes with him, 15 minutes with her, 20 minutes with her. But sometimes perhaps the size of the classes, there could be a certain limit to them so that everybody can get the same amount of attention they need. Apart from that, it's a positive experience and I would recommend it to everyone.

I: And I'm glad [unclear 23:10] positive experience for you, yeah. So approximately, how many weeks of face-to-face sessions did you have before the first lockdown, do you remember?

M11: Well, I finished the course at, I think it was eight or ten weeks. So I'd finished that before Christmas, so 2019, so there was no lockdown. But I continued going to the gym roughly around the same time, and I would occasionally see the instructor, who I wasn't really under the scheme then, but she would say hello, and how are you doing and such and such. And she'd ask me about my general health, and she would help me if I wanted to try another exercise or something, actually. She would either help me, or she would tell the gym employee that I needed assistance. So, yeah, so I still had a limited voluntary sort of contact with the instructors, but the course ended before lockdown.

I: Yes. And you decided to postpone, rather than doing virtual, because you preferred that face-to-face contact, so you decided to postpone the sessions?

M11: Yes. Yes.

I: Yes, can you talk me through that, and why you decided to postpone?

M11: She did - well, at the time, I didn't have Zoom anyway on my computer, or anything like that. Now, I believe when the first lockdown came, I was doing other exercises, and I could go out walking instead. So I didn't really need to go to the gym, although I was missing it. So I thought, well, I don't need to do face-to-face online with them. But I did have some back and forth emails with them, because they were asking... Because I think, for a bit, they did ask me how I was doing and they did recommend me some YouTube videos, because I was doing Tai Chi classes and I did miss the Tai Chi. I really missed the Tai Chi, so I was recommended some Tai Chi videos that I could do in my own time. But, yeah, but apart from that, I'd rather have face-to-face than actual online meetings, yeah.

I: What were you told about how the new programme would be like, and how it would be delivered, and how did you feel about this? The virtual programme, were you [over speaking 25:51]?

M11: The virtual programme, I didn't ask too much about it, to be honest, because when lockdown came, I was more or less going to the gym on my own then. So I wasn't really under the programme then, so probably people on the programme probably needed their help a bit more than me.

I: Okay. What made you do - for the face-to-face sessions, and why do you so much prefer the face-to-face sessions, is it because you get to get out of the house, you get to make friends in it?

M11: Yeah, I just like talking to people face-to-face, and the Zoom thing is very handy, I agree, but it's good for long distance, I think, and not for a local thing. I'd rather go down and talk to somebody face-to-face, and there's no ambiguity then when you're talking to somebody

face-to-face. So that's right for - although I do recognise that in these times, virtual meetings like this are better than nothing.

I: Yes. And do you think that face-to-face is more, as in physical, is more appropriate for exercises?

M11: Yes. But I know that the next generation after - because I'm not that tech savvy and the people on my course were of an older generation, and they didn't grow up with smartphones. But, yeah, I would say that the next generation coming through are going to be very au fait with smartphones and technology, and they would probably embrace more virtual meetings like this. For example, I think there's the Peloton thing that goes on, isn't there, and they're pushing people to use that. So I think this has its place and it'll reach to people who just can't get out, or perhaps some of the people that are a bit nervous of going out as well. So, yeah, I can see the benefits of this, and it just wasn't for me because perhaps I'm a bit old-fashioned and I like to go out and see people.

I: And what do you see as the downside? So what would you say are the negatives of virtual, or home exercises?

M11: Well, the virtual one, I suppose it would be a bad wi-fi connection. You are limited to your wi-fi connection, depending where you are in the country; I'm not so bad here in South Wales. And also it's strange, because if you've actually met somebody in the flesh, it's easier to talk to them, engage them than talking to them online, it just is. But if you've never had that experience, I don't think that's a big issue for virtual meetings like this. No, it's - I think it can become the new norm, virtual meetings, because people probably won't miss the face-to-face ones, and you will get to meet more people. But, then again, I don't know because I'm not relatively experienced with Zoom meetings, how the people who want a bit more time, than others. Like I said, I don't want much time with somebody, but if you had a meeting... And I would assume there - and I don't know how many you can have in a Zoom meeting, is it ten, 12 or...?

I: I think so.

M11: Something like that, but eight of us might be fine with what's being told to us, but one person might need a little bit more information. So I don't know how that would work, because perhaps it is a solution to it, but I don't know it. No, how could virtual be improved? I don't know, because I really don't have the experience with the virtual technology, as such, as I say, I'm old-fashioned and I'm not too clever with the computers myself.

I: I think regarding Zoom, I think you can have - it depends on what [unclear 30:12], because of the different...

M11: Yeah.

I: ...pay for different packages, and it depends on your package. I think you can have up to like 50, 100 and more, depending on what you pay for.

M11: Well, I think that would be quite hard to do a session, a fitness session with about 50 people. One thing is, you could - well, you could also do your stretches and exercises that you don't need any equipment for. But if it comes to something like if she says, right, if you can just pick up your dumbbells, and only 20 people have actually got dumbbells in the house, it falls back then. So I think the Zoom meetings would be good for explaining to people how to do stretches, have to do exercises without any equipment, which you can do, and generally for confidence and wellbeing checks. But I think with the latter two, you probably need more one-to-one work with that sort of thing.

I: Right. So you think like online virtual exercises are more appropriate for less strenuous activity, to something that wouldn't require too much effort?

M11: Yes, effort and, of course, the equipment isn't there, so for physiotherapy exercising, and it could be. But, then again, no, I think just for stretching, really. But when somebody is face-to-face with you, they can see if you're not doing it properly. Whereas if you've got 50 different screens here, and you've got to check every single time, that could be difficult and someone could put their shoulder out, or something like that. So I think that there's a case for the Zoom meeting to be limited to a very small group, really, so that more people can do it. I'll still look into it anyway, yeah.

I: And as you've been about scrutiny, because online, on virtually, everybody will have their webcams on, so it's like many people can see you at once. Whereas if it's a physical face-to-face, not many people can see, so do you feel as though that would also maybe put you off, because everybody can see what you're doing?

M11: Yeah, or you can see the state of my house, you mean? Yeah, it doesn't put me off, but it would probably put my mother off. But, yes, but each person is different, I suppose, with the webcam. I'm not too bothered, as long as there isn't anything offensive behind me, and I'm dressed. So, yeah, it all depends on the person, really. I mean, maybe that's something that could be explained to them, if you go on a webcam, please make sure that you're dressed appropriately, and you haven't got any rude posters or something behind you on the wall, or something like that, I suppose. It's a whole new - it's a whole new something to look at, isn't it? It's not just the fact of doing exercises, and looking after people, you don't want to offend anybody, do you...

I: Exactly.

M11: ...which is something else, yeah.

I: Exactly. And could you see any benefits to virtual? So I know obviously you prefer face-to-face, but do you think virtual has its place?

M11: Yes, absolutely. It can reach out to more people. Once again, it would probably depend on, I suppose, funding and people available at the other end of the line. Because in the gym, the one woman was looking after about 12 people at the same time. On Zoom, she could probably do the same in one session, or she could look after 12 people in the space of an hour, or two hours. The times are more flexible, I mean, she had to be at the gym for a

certain amount of time and then she'd be off to the next gym, and then she'd be off to the next gym. Well, as in Zoom, it's just a matter that you can do everything from there. You can do everything from your own office, and maybe you could employ a few more people that way, because there's less travelling and so on. So, definitely technology, because if the nearest gym for somebody is 20, 30 miles for somebody out in the country, and they perhaps... Because when you have certain operations, you're not allowed to drive for a while, so you can't get there, you can't get a taxi, or public transport. So, yeah, this can reach out to everybody, so there is definitely a place for virtual.

I: Yes. You mentioned that it's more convenient and it's saves cost, it saves travel time.

M11: Yeah.

I: Yeah, there are many benefits. Is there anything at all that would have encouraged you to do virtual delivery [over speaking 35:05]?

M11: Yeah, if it was - just said like we're just doing a virtual run to show you how to do your stretches before a workout. Say I was going out for a run, which I don't do, I just go out for a walk, or a brisk walk, or go out on a bicycle, but they can actually have a Zoom thing to tell you, look, this is how you warm up, this is how you stretch, this is... Because we are told how to take our pulse, yeah, so it's hardly... So if you were doing your own exercise, the virtual Zoom could be good for like a pre-exercise warm up and that sort of thing. I think that would be a good thing, if someone could contact me, we'd arrange of time and we'd do a little face-to-face, or a little virtual face-to-face like that. I would have gone for that, and I didn't have a Zoom at the time, actually, so it wouldn't have worked for me, but it would now.

I: Yes. And did you express any of these concerns that you had a virtual delivery, to your exercise professional? Did you express them at all?

M11: No, I wasn't that - I wasn't concerned at the time, because I was able... I felt enabled to go out and I'd, more or less, recovered, so it wasn't a problem with me. But I think [name] did get in touch with me once, and saying that she was setting up virtual meetings with some of her clients. And because I was the youngest in her class, could she just have a meeting with me, just because she was feeling her way through the technology. So I know what she was doing, and she was meeting the more needier people, one-to-one, like we're doing now. So I did that with her, although I didn't have a camera, but I actually spoke to her on my mobile phone while I could see in her face on the camera, so it does work like that. I didn't need it, but I suppose I would take it if I got older and more infirm, I would be able to take it now and I'd probably enjoy it, yes. It's nice to talk to somebody, even if it's say you're in Belfast.

I: Exactly. So it sounds like you received good support during the programme. So I would like to talk to you about how different people [unclear 37:33]. So, first of all, I'll start with your exercise professional, which you already have touched on [unclear 37:40], so it sounds like you have a good relationship with her?

M11: Oh, she was great. Yeah, she was - there were two of them from the council, and one was [name], and I can't remember the other girl, but she used to take the Tai Chi classes. But [name] was the one who initially phoned me up, she sent me a letter, and I think she sent me an email, and she was the one I really touched base with, yeah. Very good. A very good programme, yeah.

I: And do you feel as though she was appropriately skilled to deliver the sessions?

M11: Oh, yes, she was - well, I don't know that much about fitness, but she seemed to know a whole lot more than I did. And, yes, to be honest, yes, she did because she would explain each exercise, and she would explain which part of the body it was benefitting, so on that case, and I learnt some new words with that, medical words.

I: You mentioned that she was friendly, but did she also go at the right pace for you?

M11: The right what?

I: The right pace for you?

M11: Oh, the right pace? Yes, yes, each to his - yes, she was very much each to their own. She did customise the thing to - customise the programme to each specific patient, or she told me that herself. So she started me off on what she thought was a good pace, and then after the first session she said, well, was that too much, or do you want to up the pace a bit more? So, yeah, she was constantly on my case like that. So, yeah, I had no problems with that, because eventually I started, I got the confidence to go by myself. But for the first couple of sessions, she would voice her concern if she thought I was going to fast, or too hard, or lifting too much. So she'd just say, no, no, slow down and build it up slowly, don't try to do too much. Good advice.

I: Good advice, definitely. Do you feel as though you received enough support, would you have liked more?

M11: Oh, I had plenty. I had plenty from her, because every session she did find time to talk to me and chat to me. So, yeah, I had more than enough, I did.

I: And how often were you in touch with [name]?

M11: [name]? Well, I'd see her every week at the gym. I think she was there - I had sessions twice a week, and I think she was there for both of them as well. So, yeah, I'd probably see her twice a week, and... But I would also see her then when I came off the programme, but kept to the gym, so I would probably see her about once a fortnight then, and it was a hello, how are you doing? And any problems I would talk from - yeah, just a little catch-up.

I: And would you say that your relationship with [name] affected your participation in the programme? So if you didn't have a good relationship, do you think you would have continued?

M11: No, no, I don't - no, I honestly don't think, if the person taking it was a bit stern or authoritarian, I probably wouldn't have... I'd have probably carried on doing the exercises,

but I wouldn't have been seeking their advice, or their counsel, I suppose. [name] - when I had - excuse me - she was very welcoming, and very enthusiastic, a good personality.

I: That's always very helpful.

M11: Exactly.

I: And did you have any support from your family or friends, outside of the programme?

M11: Well, yes, there's only my mother. Yeah, she was very good. The fact that she's a lot older than me, and probably she needs more looking after than I do. But, yes, she was very good; she was very good to me, and some of my friends. I'm quite lucky in that they'd say, look, if you need a lift anywhere, if you need this done or you need that done. As it happened, I didn't, but the offer was always there, so I was glad of them, yeah.

I: Perfect. So it sounds as though that encouraged you to go to the classes as well?

M11: Oh, yes, yes, I think, because I used to go out and do activities with them, I think they wanted me... Well, they wanted me back, and they wanted to carry on. So, yes, plenty of encouragement, yeah.

I: And how important was the support for you?

M11: Yeah, it meant a lot, when I think of it, is that people did actually want me around. So, yeah, I thought that did - that was quite touching, because sometimes you tend to forget that... About things like that and when people say, yeah, come on, it would be nice to see you back, you think, oh, well, yeah, so they did miss me.

I: And were there any negative influences around you at all?

M11: Not from my close - not from my close circle of friends or family, or anything. Any other negatives were totally out of my control, with the state of the country, the state of society. Nothing I could do about it, so I just have to get on with my own rehabilitation in that way. So, no, there were no direct negatives, there was no negative person around me, or anything like that, no.

I: Did you make any friends during the first few weeks of the programme?

M11: I'd say I made more acquaintances, people to say hello, and stuff, but nobody I'd go out and have a cup of coffee with after. No, there was nothing like that, but I'm a little bit of a solitary person anyway. But I could see there were little knots of people who would come together, just through going to this course, so it does work.

I: Yes. And were they a source of support, so the people who you call [?an acquaintance 44:07] were like a source of support for you?

M11: Yes. In fact, yes, we were all self-supported on the group, because we'd all like to... We'd all say, oh, you're lifting more weight, or, oh yeah, you're looking slimmer. No, I didn't say that, actually. But, yeah, we'd go on and we'd say, yeah, can do an extra ten minutes now, and I can run a bit faster. And people are saying, oh, when I came here six weeks ago, I could

hardly use this machine at all, and now look at me. So, yeah, there was a lot of that and that's what you get with friends in the gym, I've noticed, anyway.

I: Yes, so they were more encouragement for you, and also accountability as well?

M11: Yes, it is, because when you keep going to the gym, you want to just try and keep the level and you want to keep improving. There's a certain feel good factor about it, and I think it's better than doing exercise on your own. It's always better to go where there's other people, and you can all share the experience of improvement and things like that.

I: Exactly. Were there any individuals on the programme who were a negative influence?

M11: No, not on the wellness programme. No. No, to be honest, they were - we were all quite a positive bunch. I would say there were people who would turn up for one session, and then you'd never see them again. And I'd feel that was a bit disappointing, not for me, but I was disappointed for them. They'd turn up and perhaps they didn't have the attitude, because half of it is your... They can tell you what to do and how to do it, and tell you the benefits, but you've got to want to do it as well, haven't you? And some people, they've gone on the course, or they'd had the induction, and they didn't do it. And that was a disappointment for me, because I don't like to see people give it up like that, but it wasn't a negative impact on me. Perhaps those people needed more help, I thought, but there we are!

I: Through the programme, have you developed an enjoyment for exercise?

M11: Any what?

I: Have you developed an enjoyment for exercise?

M11: Oh, an enjoyment! Oh yes, yes. I'm told that when you do exercise, your bloodstream releases feel-good endorphins into the bloodstream. And I do sometimes, not so much on a day like this, but if it was a bit cooler on a sunny day, and I'd go for a nice long walk and I'd come back a bit out of breath, but, yes, it's a good feeling. I enjoy it, I really do enjoy it. I have to be careful I don't push myself too hard, and that's a bit of a danger for me.

I: Yes, exactly. And at the start of the programme, did you have any concerns about your mental health?

M11: I did when I was actually on cardiac rehabilitation, and they referred me to my GP. After having a chat with me, and my GP had put me on... He'd actually put me on antidepressants, which worked very well, but I think the combination of exercise and my antidepressants, is it is a positive experience for me. Because my problem was, I used to worry too much and I used to worry about trivial things too much. And I think the word given was over-catastrophise, if that's such a word? But I don't have that so much, but a lot of it is when I do exercise, because when I don't do exercise, I do feel a little bit sad and a bit down.

I: I can feel the same as well, yes. Do you think you'll continue to exercise?

M11: Oh, definitely. Definitely. I'll continue on until I can't do it anymore, yeah.

I: And do you think the different types of delivery are more or less suitable for different people, at different stages of the programme?

M11: I'm sorry, you broke up a little bit there.

I: Oh, sorry, so I was basically saying, so are there some parts of the programme that should always be face-to-face and why?

M11: I think you should have a face-to-face meeting, yes, essentially to know your instructor. I think it's always better to have a face-to-face, and you could have a one-on-one where they can tell you... Well, you can tell you exactly what your hopes and fears are, and I think all that should be done face-to-face at least. And even if it's just a face-to-face where they can give you notes explaining how to set up a Zoom meeting, because I was the youngest in my class, and I'm 53. So everybody else was in their sixties and seventies, and they were not tech savvy. So I think they would probably all need a meeting with somebody who could explain to them how a virtual system would work, because not all of them had children and grandchildren who would set it all up for them. So that is the case, and there should be a face-to-face meeting somewhere, preferably at the start of the programme, at least, I would say.

I: And do you find having that face-to-face is important in making friends, to develop in friendship?

M11: Oh, definitely. Definitely. I mean, people - more people should go out and meet people in the flesh, because living... As I say, living a life online through even Zoom meetings, or social media is not healthy. I don't think it's very healthy for your mental state of mind anyway, because there's a lot of... A lot of poison out there, and at least in the street, you can turn away and walk away from somebody who's unpleasant. You're not bombarded with it, and I think, yeah, for programmes like this, there should be a certain amount of face-to-face and meetings, yeah.

I: So what changes would you like to see for the NERS in the future, particularly in terms of how it's being delivered?

M11: Well, maybe you could - if I was referred to this again, and hopefully I won't to be, but I would be quite happy to do Zoom meetings now. But I think I would like to have met with somebody first at their office, and I could have... They wouldn't have to travel to the gym, but I could travel to wherever they were, and then we could discuss my programme there face-to-face, and then perhaps do it online after that. And she could say, look, this is what we'll be doing online, this is what we could do in the gym. And that would mean instead of me doing two sessions at the gym, I could still do that, but I could also maybe have one or two sessions at home, where someone could talk to me about whatever they feel is necessary for how to do stretches, warm-ups. I don't know, even if they wanted to discuss diet at some stage as well, but more could be discussed online because you'd have somebody with more time for it.

I: Is that - and is it important that whoever delivers that online session, is [?a person 51:53] you had that face-to-face contact with, or...

M11: Yeah.

I: ...is it important for there to be that continuity in interaction with the same person?

M11: Yeah, that's right. That's right. Because, otherwise, you could - at some stage, you could just be talking to an animated face, a computer programme, couldn't you? Not a live person. But it's nice to know that there is a real person out there, who is thinking about you and talking about you. I think that makes a difference, and perhaps a new generation won't be bothered by that sort of thing. But, certainly, I would like to know there's a real person on the other side of that camera.

I: It's important that that person behind the camera is familiar with them, because you've already had that physical face-to-face interaction before the virtual?

M11: Yes, exactly.

I: And also is it important that they are from your local neighbourhood?

M11: No, that wouldn't bother me at all. I suppose if the person lived in the neighbourhood, because I'd obviously have to meet them at some stage. So, no, it's not that important if the person, wherever the person is from, and it wouldn't bother me at all, as long as I've met them once. Well, I can meet them at any time, I would hope, if there's... But I would be prepared to talk to them online as well.

I: And do you think that the NERS users would be willing to pay for access to digital content?

M11: Well, that's another one. I was lucky, and most people in this country are lucky that it was a government and local authority funded scheme. I don't know, if you start asking people to pay for it, I think things might drop off. I know you've got to think of the Peloton at the moment, haven't you, where people pay to... As an exercise class, and perhaps that is the way things are going on that. But for - I think someone in my case who is on recovery, and trying to get their confidence back, and their wellbeing, I think asking them to pay for it as well...

I: Would that be the motivating factor?

M11: Yes, that's it! I don't think - yes, it would demotivate you as well. Because the other thing, my example, I'd just had this operation, I'd been in hospital for a couple of weeks and I've come out and I'm feeling low, and I'm stiff, and I'm aching. And somebody now wants me to pay to help me get better, and I'd probably say, in my case, for rehabilitation cases, I'd probably say no. But I suppose people who want to keep fit and stay fit, perhaps, perhaps.

I: Okay. [Over speaking 54:58].

M11: I suppose it's cheaper than having a personal coach, isn't it, or a personal trainer, isn't it?

I: Yes, also, you wouldn't mind paying, because it's cheaper than having a personal trainer?

M11: If I needed a personal trainer or a personal life coach, or something like that, well, I would have to pay for it in a gym anyway, so why not pay for a virtual one?

I: And how much then would you say would be reasonable to charge for an online session, a live session?

M11: I couldn't say there, because I haven't worked out the economics of it.

I: How much would you be willing to pay?

M11: How much I would be willing to pay? Nothing. Because I don't want a personal trainer. There's only so much a personal trainer or a coach could do online, once again. If I went to a gym and somebody said, yes, you can do this session and it'll be for £40, is where I'll do a programme for you. Yes, I would pay that, but for one online I don't know, you'd have to... I'd have to know what I'd be getting out of it, to be honest, and if they want to charge me £15 pound a month, I'd probably say, mm, no, no thank you.

I: Fair enough.

M11: Yeah, well...

I: We're almost done with the interview, and I know we're going past 11. Do you still have a bit of time for us to continue?

M11: Yes, carry on. Carry on. I've got until half past 11, so carry on.

I: We'll be done way before then.

M11: Oh good.

I: I appreciate your time. So now I'd like to ask, or understand any cost that the service - that you would have paid to participate in the NERS programme. I have a few questions here just to identify how much it cost you to be a part of this programme. [?! think that was free 56:43] to attend, however, did you have to buy any... For example, did you have to drive to and fro? How much did that cost you to drive to the sessions?

M11: Not a great deal, and I drove - the gym was four miles from the house, so it wasn't a great problem for me cost-wise, because I was still in work as well, so that was important. So driving back and forth, that wasn't too bad, twice, three times a week. And, of course, then I took up membership of the gym afterwards, because I wanted to, and you've got to pay for the facilities, and you can't have it for nothing. So it didn't cost me a great deal, I would say, because I made the time, so it didn't cost me any time, because it was time that I wanted to spend. And the actual monetary cost in petrol was negligible, because it was probably money that I would have spent on doughnuts or chocolate, or sweets, so I'd rather spend it on [over speaking 57:50].

I: So how much - if you had to quantify it, would you say less than £10 [unclear 57:55]?

M11: Ooh, less than £10 a week. I'd say it's probably about - it'll probably be about £3, £4 a week, I should think, if that.

I: So £2 to go, and £2 to come back?

M11: Yeah, and that's for two sessions, so that's two, so let's say £2 a week then, if that.

I: Two pounds a week for two sessions?

M11: Well, if one session would cost me £2 - [two sessions 58:25].

I: To go, and then to come back?

M11: To go and come back, yeah, it was four miles. It's an eight-mile round trip, and my car does around 40 miles to the gallon. You'll have to get your calculator out, because I can't... Well, it was a round figure of £4 a week, I think.

I: For both sessions, okay.

M11: Yeah.

I: So £1 for each session. No, £1 to go, and £1 to come back [over speaking 58:48]?

M11: To go and come back. But I'd be doing shopping in the meantime, so I'd be stopping anyway. Yeah.

I: And you mentioned that it was free to attend the sessions, but you [unclear 59:01] you purchased a membership for the gym?

M11: Yes, I think I - because I joined on the course, I think I had a bit of a discount, so I'm not paying a lot of money. And it's just - it's the freedom pass I'm using and [unclear 59:14] for a couple of gyms around the city. So I can't remember, it's something like £15 a month I'm paying. And because I kept paying it through lockdown, they froze it at £15, so it's... I think it's value for money, because I'm using their facilities.

I: Yes. And did you have to park somewhere?

M11: No, it's free parking, and there is a car park. The gym I use is in a school, and obviously when people are in school it's a bit harder to park, and the car park is a bit busier. But, no, I've never had trouble parking, really, to be honest. So, yeah, it's very convenient, the gym I go to.

I: And did you have to buy any equipment to participate in the face-to-face sessions?

M11: No, I bought a small towel, a little hand face towel. No, I had almost everything else, because I had been active until I was ill, so I had the shorts, I had the trainers, so really, shorts trainers, a couple of tops and a water bottle, and I think that's all you need, really, isn't it? You don't even need a water bottle, do you, you can just refill the plastic bottles. So equipment-wise, no, it's very cheap and they just say wear loose clothing, and almost everybody... I think I only know one person who wears very tight clothing all the time, and...

I: So you mentioned... Sorry.

M11: They don't need the gym, so, yeah. So, yeah, it's very - equipment-wise, yeah, it's not taking up a new hobby like cycling, is it, or something, where you've got to buy all the equipment. No, it's very cheap.

I: And you I mentioned about the face towel, so did that cost much to buy?

M11: Once again, it's £2, if that. I think you could get them in - I actually bought mine in a sports shop, but I've seen them in market shops for a pound, or your local supermarket will sell them for a £1. As with the T-shirts, I mean, you can buy, for me, cheap T-shirts for a couple of...£3, £4, yeah. So that's all I've paid. I'd say max - if I had to start now, I'd probably get all my equipment, apart from the trainers, for less than £10, really.

I: Right. Obviously, you had some before this, because you'd been accessed before?

M11: Yes.

I: Did you have to buy any like mat, any physical materials, so like weights, a mat?

M11: No, the mats were provided for the Tai Chi class, and that's the only time I used the mat. I could have bought weights, if I wanted to, but everything I needed was at the gym. So I did two sessions a week, where I could use those weights. Any of the other fitness was probably cardiac fitness, which involved me walking, so a good set of shoes was recommended.

I: And you've not bought any additional exercise clothing at all, to facilitate the sessions?

M11: Not for the gym. Not for the gym. I mean, the only - I think the most expensive thing would be trainers.

I: So you had to buy trainers to attend [over speaking 1:02:34]?

M11: I didn't, I already had some, but they wear out very quickly, so, yeah, I keep having to buy trainers for the gym, well, about once a year I'll go through a pair of trainers.

I: And in the programme, did you have to buy new trainers?

M11: No, no, I'd already bought trainers before that, for my own use as well.

I: Exactly. And how many weeks did you attend the sessions?

M11: I'm pretty sure - I finished the whole course, and I'm pretty sure it was eight or 12 weeks, I think. Twice a week for the 12 weeks, I'm pretty sure.

I: Twice a week. Perfect. Okay. And you mentioned that it was relatively cheap for you to attend, and did that facilitate your participation in the programme? If it had been expensive, like let's say you didn't have any of the materials, any of the clothing, or trainers, do you think that would have put you off?

M11: No, no, I don't think it would have put me... I would have picked what I could have bought. If they said, well, you've got to have this, and you've got to have that, and they give you a

price list, I would have been put off by that. I think it's good what they say, when you say, when you tend the gym just wear loose clothing. And I think that is good enough, because everybody's got some loose, baggy tops or baggy joggers, or trousers, or something like that. Most of the older people on the circuit class were just wearing light, loose-fitting clothing which they had around the house anyway, and soft shoes. But, yeah, if they did say you need to buy all this equipment, that could put... It could put people off, because some people may be retired, or they may be on very low-income jobs and they can't... My trainers, for example, can cost because I wear running shoes, because I do so much walking. They're quite expensive, but that is my choice to buy them. But if somebody said, you have to buy this type of Nike, latest training shoe, that would put me off.

I: Okay. And now we've reached the end of the interview, so is there anything you would like to add?

M11: No, no. I think we've covered it all. I can't think of anything. I mean, I will say if I can't go training, I do get sad and down, I really... Because I really do miss that feeling of being healthy and slightly out of breath, and a nice healthy perspiration, I miss that. And, of course, the first lockdown which we had in Wales, I mean, everything was shut and I couldn't go to the gym at all, I managed to do some walking and that was okay. But, no, the gym, is - it's nice to go in winter, so hopefully by winter it'll be back open, so I won't have to go walking out in freezing cold temperatures and rain. So there's nothing you can do about that, is there? That's a government decision, isn't it? But the gym is open now, actually, but it is still subject to strict Covid regulations there.

I: Yes, I can imagine. And is there anything you were expecting me to ask, that I didn't ask?

M11: No, no, I didn't even know you were going to be talking about this course, actually, I thought you were going to be talking about Covid.

I: Is there anything that could have been done to improve the interview?

M11: No, no, you were fine, you were very good.

I: Thank you very much, and likewise you. I'll just stop the recording now. Thank you so much.

M11: Okay.

I: That's been very, very helpful.

End of Transcription