

Participant M13

I: Perfect. Yeah. So let me know, how did you find out about the programme? How were you referred, and what happened?

R1: Well, my wife had a mastectomy, and after the chemotherapy and the radiotherapy and everything else, she was referred to - by her GP - to NERS. And she went through the course and she advanced into further gymnastics, and she said to me that they do a course for elderly people, right? And she said, what I would do, is go and see the doctor and ask the doctor about it. So I was like, well, seeing my GP for something else, and I just happened to mention it, this referral and she said, yes, fine. And about six months later, I got an invite to go for an evaluation by the instructor. And because of my age, that put me in the average age group and the frailty of that particular group, they put me on this balance thing, exercise and balance, which I found fine. Yeah, it was fine, but I'm a very active person.

I: Amazing!

R1: I'm an avid builder, and I'm always up ladders painting, or cleaning gutters, or climbing on rooves. And I got a rollocking for being on the roof, repairing the roof on the 85th birthday, and I got told off.

I: Oh, I can imagine.

R1: So the thing for the balance from the instructor, when we were going face-to-face, or in the meeting, I found a bit boring. There was no - I couldn't... I always aim for a target. I've got to have something to aim for to make me go for it, and this boring... This repetitive, repetitive, repetitive, it was getting a bit boring on the face-to-face, and then, of course, the pandemic came about, and we went on the virtuals. I'll be perfectly honest, about six weeks before Christmas, this Christmas 2020, I bought the wife an art studio. She's an artist.

I: Oh wow!

R1: And I bought this 15 by 10 art studio for her, in the garden. So on the Tuesdays when we were supposed to be having the virtual exercises, I forwent them. But I was getting plenty of exercise, putting this bloody shed up. Brick-laying and climbing on rooves and putting steel work up and cladding it, and all the rest of it, and decorating it. So I haven't actually been on, but what I've done, I haven't met him on the Tuesday when we normally meet at half past ten. All right? What I've done, I've taken his recording and I've recorded it on the laptop, and I've put it into my folder. So if, and when I feel like it, I just bring it out of the folder, put it on and do the exercises with them, not necessarily with him. But on my own, with his own course. And [name], the tutor - [name] - the instructor - God love him - he's a very quiet-spoken person, and with being a little bit deaf, and quite a number of people are, we can't really hear what he's saying. You have to have everything turned up loud, because he's quietly spoken. But there you go, that's it! That's my weird and wonderful experience about it. I think it's good, and I do a lot of bike riding, so I've got an electric bike; I go out on the electric bike. I take the dogs for a walk nearly every morning, and of a night time.

I work in the garden, and I do building projects. I'm actively involved in Freemasonry. I sail racing yachts, model racing yachts, and I'm running around the racing pond like somebody gone soft. So exercise-wise, I'm fine.

I: Yeah, it sounds like you do really, really well. So just going back to kind of the very first experience, so when you went to the doctors and you said... Did you ask them to refer you?

R1: Yes.

I: Okay. What did - what's the impression you got of the doctor? Did they know much about NERS? Were they particularly supportive, or...?

R1: No. No. This chap, he is a Polish doctor, and he said to me that he had heard about it, but he wasn't aware of the contents, but he would refer me, which he did. All due credit to him, yes, I got on the course, but actually didn't really know much about it. I don't know whether they do it in Poland, or I have no idea.

I: They'll probably have their own version of it.

R1: Yeah.

I: There's one in England as well. Was there - so you didn't really... So you knew about the programme from your wife, had she started the exercises? Did you know what to expect?

R1: Oh, yeah. Because when I went for the interview with the instructor, he gave me a booklet of the exercises. And there were 15 exercises in this booklet that showed me what to do: a Pelican stand and Flamingo, and swinging legs, and rubber bands. And I bought two sets of rubber stretch bands and the arm stretches, and the pulls. As much as I can possibly [weight 07:35] and the dumbbells; I got the dumbbells as well. And I also take turmeric.

I: Say again, sorry, I missed that?

R1: Turmeric.

I: Mm. Oh yeah.

R1: I take turmeric with black pepper and ginger, and I think it works wonders.

I: Oh, amazing. I have heard of that, the health benefits of...

R1: Yeah, well, I suffer from arthritis. I've got chronic arthritis of the hip, and taking the dogs out, it's painful to start off, but I walk through the pain. You have to, don't you? You have to do that, or sit on your backside and melt away, and I have no intention. Yeah, because I've just been up and met my ninth great grandchild.

I: Wow!

R1: Yeah. [name]. I met her on Sunday.

I: Oh, how old is [name]?

R1: Oh, she's three weeks old.

I: Oh, that's lovely.

R1: She's three, yeah, three weeks old. And she's number nine great grandchild.

I: That's lovely.

R1: I think I've bred rabbits. I think my kids are all [over speaking 09:04].

I: Oh wow, you have good genes. Very good genes.

R1: They're all strutting their stuff, yeah.

I: So you said it took six months from when the doctor referred you to... Is that to meeting your exercise professional, did you say his name was [name]?

R1: Well, the notice just came through to say that you've been referred to NERS, right? And, [name], my wife, she was going every week, twice a week. And when she went down, she spoke to [name]. She actually spoke to the instructor and said, I have had the invitation to go to NERS, and when did he want to see? He said, bring him down any day. So it wasn't sort of a formal booking, so I just went down with [name] when she was in one of her sessions, and just had to chat with him. And he put me in this balance class, and I don't know, for about eight weeks or something like that. And then, of course, the Covid came about and upset everything. But I was expecting to go to finish the course, and go on to something else. But, well, with the pandemic, nothing's moving at all, and I don't know the place that we went to, the [place] Leisure Centre, apparently it's going to be pulled down.

I: Oh, that's a shame.

R1: They're going to replace it. So whether Aura, the people who are running the NERS, are going to be involved in that, I have no idea. But at the moment, we're still on the virtuals.

I: Okay, so when you met [name], did he answer any questions? Was he particularly knowledgeable? Did he tell you what was going to happen?

R1: Oh yeah. Oh yes, yes, it was fine, yeah. He asked me what exercises did I do, and what was my physical capabilities?

I: Very good by the sounds of it.

R1: Yeah. And he was quite pleased about it. He said, well, you don't need a lot of exercise, you just need loosening up, if you like. He said, but I'll put you on this course, this balance course, because you fall into that age group. Now, to me, that wasn't an evaluation, I don't think so, because I can stand on one leg. I have no problem putting trousers on, or getting dressed or undressed. Occasionally, I have to lean on the doorway, or touch the bed, or use the wife as a prop. Yeah, but, no, I just found it, the whole course, so repetitive when it comes on a Monday, inviting us to meet him on the Zoom on a Tuesday. You know exactly

what he's going to say: give yourself plenty of space, sit down on a chair, get a couple of cans of beans, or bottles of water and that's it every week. And it's the same thing: tap, tap, tap, march, march, march, march, raise your legs and raise your feet. Yeah, I just - I'm not being nasty, but I just found it a bit boring. I haven't got a target, and I need a target.

I: Yeah, something to work towards.

R1: My wife, when she finished the chemo, went swimming through the trees and she done a zipwire course up in [*place*]. All due credit to her, and I wanted to have a go at it with everybody saying, oh, you're too old, you're too old! But I intend to do it when I'm 100.

I: Yeah.

R1: I have every intention, but the one to celebrate is [*name*]'s 10th birthday, not my 100th, [*name*]'s 10th.

I: Oh, that is lovely. You'll have more great grandchildren by then.

R1: I know. I know, I'll probably have a hundred bloody grandkids by then.

I: Okay, so you said that the virtual was a bit repetitive, and sometimes a bit boring, is that right?

R1: Well, I suppose [*name*] was a bit limited, because he's doing it from his home, and the facilities he's got available to him would be what he could get in his room with the video camera. He didn't have the facilities of the leisure centre, or the gymnastics, or bikes, or anything.

I: So what did you get involved with virtually? Was it just these online sessions where you kind of followed along with [*name*]?

R1: Yeah.

I: Was there anything else?

R1: No. No. We haven't - we keep meaning to go swimming, but we never get around to it, and we haven't got around to it yet. And I've got two false legs, two false knees. I had the one knee fitted in 2004, because of arthritis; and one fitted in 2005 because of arthritis, and that same leg, the right leg, I had it refitted again in 2019... 2017, wasn't it, [*name*]? When did I have my second knee, '17, was it? This one.

R2: Sixteen or seventeen.

R1: Sixteen or seventeen. Because we'd just got a rescue dog, and he rolled into me and smashed my leg. So, yeah, he broke all the parts, so they had to replace it.

I: Oh wow!

R1: Yeah, so the swimming, was a bit iffy. And I've got aches and pains, I must admit, I do have aches and pains. We all have aches and pains, but we don't moan about them, do we? Well, I don't.

I: **No. Okay. So the first session that you did with [name] online, how did you feel that was, did you feel it was suitable for you, or...?**

R1: Yes. Yeah, and I thought it was pretty good, but, as I say, [name] is such a quiet-spoken chappie, I couldn't hear what he was saying. Do you know what I mean?

I: **Mm.**

R1: So what I had to do when his session was finished, was put earphones on my laptop and watch what he was doing, and watch what he was saying. But I couldn't manipulate myself, because of the restriction of the earphone lead.

I: **Oh, I see.**

R1: So I had to try and remember what he was saying to us. But later on, somebody must have mentioned to him, and he must have turned the sound up on his video recorder, because it wasn't too bad. It wasn't too bad.

I: **Oh, that's good. So what did you think the session was going to be like before? Have you ever done a virtual exercise session before, this one, with [name]?**

R1: No. No.

I: **What did you think it was going to be like?**

R1: I just thought it was going to be a chat. I didn't think it was going to be any of the up and down, and the things like that. I had no idea what it was going to be. And it was a - yeah, it was a pleasant surprise when he actually started doing what he was doing, showing us what to do with the chair, and the tins of beans and ropes and elastic bands. Yeah, he's a very, very intelligent, enthusiastic chap, he is, [name].

I: **Great.**

R1: Yeah, he is, really. And the other instructors, that when [name] is not available down in London or up in Scotland, another chappie comes in called [name], and he takes the session. Slightly different, because they have a different approach, but, well, all in all, I found the instructor pretty good. Pretty good, yeah.

I: **That's great. So...**

R1: And when we were doing that at the leisure centre, there were three or four instructors standing round watching the people do it. As I said, there was about 25, 30 people doing it. I think they were there to help anybody who'd got in difficulty, because some people were having a bit of difficulty.

I: Yeah. So other than - you mentioned sometimes *[name]* was quietly spoken, and the volume was a bit of an issue. Were there any other problems with technology, or doing the sessions virtually?

R1: No, none - none whatsoever.

I: That's really good.

R1: Yeah, none whatsoever.

I: Okay. And how did you get hold of the exercise bands, and the weights that you said you were using at home?

R1: She who must be obeyed - she's sweeping the floor at the moment.

I: It's all right.

R1: She went online and got them for me.

I: Okay. Was anything provided by your NERS?

R1: No. No.

I: Okay.

R1: Because everything was in the leisure centre, and when we were isolated in Wales, and with *[name]* having mastectomy, we were shielding and I've got a few problems, and I was shielding anyway. All the equipment was left in the leisure centre, and then they turned the leisure centre over to a hospital.

R2: *[hospital]*.

R1: They did, yeah, and [*?they're over to 21:28*], was it *[hospital]*?

R2: *[hospital]*!

R1: *[hospital]*

I: Wow!

R1: Yeah. So all the equipment that was in there, including the ice-rink, were all ripped out and turned into a massive great ward. And it's now an injection centre, so what happens after...

R2: It's still a hospital.

R1: What happens after the injections are finished with the leisure centre, we have heard, as I say, that it's going to be pulled down and maybe a new one.

I: So when you were at home doing the exercise classes, did you have enough space to...?

R1: Oh yeah. Yeah. Yeah, my lounge is 20-foot wide and 30-foot deep. Yeah, no problem. No problem at all.

I: **Did you get any kind of encouragement from home? Did [name] ever do some of the classes with you?**

R1: Oh, yes. Yes, yes, in fact, I shouldn't say this, but she thought she knew more than [name], as you women do.

I: **Yeah. Okay, that's great. So summing up the virtual sessions, how would you say that experience was?**

R1: Summing them up. Very helpful. Very helpful at the time. But, as I say, the erection of the art studio was the commencement of my non-attendance, if you like. I know I get the email every week and I think to myself, oh, should I go? But one thing and another, there's always something crops up and I can't get at it on the Tuesday, and it's always on a Tuesday at half past ten. That's the time that the man allocates to the job, and that's fine. If everybody who attends it has got that time available, then that's... Yeah, that's fine. And there's no chastisement from him for non-attendance. If you don't go on to Zoom, he doesn't ring you up and say, what the hell's happened? There's no clawing come back, and if you go...

I: **And would you find that helpful?**

R1: ...onto Zoom you're very welcome.

I: **Would you find that helpful if he was to call you up and say, where are you, or would that put you off?**

R1: Yeah, but it's putting the burden on him, isn't it?

I: **Yeah, I'm just wondering whether it would help you with some, with encouragement to join in, but if you're busy, you're busy, but...**

R1: Yeah. Yeah, I've got - no, I've got no reason for not doing this, and no reason at all for not doing it, apart from an awful lot of the times I'm doing something else, I'm busy.

I: **Yeah, so...**

R1: And, as I say, I've got the videos on my - on this laptop, in my folder and I can bring them up and do the exercises any time, which I have done.

I: **So you said a little while ago that you thought that you'd been put in the balance class. Do you think that was suitable for you, or do you think that potentially you could have been put in a different class?**

R1: Well, I'm taking the advice of the expert, yeah. Taking the advice of the expert, yes. Maybe I thought that I didn't need it, and maybe he thought that I did need it. I personally didn't think I did, because my balance is not bad. As I say, I have no problem dressing. Occasionally, apart from the odd occasion when I'm putting my trousers on, and I'm hopping

around the bedroom, because the other trouser leg won't go on my foot, as you do. Everybody has this problem, occasionally.

I: Yeah, they do. They do.

R1: They do, yeah.

I: So when you met [name], and this was your first meeting after your wife had arranged it for you, what were you thinking you wanted to get out of NERS, at that point?

R1: I'd had a hernia operation, right? And plus the knee replacement, and my right leg was sore, very sore. I used to walk through the pain barrier with it, and deep heat rubbing, and all sorts of things. The hernia was repaired, because it had been repaired four times before, and it was protruding out about six or eight inches. And this doctor says I'll push that hernia back in and it'll never ever come out, and he did, and the hernia is inside somewhere. But the stitching, he must have stitched it to the muscle, or something because in the hernia area, there is a pain each time when I walk. But, as I say, it's a pain and you walk through the pain, and you just get on with it. You can't get all of it and throw it away, so you just cope with it.

I: So were you helped - were you hoping...

R1: And that was the basic reason that I went to NERS, to try and increase the muscles in my legs.

I: Yeah, yeah.

R1: My lads, they used to do marathon running. One goes skiing all over the bloody world, with his wife, they go skiing about two or three times a year. And they do all these wall push ups, [unclear 28:23] for strengthening the legs against the wall, with their back against the wall, and stoops and things like that. And he was here and he said to me, well, why don't you try it? And with my knees, I couldn't even get down and have a stoop.

I: You tried, though.

R1: Well, yeah, yeah, but if I got down, I couldn't get up. The wife would have to help me up.

I: So other than the kind of building up strength in your legs, did you hope to get any kind of social benefits and new friendships, and wellbeing?

R1: Oh, yeah, yeah. I like meeting people. I like meeting people, and we converse with people. Yeah, I can't say that I've got any enemies; I've got a lot of friends or associates. I'm not an aggressive person, anyway.

I: No.

R1: I just like meeting people. And I thought, well, yeah. And one of the things that came out of the NERS thing with the wife, she met a girl who was doing the same course as her, and

they've now become friends. And we go to her house and she comes to our house, so there's a friendship come out of that.

I: That's lovely, yeah.

R1: And I was thinking, well, maybe I can meet a friend at the NERS class, but the pandemic cut it all short, didn't it?

I: Did you meet anyone when you were at the face-to-face exercise sessions?

R1: Oh yeah. What was that woman who kept pestering me? [Aside conversation with wife] It's you women. It's you women. I'm sorry, but it's you women and it's built into you women, you're nosy parkers. You are all nosy parkers, and I think she was just asking to be curious, not for any particular... No particular reason. She didn't know how much money I had, so she was... Yeah. But, yeah, I was...

R2: [Unclear 31:12] right into lockdown?

R1: Yeah, it was fine, yeah. Yeah, somebody is poking their nose in. This one here. Come here, [name].

I: Hiya. Hi, [name].

R1: Yeah. And that was - [name] was going into the advancement of gymnastics...

R2: No.

R1: ...when the pandemic came about.

R2: We went to the gym, me and...

R1: Went to the gym, and...

R2: Me and [name] came off the NERS, and we went into the gym, and we were doing that, and then that was stopped, because, yeah, yeah.

R1: Yeah, it's caused a few problems, hadn't it?

I: Yeah. So when you were doing the face-to-face sessions, was this...? What were they like? What were you doing, and how did you feel that they were?

R1: With the people who were doing it?

I: Yeah, when you were face-to-face in the leisure centre, what were they like? What were those sessions like?

R1: All right. All right. A stumbling shambles, if you like, because there's - they're walking up and down the room, walking up and down the room. And, of course, some people walk fast, some people walk slow - and I mean slow - so it was like a Euston Station type throng - sorry - in the middle, and around the edge, people were trying to do the exercises, yeah. Yeah, it was lovely. It was a mumbling, stumbling - bearing in mind the various abilities of the people

who were attending, some were on two sticks, some people... One old chappie was bent over that far that he couldn't get his head above his waist. You know what I mean? He was trying to - they were trying to improve his balance, or whatever. Yeah, and ladies and old chaps, and, yeah, it was all right. It was all right. It was very social. Very social.

I: [Over speaking 33:53] you could make it the right level for you, by...

R1: Oh yeah. Yeah.

I: ...going a bit quicker?

R1: I was in that age group, wasn't I? I'm probably older than all of them, but, no, I accepted it. And they kept on saying, slow down a bit, [name], slow down, you're doing it too fast, [name]. You're waiting to move on to the next step, and the next step, they haven't finished theirs yet.

I: You're an overachiever, [name].

R1: Yes, overachiever, to say the least.

I: Were you excited before this session? Did you have any concerns?

R1: No. No.

I: Okay. And was the class what you expected?

R1: Was the class?

I: Yeah, the in-person class, yeah.

R1: Yeah. The class varied in size each week, because of a variety of reasons.

I: Yeah. So how many weeks were you doing it face-to-face before it went to...?

R1: About ten, wasn't it, [name]?

R2: Something like that, yeah.

R1: Well, around about ten weeks. Yeah, around about ten weeks. It was a 16-week course, but, no, we'd done about ten and then all of a sudden we just have to stop, because of the pandemic.

I: So how did you get in contact [over speaking 35:36]?

R1: We started in the October, and we went through to the middle of December when the leisure centre shut down for the Christmas period - Christmas and New Year. And then when we came back, to go back in the February, I had something on and I couldn't go. And then the pandemic came about, and the shielding, because the wife and I were shielding from the February '20 for, what, seven months, wasn't it, [name]? Seven or eight months?

R2: Yeah.

I: Wow! That must have been tough.

R1: Well, we were shielding because of our health reasons, and then the Welsh National shielding came in and we had a letter from the national doctor to say, you've got to shield for another 12 weeks, and we had already done 12 weeks. Yeah, it was a bit of a pain.

I: Yeah. So when the sessions stopped being face-to-face and they went virtual, who got in contact with you to tell you that that was happening?

R1: [name] sent an email, because he'd taken all our email addresses, and he sent us an email to say that he was going to do these virtual on the Zoom - the same as yourself - and we just started the Zoom lesson, yeah.

I: So...

R1: He put a link on.

I: Yeah. Can you talk me through why you decided to carry on doing it virtually, rather than just postponing and picking it up when it came back to face-to-face?

R1: Well, we didn't know. I wouldn't postpone it, because I didn't know how long the postponement would last, and nobody knew, and nobody still knows. I know they've relaxed all these restrictions and things like that, but next week they could be back on us with force. Excuse me.

I: That's all right.

R1: No, it was [name] who sent us an email, to me, and to all the others who were on that particular course. To say that he was doing this Zoom, and all we have to do - was the same as yourself - you click on the link. I already had Zoom on my PC and laptop and phone, so Zoom wasn't any problem to me, I'd used it before.

I: What did [name] tell you that would be involved?

R1: It would be virtually the same as we were doing when we were at the leisure centre, but he would have to restrict it a bit, because of the facilities available to him at that particular time. Like in the leisure centre, he had the racks where you could lift your arms up and lift your feet off the floor. You know what I mean? He hadn't got them in his home. There were all sorts of things, and there were pulled down weights that we could use. He didn't have them in his home, so he had to adapt his routine, if you like, to suit the facilities in his house, when he was making the recording.

I: And your house, I guess, as well, because there's no point him picking up weights when you guys don't have them at yours.

R1: Absolutely. And there's not a lot of people who have got weights.

I: No.

R1: You know what I mean? A lot of the people who were on the course probably didn't have the elastic bands, the stretch bands.

I: **Do you agree that that's what happened then, and it would be the same as what happened in the face-to-face, but it was slightly restricted?**

R1: Yeah.

I: **And would you have preferred to carry on face-to-face, if that had been an option?**

R1: Oh, yeah. Yeah, because there is an incentive to go there. There is an incentive to go. It's like would you like to go out with your friends, or would you just like to talk to them on the phone? Well, I'd rather go out, because it's an incentive to do something, isn't it? Yeah, and if the face-to-face came about again, yes, I think I would go.

I: **You'd go back, right.**

R1: Because, there again... What's your name, Shanty? What's your name?

I: **[name].**

R1: [name]. There is a target. If you've got to go on a Tuesday at a certain time, you've got a target. You've got a target and you've got to meet that target. Whereas if it's on the virtual, you don't even have to open your laptop, it's that easy to avoid it.

I: **Yeah. So we're already discussing the kind of differences between the virtual and the home delivery, but just to go into those a bit more, how would you say that they compare, the virtual delivery of the exercise classes versus the in-person delivery?**

R1: If he'd done the virtual in a different atmosphere where all the facilities were available to him, a lot of it would be a waste of time, because the people in their homes wouldn't have that facility, right? Equipment-wise, on the face-to-face, is far superior to the virtual, it's got to be.

I: **Yeah.**

R1: It's got to be.

I: **Yeah, of course.**

R1: I mean, with the - when they do the virtual, there's one instructor who stands at the end of the room and he shows you what to do. When you're doing the face-to-face, he's mingling with the crowd, and so are the other instructors, who are not tied up with their own classes. They are all mingling together, and you feel as though they're looking after me type of thing. I am important, and they're looking after my safety, they're helping me, which they are doing with people. No, I think the face-to-face far outweighs the virtual, I do honestly, yeah. It's - with an awful lot of people, and an awful lot of people who went, are lonely people. They are widows or widowers, and actually physically going out on a Tuesday morning to go

to the gym, is going out and meeting people. And that overrides the virtual, because doing the virtual for a lonely person is just like turning the television on, isn't it?

I: Yeah, I can see that. Yeah. So when you were - when it went virtual, did some of those relationships that you'd built, all those people you met, did that suffer because it was virtual?

R1: Oh yeah, because we lost contact. While we were doing the face-to-face, we never took, never wrote details down or anything like that, you just... You knew that you were going to meet them again next Tuesday, and chit-chats, what have you been doing? Or have you wallpapered the toilet yet, or whatever? Just chit-chat, social chit-chat. But, of course, when we lost the face-to-face, really, yeah, and with it being in Wales, it's rather rural. We are rather rural, and people live far and wide. You know what I mean? And they would probably come maybe 15 to 20 miles to [place] Leisure Centre, to take the face-to-face sessions and then go back home. Some of them lived locally, but an awful lot of people come from God knows where.

I: Did you notice any kind of impact on those feelings of wellbeing, and when you were making those friendships when it went virtual, did you feel a loss, or did you feel it was the same?

R1: I felt - I thought it was a shame. Completely out of my hands, and I couldn't do anything about it and neither could anybody else. What came about was for the safety of the population, in general. No, I just thought, well, it's a shame we can't meet all these people, what are they doing? And I think a lot of them would not have the facility of a computer. A lot of people don't have a computer. A lot of people don't have a laptop, so they couldn't get involved in the virtual. I don't know. We don't even know whether they're still alive.

I: Yeah, that's a real shame.

R1: Yeah.

I: So the goals where you wanted to get stronger, strengthen your legs and improve your health, did that suffer at all when it went virtual, or do you think you made the same amount of progress, when you were...?

R1: I made the same amount of progress, because one of the reasons for not picking it up on a regular basis, was I was busy building walls and building the art studio. Taking the old art studio down, and rebuilding one and teaching the wife how to lay bricks, and yeah.

I: I can hear her laughing.

R1: She's not bad. She's not bad. It's a bit wibbly-wobbly, but it's not bad.

I: As long as the wind doesn't blow.

R1: Pardon?

I: As long as the wind doesn't blow.

R1: Yeah. So the missing of the virtuals on the Tuesday was that particular, for that particular reason, that I was physically involved in something else. Because I like the garden, and there's always something to do in the garden or whatever. And we had a caravan, which we couldn't go out in during the pandemic. And we've got two dogs, and we take them up the river, or take them for a walk every day.

I: So you were still exercising, but just in different ways outside the programme?

R1: Oh, yeah.

I: Yeah, okay. So did you complete 16 weeks?

R2: No.

R1: No, no, not - no, no, we we've only done, I think it was about ten.

R2: Ten, yeah.

R1: [Over speaking 48:32].

I: Including the virtual? So when it went - you did your ten in person?

R1: Oh, with the virtuals, yeah, well, yeah, well beyond.

I: Okay.

R1: Well beyond. Of course, I've got an invite from him for this morning; I should be on it now.

I: Oh, sorry, I'm taking up...

R1: No, that's all right, I'm going to ring him up after and tell him it's your fault.

I: Yeah, that's fine, you can tell him it was me. I wish I hadn't given you my name now. So, did you have a 16-week assessment?

R2: No.

R1: No. No. Well, I honestly don't know if we had have had kept going with the face-to-face, whether there would have been an assessment at the end of it, or whether it would have been a recommendation to repeat that same session. Because it gave me the impression that it was just a weekly workout; it was like a guideline, like the road signs, they're only a guide and they're not a target. If there'd have been a target to reach, I think a lot of people may have attempted to reach that target, to go on to something else, like bike riding or walking machines, or whatever. Because [name] finished her programme; it wasn't the same as mine, but she finished her 16 weeks and then was advanced into the next session, which was a bit more tedious. Yeah, it was never mentioned - an assessment - there was never an assessment mentioned. It probably would have been, I think, for [name] and his crew to be able to say, well, yes, I've done a good job, or, no, I haven't done a good job. But they've got to keep records, haven't they, of their assessments, of their ability, because if they don't do a good job, they're wasting their time.

I: Yeah, they do need to keep track of whether you're improving, yeah.

R1: But, as I say, there was no mention of an assessment.

I: Okay.

R1: But I think there would have been. I think there would have been.

I: So, on reflection, are you happy with the decision to carry on virtually, rather than just postpone, or would you change your mind now?

R1: Oh yeah, carry on virtually.

I: Okay.

R1: Yeah, carry on. Definitely carry on virtually.

I: Yeah.

R1: And when I have gone on occasionally, there is one lady there who must do it every week, because the conversation between her and [name] is more intimate, if you like, without it being nasty. It is more intimate, because they meet on a regular basis. And you get this confidentiality thing, don't you, when you meet regular?

I: Yeah. You learn a bit more about each other.

R1: Yeah.

I: Okay. And then the last question on this comparison section, is if there were no restrictions in place, what would you choose as your method of delivery? Would you have a mix of both? Would you just do it face-to-face, or would you just do [over speaking 52:47]?

R1: Oh well, yeah. If the - yeah, if there were restrictions, I would do it face-to-face.

I: Okay. All right. So it's - we've got two minutes left of the interview, but do you have another ten minutes just to go through the rest of the questions?

R1: Yeah, yeah.

I: Thank you very much. So this part is just about the kind of relationships that you made whilst you were part of NERS, so with your exercise professional, with [name] or others on the programme, so the friends you made. So starting with [name], can you tell me about the relationship you kind of built with him, if at all?

R1: Being ex-service, he was my boss, if you like. Yeah, whatever job I've gone on, if I wasn't the boss, I would respect the boss, whoever it may be, I would do whatever the boss said. It was that relationship. It wasn't a social relationship, or anything like that. It's just that [name] was there to do a job, and his job was to tell me what to do and I done it to the best of my ability. With that, we got either the okay, or well done, or you're absolute bloody rubbish, or whatever. But [name] was [name], and all the instructors, whoever they may be at that

particular time, had a job to do. And their job is to tell the people who they are instructing, because they are instructors, the people that they are instructing, what to do and make sure that those people carried out the instructions.

I: Yeah. Do you think he did a good job at that?

R1: Pardon?

I: Sorry. Do you think he did a good job at that? Was he [?skilled 55:05] at that?

R1: Oh yeah, absolutely.

I: What was his sort of style? Was it friendly? Was it encouraging? Was it...?

R1: Very friendly, very encouraging. Repetitively. He would come back and say, don't do it that way, do it this way. Now, if you find that you can't do it, don't bloody do it. You know what I mean? If it hurts you, don't do it. Do it a different way. Try it this way. And the guidance from the instructor was excellent.

I: That's really good.

R1: From all the staff.

I: Yeah. So the amount of support that he offered, was that the right amount, or could you have done with more or less?

R1: No, it was absolutely the right amount. The right amount. He wasn't on your back. You know what I mean? He would just let you get on with it, but he was keeping a careful eye on how you did it. And if - and there were some people who were struggling... Because I was doing an exercise, and I was doing it completely wrong. We had to lean on a wall, with your feet outstretched, right? And I thought it was press against the wall like that, but it wasn't. I'm supposed to be pushing with my feet.

I: Oh!

R1: I'm supposed to be trying to push the wall over with my feet, but I wasn't and I was doing it [unclear 56:53]. And he was doing it - it should have been leg bent, and he just came up and put his hand on my shoulder and said, [name], and explained it to me. And after that it was fine, and I was pushing with my feet.

I: So what was the difference virtually then? Because, obviously, he wouldn't be able to kind of watch you quite so closely. How was his support when it was the virtual sessions?

R1: He couldn't really unless, of course, because he had the Zoom meeting, he'd have five or six across the top. If you were putting your hand above your head, he would say straighten the elbow or whatever. And I would imagine he would say to people, and I've never heard him actually say it, you need to pull your elbow in towards your head and get it straight, or put your arm out straight, dead straight and then lift it, rather than bring it up from the side. Because you bring it up from the side, bent, but bring it up from the front it's straight. That type of thing. Yeah, there was virtual guidance, yeah, help for people, and some people

were having difficulties. But it was a very, very slow session and it was more walking on the spot type of thing, just to keep the legs going. Yeah, he did. He did. If you needed it, he would give you help. Yeah, I would go back to him in an instance, if the opportunity arose.

I: How important was he to your engagement? Was he one of the main reasons you kept going, or was it other things?

R1: No, it was the total exercise programme. Because, as I say, sometimes [name] wasn't there, it was another instructor would come in, either a chappie or a girl, or two of them, or whatever. Whatever the - how many there were, three, they didn't have a session on their own, they would come in and help. The same as when [name] finished his session, he would go in and help those when they were doing their particular session on the face-to-face. I think the whole Aura crew were very intermixed and very helpful to one another, as well as to the individual.

I: That's great. So moving on to other people that have helped you, did you have any support from your family and friends in getting involved? I know your wife recommended it. And in what kind of way did they provide the support?

R1: They didn't know about it. My kids didn't know about it. If I had have said something to them, my second lad, who is rather outspoken, would have said, you don't want to do that, you silly old bugger, you're too old. Yeah, and he's 61 himself. Yeah, but, no, well, I got total support from the wife. Absolute total support from my wife. Total support, total encouragement and total chastisement for doing it wrong.

I: So what sort of ways did she support you? Did she ever drive you to the sessions? Did she ever join in with them?

R1: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Well, she didn't join in, she interfered.

R2: I supervised.

R1: She supervised. He told me to do it a certain way, and I was doing it a certain way. And I was being told by her indoors that you don't do that way, you do it this way.

I: You were being supervised?

R1: Yes. Well, we are - us lads are all under control. If you look closely at all the male population over the age of 26, you'll find that there's a thumbprint in the back of their neck.

I: Oh dear! So you said if you'd mentioned it to your son, they might not have been... They have said, oh, you're too old to do that. Would that - did that affect you at all, do you think?

R1: No, no, no, no. I told my kids to be their own person, to do what they wanted to do, right? And not to step out of line. Don't harm themselves with drugs, or don't hurt anybody if you can't hurt. If you avoid hurting anybody. And they've all gone their own way, and they've all got lovely families, and they're all nice people. And if it had to come about that I told them I

was doing this exercise programme, they would have said, go ahead, you want to do it, dad, go ahead and do it.

I: Yeah. And then the other people on the programme, I know you said it was helpful that you would always prefer to go and see your friends face-to-face, than to just speak to them on the phone. How important was that in your motivation to keep going?

R1: I'd say about 95 per cent. I'd say about 95 per cent is the interaction, the interaction and meeting people. Again, being the person that I am, and always in senior management, I would like to see the progress of the next person to me, or how is the group improving because of these qualities? If the person who came with two walking sticks finished the 16-week session with only one walking stick, or maybe no walking sticks, absolutely spot on. Just the job! Yeah, it's worked! It's worked!

I: Yeah.

R1: And, as I said, there's one chappie who was bent right over, and I thought he was looking at his shoes, but somebody said, no, that's how he walks. And he was going there for the exercise, and he lived on his own, he had something to do. Yeah, and he didn't get involved in the standing ex...the flamingo and all the wall presses, and things like that. He'd done more walking up and down the hall, than anything else, just to loosen his hips or his back, or whatever. I don't know what the reason for his posture was. No idea. I didn't - you don't like asking, do you?

I: Yeah. So it sounds like that social support was quite important, or the social element of this. Was there any part of the social side of things that was a negative influence? Was there any individuals on the programme that you - that were less helpful to your motivation to want to keep going?

R1: Not really. Not really.

I: Okay, that's good.

R1: I'm one of these people that speaks when I'm spoken to type of thing. If they don't want to speak, they don't want to speak for whatever reason.

I: Okay. So through the programme, have you found it to be helpful to your wellbeing, and when it was both... When it was in-person and virtually, has it been helpful to your wellbeing?

R1: Oh yeah, definitely.

I: Okay. That's really good. In what sort of ways?

R1: In the way that I could show - if necessary, I could pass that information on to others, and help them. If somebody has difficulty with their hands or their arms, my information could go to them, well, get hold of a couple of tins of peas, or and lift them up to your chest. Just

exercise quarter of an hour, ten minutes or whatever, just do that and it will strengthen, and you can lift them. It's an information that I could pass on.

I: Yeah. I see. What would you like to see for NERS, in the future? If sky is the limit, what would you love to be involved in the programme?

R1: I'd love to be able to go into a hospital, and have my head transplanted onto a 25-year-old body.

I: What about a 24-year-old, like me?

R1: I didn't say a female! Thank you! Thank you!

I: Yeah. And then what would you get involved with, if...?

R1: Oh, I honestly feel, mentally, around about a 45-, 50-year-old. I don't have worries about money. If I've got money, I've got money. If I lose money, I'll lose money. I couldn't care less. If you lose it, you can't do anything about it. If you've got to get out there or save it, or whatever, give it to the kids, or whatever.

I: Okay. So...

R1: And I think it's - that is part and parcel of the longevity. I don't worry about it, and if it happens, it happens and if it doesn't, it doesn't.

I: Would you - so specifically for what NERS and what NERS could provide, would you like to see in-person sessions back? Would you like to see swimming? Would you like to go to the gym? What sort of thing would you really love?

R1: Yes. Yes. I'd like to go swimming, and I'd like to go to the gym, if possible.

I: Okay. And if content continues to be online, how important do you think it is that [name] is the one who provides it, or could it be anyone and you don't mind?

R1: It could be anyone of [name]'s ilk.

I: Okay.

R1: And I would imagine the people who work with [name] are all, more or less, the same pattern. They're all the same level of quality, and some are better than others, and slightly, some are less better. But, in the main, it wouldn't really matter. They have, if you like, it's like a chaplain in church, you've never seen a vicar or a chaplain, or a priest recite the wedding. He reads every prayer. He doesn't have to learn it. He's got a book there. And [name] has got a book of instructions on, and all these instructors have got a book of instructions on and just pass the information on [?type of thing 1:11:02]. And make sure that the person who's receiving the instructions does it properly.

I: Yeah. And so this online content, do you think any NERS users would be happy to pay for it, or do you think it should stay free?

R1: That's a difficult one, and I don't know the financial status of the people who are using that. I'd be quite happy to pay for it.

I: **Okay. Perfect. So that's the main questions done, but could I just ask, we're trying... Part of our evaluation is looking at how much people spent to be involved in NERS, so we've got some questions on the economics of your involvement. These should be fairly quick, so can I ask, during a typical week when you were doing the face-to-face, how many sessions did you attend?**

R1: One.

I: **One. Okay. And ten weeks of the 16 weeks were virtual, weren't they?**

R1: Yeah.

I: **Were face-to-face, sorry.**

R1: Were physical, yeah.

I: **Yeah. And when it was virtual, you were still attending only one a week?**

R1: Yeah, on a Tuesday.

I: **And did you pay anything for the face-to-face sessions?**

R1: No. Yes, I did, I beg your pardon. How much was it, [name], £2 was it?

R2: Yeah.

R1: I think it was £2, or a £1.

I: **Okay.**

R2: £2.

R1: £2.

I: **And did you pay anything for the virtual sessions?**

R1: No.

I: **Okay. And how did you travel to the face-to-face sessions?**

R1: In the car.

I: **And how many miles is it between you and the venue?**

R1: About three miles.

I: **Three. And did you have to pay for parking?**

R1: No.

I: Did you buy any new clothing to take part, gym clothes?

R1: I bought a pair of shoes, gym shoes, non-slip.

I: Roughly, how much did you spend on?

R1: Oh, £20, wasn't it?

R2: About that.

R1: About £20.

I: Okay.

R1: Something like that. And then there was the stretch bands. What did you pay for the stretch bands, [name]?

R2: Oh, I don't know.

R1: About - she bought two sets. Stretch bands are about £10. Yeah, two sets at about £5 each.

I: Okay. Did you have to buy any devices to take part, so like an iPad, or a laptop?

R1: No.

I: No, great. And did you use broadband, or was it your 4G or 5G, the mobile network?

R1: It's the 4G mobile.

I: Okay. And do you know how much you spend on the 4G?

R1: On a monthly basis?

I: Mm.

R1: I think it's £18.

I: Okay. Right, that's all of those done. So we've finished the questions, but is there anything you want to add?

R1: Not really. Not really. Just why are you doing this?

I: So we're doing this, we're going to find out all the best ways that NERS was delivered, and all the ways that weren't so helpful. And we're going to report back to NERS and the Welsh government, and give them our findings and they can take what they want from it, and hopefully improve the service.

R1: Right. Is NERS a national thing, or international...

I: Yeah, NERS is...

R1: ...or is it just local to Wales?

I: It's Wales. Your NERS programme is Wales, but there are - there is an English one, and there's probably smaller ones kind of county-based as well; but I'm not sure about those.

R1: Ah, right. Right, I'm with you.

I: The ones we're looking at in particular, is the Welsh one?

R1: Yeah. No, I thought it was a national or international thing you were doing, to get the funding type of thing?

I: Yeah. Is there anything you expected me to ask, that I didn't ask?

R1: What am I having for my tea?

I: What are you having for your tea, [name]?

R1: I haven't got a clue. I'm letting [name] decide that.

I: Okay, so the last thing is, we're looking for people who didn't take part in NERS at all, and maybe they were offered it by the GP or their friends told them about it, but they didn't want to go ahead. Do you know anyone in that circumstance?

R1: No.

I: Okay. Not to worry. All right. I will stop recording, and I'll just ask you about vouchers, and then we're done.

R1: Right.

End of Transcription