

Participant M16

- I: Okay, so recording started. So the first question - so the first thing we're interested in, is understanding the experience of when you were invited to start the NERS programme. So what was working well, but also how could it be improved? Can you talk me through that right from the start, how you found out and then what happened from there?**
- R: Yeah, well, [place] is a small place so you tend to find out programmes that exist for older people, or it's common, it becomes common knowledge and gossip, and everything else. And I met a person called [name] [Tack 00:46], and [name] was responsible for the nature of the course, and a lot of its input and so on, together with other people, of course.
- I: Yeah. So was she - she was an exercise professional, or was she a friend that recommended it?**
- R: No, she was just somebody that I've met.
- I: Okay. And did she work within the NERS?**
- R: Yeah, to my knowledge, yes. I don't think I ever asked her that question straight up, but she ran classes locally, and my wife and I, we went. It was as simple as that, really.
- I: Okay. So did you go to the GP or a healthcare provider and ask to be referred onto the classes?**
- R: Yes, I think that I did mention it to the doctor, and said that I knew [name] anyway, and it seemed an appropriate time of my life to show some interest in keeping reasonably fit.
- I: Yeah. So did the GP give you much information about what was included, or was it mainly from Sarah?**
- R: Mainly from [name].
- I: And did you kind of - you knew what to expect from what she said?**
- R: Oh, absolutely.
- I: Yeah. So what were you told about the programme, and how well was it explained to you?**
- R: Well, we had an initial sort of conversation and where the various aspects of doing the programme was shared and this, that and the other. And I shared what I wanted to get out of it, that kind of thing. And, at that time, I was put on a twice-weekly class list and that was specifically for gym, like keep-fit exercises; and that satisfied my need at that time. As I've got older, there was a need to change and because I talked to [name], and now it's more orientated towards, not so much keeping physically fit, but keeping mentally fit as well. And that's - I'm sure that when that starts in September, that will prove to be as good as the things that have been offered in the past.
- I: Yeah. Yeah, hopefully. So how interested were you, from what [name] told you?**

R: How interested? Well, in my - deep in my distant, past life I was a [*profession*], and so physical education is a part of the primary programme, as you probably know. So I was interested, and I am a sportsman anyway, and played rugby and that kind of stuff. So, yeah, I think I must have been a very easy victim. Yes, it was absolutely grand. The only thing that I did note at the time, was that it was taking place in a school environment. In other words, borrowing the school gym, and I think that was [?fraught 04:49] with a few difficulties and problems. And, of course, then you get more into the political side of the school system, and the county council system and even up to central government system. And I can't be bothered with that. There were many interruptions to the programme, caused by the school demanding its right to have the hall, especially for examination purposes. And I didn't go along with that, really, and I made my views felt, and that resolved itself eventually. It's never going to be satisfactory - satisfactory sort of using school premises, and I think that now it seems that the [*place*], and that's the cinema and the theatre, and everything else, is being used now in preference.

I: **Okay. So...**

R: And now I think that's a good thing.

I: **Yeah. So is that when you decided to postpone, when there was lots of issues with where it was being, taken place?**

R: Yes, I think so. And it was not so much taken like that [unclear 06:37], it was wanting to get the county council to make some kind of resolution on a letter that I... Which they took weeks and weeks and weeks to reply to, so I wasn't too pleased with that. But then I think things changed a bit, in terms of frequency of use and that kind of stuff, positively. However, often when you're talking to county councils, you've got to make a judgment in your own mind whether they know what they're talking about. And I'm sort of, I suppose, sanguine about it, and they seemed to provide some improvement anyway, or at least it created some interest.

I: **Yeah. Okay. So how many weeks were you doing the face-to-face programme in the school, before you decided to postpone?**

R: Oh crikey! Hang on, I'll ask my wife, she's got much better memory than I have.

I: **Okay, no problem.**

R: Oh, she's not there, she must be out in the garden, I think. I would say - I think it must have been something like four years.

I: **Oh, wow! Okay.**

R: Oh, yes. I'm talking about a long period, so four, maybe five years even, but [*name*] will know all that.

I: **Yeah. So it must have been very important to you, these issues were resolved. Can you talk me through exactly what happened?**

R: Well, I think the result of it was that there was some sort of recognition that older people in the community, you were entitled to use, where possible, community assets for various things, and that old people had a certain degree of importance, simply because of their age. And they were backed by doctors, which was a central government programme. So I was at a loss, really, to understand what the problems were, but there we are. Yeah, campuses and that kind of thing, the local bits and pieces that go on in campuses may not be the ideal. Yeah, and that's all it is, it's to do with personalities and people not seeing things in quite the same way. My view was that older people in the community deserved access to good buildings and facilities, as much as young people, so that some consideration, at least, should be given to them.

I: **Yeah, absolutely. So at what sort of stage did you decide to withdraw? When was this? Was this before the pandemic started, or...?**

R: Yes, it was, and I believe that things have improved, or some... One or two things have been accomplished there, on the campus. But also, and that is interesting for me to note that my last interview - interview - if you could call it that, with [name] was at the theatre in [place], in one of the theatre [?fire 10:39] outlet. So, and that was fine. So, obviously, there has been some shift there, other shift has happened and how good the relationship is between the various would-be users, I don't know.

I: **Yeah.**

R: But there's always a problem, I mean, through all my professional life, I've never known a time when a shared building didn't present problems.

I: **Yeah. Yeah, of course.**

R: It's inevitable.

I: **Yeah. So what sort of timing was this - was this way before the pandemic, or was there any kind of...?**

R: Oh yes. Oh, good Lord, you asking me? Yes, I'm talking about at least four years before, five years before the pandemic.

I: **I mean, when you decided to postpone, sorry, when you decided not to...? To withdraw your kind of participation, what sort of timing was that?**

R: That's a very good question. I have to be specific. Let's have a look, so I've got a clue here.

I: **It doesn't need to be too specific, just so I've got a kind of understanding over the last few years, how you've been involved?**

R: No, I'm looking through the papers here and I didn't keep the papers, as perhaps as much as I should have done. What's this one? Yeah, [name] is the contact point, and I think that we are talking about '19 - 2020, or 2019. I'm sorry, I can't be more specific, but the days of me keeping absolute office-like records and that kind of thing, have long since been over. But the county council itself will know, because I wrote to them and I have replies. And the

replies, I have to say, were positive and people did show an interest. What I didn't know, is what specifically the outcomes were.

I: I see, yeah.

R: I mean, in a sense, they could have said, well, look, you're just a person or a [unclear 13:25] one or two of the classes, and the way in which the whole organisation is run, is way beyond that. Mind you, it would have been very helpful if they had been a bit more specific about the various points of view that have been expressed [unclear 13:45].

I: Yeah.

R: It's a long time ago now, so it's out of my interest area now.

I: Yeah, I see. Yeah, it's moved on. So is it right to say that your decision to take a step back from taking part in NERS was nothing to do with Covid, or it going virtual and online?

R: No, nothing to do with Covid at all.

I: Okay. So can I give you just an example, like, what would you have done had you been on the programme and it had gone online? What do you think you would have done? Would you have continued, or would you have decided to postpone until it was face-to-face again?

R: I would have postponed until it was face-to-face again. I don't operate very well on computers.

I: Yeah.

R: It's just one of those things. I don't feel happy with it. I want it to be face-to-face.

I: Yeah. So IT kind of being one of the things that would stop you getting involved virtually. Was there anything else?

R: No. I think it was just that, and then things moved on and the Covid happened, and it seemed to drift that way. I'm sorry, I don't feel I'm being very helpful in that respect, but it wasn't... Put it this way, I wasn't angry, I wasn't annoyed, I wasn't taking my bat and ball home, or anything like that. And it was, well, the class isn't happening any longer, so [unclear 15:38] going, really, so, yeah, there was nothing there.

I: Yeah, I see. I see.

R: And then you get out of the habit.

I: Yeah. Yeah. So shall we talk about the kind of exercise sessions, when you were doing them over the four years? So you had some of the usual face-to-face, so I just want to understand what was working well about those, and what worked less well. So can you tell me about your experiences of the face-to-face sessions?

R: Well, the sessions - I respond well to practical sessions in a place, which is designated for that kind of use, exercise programme. And so it meant that I could [unclear 16:30] what I did from things to do with weights and that kind of stuff, to floor exercises and so on. And having a kind of PE-ish background, because I was [*profession*] and you have to... And I did take lots and lots of lessons, and that kind of thing with you youngsters, that I knew a little bit about the whole process, and I knew it would do me good.

I: **Yeah.**

R: It's simple, really. And [*name*] is, oh, cracking and she's a very valuable [unclear 17:13] person that, she really is. I'm full of admiration for her.

I: **So did she run your exercise sessions?**

R: Yes, a lot of them, yes, she actually did. And then she had other people who were doing it, and I think this was a part of her expansion programme, getting other people interested, who were qualified to run it, and that kind of thing. But, no, I think she kept a very tight grip on it, and certainly enthusiastic is the name of the game, as far as [*name*] is concerned.

I: **Oh great. So was she encouraging? Did she encourage you to take part, and to come every week?**

R: Absolutely! Oh yeah. You don't get any more encouraging than [*name*].

I: **Oh, wonderful!**

R: Oh yes, so she really is - the highest of praise.

I: **Yeah. And how suitable did you feel the sessions were for you?**

R: Oh, immensely, and I don't know whether this makes any sense to you, but, certainly, the older you get you go there certainly for the exercise. But not primarily, necessarily, you're also going there to meet other people, and you're also there to converse with other people, and get on with other people and share with other people. And these are things that need to happen to more and more elders, as they're getting older, if you know what I mean? It's important.

I: **Of course, yeah.**

R: It really is. And when it's taken away, and when - and going back to the school item and that kind of thing, I think the thing that irritated me the most, was I suddenly felt like I was being treated like a second-class citizen, and that my need was not that of the school's need. Hang on, [? 19:24], life ain't that simple. And I think they took a very narrow view, rather than exploring the possibilities of being a bit more inclusive.

I: **Yeah. So you said - you mentioned a few things that you were looking for that wasn't just kind of to improve your physical fitness, did you experience any of those? Did you make any friends?**

R: Oh, yes, indeed. Oh, good Lord, yes. And, indeed, enduring friends. Again, this is a small community in [place], and so people who were at these classes and this, that and the other, are people that I pass in the street every day, and so you say hello and that kind of stuff. But I certainly had lost my interest, [20:19], until I was reawakened by something that was sent to me from [name], actually. I think that Covid put a bit of a dampener on everything, and, yeah, I can't remember before Covid very well, actually. But then, after [name] got in touch I thought, well, yes, it is time that I restarted that kind of side of my activity.

I: **So you've been back to do some face-to-face sessions recently?**

R: Well, they're just interviewing now, people for attending classes and I think that's at the [place], for September.

I: **Yeah. Who is interviewing you?**

R: Sorry?

I: **Who is interviewing you?**

R: [name] and her sidekick, what's his name?

I: **Okay. And you haven't needed to go back to the GP and ask them to re-refer you onto the programme?**

R: No, no. No, no. No. And it's - yeah, you don't know if the reasons for my referral were accurate, and I'm sure they were in the first place, and being ten years older, it speaks for itself then, doesn't it?

I: **Yeah, I see what you mean. So when you were doing the exercise sessions, did you enjoy them? Did you notice any kind of positive impact on your mood?**

R: Yes. It's as simple as that, and I tend to be a fairly exuberant person, so actually doing things in a group and that kind of thing can be fun. I'm one of those people that generates that kind of fun from time-to-time.

I: **Yeah, lovely.**

R: Well, yeah, really, yeah, it just makes the time go by and it makes you feel good about yourself, yeah.

I: **Yeah, course, yeah. And was there anything else that you got from the programme, when you were...? So you made some friends, and you've improved your fitness.**

R: Oh yeah, well, you make new friends. And it's all sorts of levels and [unclear 22:54], you feel you become a little bit more a part of the community, as a community-based scheme. So it's bound to have that kind of knock-on, and you find out more what's going on in the community and that kind of thing. So that too helps you become more conscious of what is going on in the [place] community, as a whole.

I: Yeah. So was there anything that you didn't like about the programme?

R: Nine o'clock in the morning is a bit early for me.

I: Mm. It is for most people.

R: And that's the only thing that I would have to say, and that's got nothing to do with the programme, far more to do with the way I get up in the morning. But that's all, and an awful lot of that is 99 per cent joke, so don't take it too seriously.

I: Yeah, yeah. Okay.

R: No, no, it's - after a while, what happens is there's a build-up, of course. So you get to know people better and that kind of thing, you get to know more of their interests and that kind of thing. You get more to talk about, and everything else. And sometimes you meet outside the class arena, as it were, and we arrange to meet in the café, or this, that and the other. And so, yeah, it's - I'm very long-sighted about these things, and one thing can lead so easily to another, if it's done positively.

I: Yeah. Yeah, of course. And how many sessions a week did you attend?

R: Mostly two.

I: Yeah. Did you have to pay anything at all for these sessions?

R: Yes, 20p. Yeah, it was a small amount. Did you want to know that accurately?

I: It doesn't have to be perfectly accurate, but if you've got it, that would be great.

R: Well, around about 20/30p.

I: Okay. All right.

R: Is that all right?

I: Yeah. Yeah. Perfect.

R: That's as good as my brain goes these days.

I: Yeah. How did you get there, to the sessions?

R: Well, I suppose - I'll tell you what we should have done, is walk there. Now, what we did do is nip in our car, because we were inevitably a little bit late and it takes us all of two minutes to go there in the car, so that's how we arrived.

I: Yeah. Well, I do the same, so... How many miles is that, do you know?

R: Well, there and back, would add up to perhaps a mile and a half.

I: Okay. And did you pay anything for parking whilst you were there?

R: No, no, no. This is a school campus, so no.

I: **Yeah. And these are just a couple of kind of economic questions, to see how much it costs people to get involved, so two more. Is there - did you buy any clothing specifically to take part?**

R: No, I don't think we did, but I can imagine that people did do. I think that I already had a fair number of pairs of shorts, and this and that kind of thing. I'm sure that we did buy one or two things, but I... You'd be better speaking to my wife about that, but not a lot.

I: **Okay. And no new trainers, or anything?**

R: Well, I would be wearing those anyway, because I'm a fairly active person anyway [unclear 27:09].

I: **Okay.**

R: So I've always got a part of shorts and a bit of gym clothing, and over garments and so on. And the same with my wife, so, yeah, we're fairly active and we were fairly active.

I: **Oh, great. That's very good. Was there anything that helped you to stay motivated, that helped you to keep going every week, other than kind of [name]'s encouragement, and...?**

R: Oh, it was simply that provided that whoever was in charge of the classes, encouraged group feeling. You'd just meet friends, you'd meet different people and you're doing different things together, and from there so much could develop.

I: **Yeah.**

R: It's fascinating, yes.

I: **Yeah. Did you say you met outside of the sessions together?**

R: Yeah, that didn't happen - it tends to happen with a few people that you get closer to, and because there's a limited time in the week and that kind of stuff, and what you feel you want to do anyway. So, yeah, personally, I have a number of people that we said hello to in the time, when we go down shopping, and this, that and the other. As from that day to this one, has gone up and up and up and up. My wife and I have something like three-quarters of an hour to walk from one end of [place] to another sometimes, simply by having to talk to people along the way.

I: **Oh, that's lovely.**

R: Yes, it is.

I: **Yeah, that is really nice.**

R: And an awful lot of that has incidentally resulted from those classes, and it's still there. People who were in those classes two years ago [unclear 29:20], or something like that, that

we still say allow to each other and we still see each other in coffee bars, and this, that and the other. And once the relationship is made, it's there.

I: Yeah. So were there any individuals on the programme that weren't such a kind of great influence, that were kind of a negative influence, in some way?

R: I think the negative influence, well, I gave you an example where, in my view, the county council was unnecessarily unsupporting of the view that older people in the community, did have access to community resources. And so - but that's typical of the local authorities, and I will say that, because I used to work in one. And depending on who is the top person or whoever, what have you, and that dictates the pattern of the ways in which they go about their business.

I: Yeah.

R: And I don't know whether it's any better now, or worse, but I just hope it's better.

I: Yeah, you'd hope so.

R: But, yes, but what does one say? There's a lot of politics that surrounds local provision [unclear 31:05], and they get close attention from county councils and things like that, as opposed to national things and that kind of thing.

I: I see.

R: Just get away with it, really simply, because there's no way in the world that people are going to know the detail. But, again, a small community like [place], yeah, it can be difficult, I think.

I: Yeah, that makes sense.

R: And [unclear 31:41].

I: Sorry, can you say that again? I missed that.

R: Yeah. No, I'm glad I'm not a part of that now. I'm 80 years old, so I've reached the stage where I couldn't give a monkeys what they think, or what they do, and I've told them to their face as well. Yeah, but, in general principle, I do value politicians that put the issues first, and then themselves second.

I: Yeah. That's what you want, really, isn't it?

R: Yes.

I: Okay. So we'll just go back to how you first found out about NERS. What was your doctor like? What did they - did they know much about it? Were they encour-...?

R: Yes, they did.

I: Yeah?

R: Yes. I was able to thoroughly talk about it with my GP, and the GP knew exactly what the programme was and this, that and the other. But, again, bear in mind, this is a small community in [place], and that's how it tends to work about a lot of things. There's - yeah, I can imagine in a big town, it's a much more problematic thing than it is in [place], because I think news like that goes around, plays around the community like wildfire.

I: **Yeah. We have found that some people haven't heard of it, including the doctors. They aren't aware of it, so they can't refer people, obviously.**

R: Well, that's just plain disgusting...

I: **Mm, it's a shame.**

R: ...because either people are not seeing it as their job to inform, or you're [unclear 33:37] accusing doctors of not being interested. And I'm sorry, I don't buy that one. Of course they're going to be interested in anything that helps their patients, and therefore their workload. I'm sure they're going to be very interested in, all the doctors I know, anyway. I don't - yeah, but there you go!

I: **So your doctor, did you ask them any questions and did you get them answered well?**

R: I didn't feel the need. With given my background, and I'm not being big-headed or anything like that, but I do know what an exercise programme can do. I do know about the various aspects of running a programme like that. [name] is magnificent, and there's no other word for it. I mean, how she keeps going with some of these things, I really don't know. But I am a great fan of hers, and she brings a lot of spirit, a lot of joy and humour, and everything else, and an awful lot of people have benefited from her work.

I: **Oh, that's great.**

R: Oh, yes, and there's no exaggeration there.

I: **Yeah.**

R: It's what she does naturally, she does it. Half the time, she doesn't know she's doing it. No, it's just - it's just her.

I: **Yeah. It sounds like she was really encouraging. Was there anyone else, like a family member or a friend that was encouraging you to take part?**

R: Oh, yeah, my wife.

I: **Yeah. Had she already taken part?**

R: No, well, I think we joined mostly together, actually, and we kept each other going on the time when I don't feel like going this morning, and she would shivvy me on [unclear 35:36]. So, yeah, it's worked very well for us.

- I: Yeah. Oh, great. Okay. So when you first met [name], after you'd been referred, so when you were first going to start the programme, you'd got all of that in motion. What was that meeting like? What did you discuss?**
- R: Well, I think it was - oh, crikey, my memory! I think it was majorly a resume of what was on offer, the choices that were possible, and the number of times you could access the facility, and that's about it, really. And then the programmes themselves demonstrated where we were going with it, and that kind of thing. I mean, this, for me, was bread and water, and I knew this from start to finish because of my own interest in PE.
- I: And did [name] contact you, or once you'd been referred?**
- R: That's a very specific question. How did it happen? I think it was something like us going down and enquiring where we knew that classes were taking place, and then you were face-to-face with [name]. And, oh, there was another person there, and he's not there now. I can't remember his name. There's nothing to say to you about him, because it's more to do with my memory.
- I: Were you apprehensive about anything at this point, just before you started the actual sessions?**
- R: To a degree, yes, because I hadn't done any sort of gym-like exercises, and regular exercises and doing things because of a commitment that you give, and that kind of thing for a while. So to begin with, I was thinking, well, I'll see how I go. But, no, it was fine, I mean, as I said, my wife and I did it for, well, it has to be four or five years anyway, at the very least. It's probably more.
- I: Yeah. So how would you sum up this kind of overall - the meeting process, just before you started?**
- R: Well, what does one say to that? Informative. Sufficiently informative.
- I: That's great.**
- R: And sufficiently encouraging.
- I: Yeah, and was there anything that could be improved?**
- R: At that stage, no, because, by definition, when you're starting something from new, nobody quite knows how everybody is going to react and this, that and the other. So it's got an in-built factor of uncertainty, hasn't it? Because you can't be certain about it. And they very quickly disappeared with the first two or three classes, and you think, oh, well, this is fine. People are fine, people are smiling, people are saying hello, and I'm not being ignored.
- I: Yeah, that's lovely.**
- R: Well, it's the usual human reaction, isn't it?
- I: Of course, everyone. Yeah.**

R: Yeah, that's right, and we all want to be noted, and we want people to be nice to us, and that kind of stuff, and they were.

I: **Yeah, we all want to make friends.**

R: Well, yes, yeah. Why not? It's much better than making enemies!

I: **Yeah, of course. So if - I know you've said that you probably wouldn't like to take part, if the service had gone virtual for you. I know you withdrew before that happened, but could you see any benefits to it being virtual?**

R: Oh, yes. I think that - I think it's got an awful lot to do with the way that virtual operates. It's the - it's a kind of a select contact system, and I think that that's the older generation people like the contact system to be more human, if you know what I mean?

I: **Yeah. Yeah, I understand.**

R: And if I was 20 years younger, 30 years younger, I'd be saying the exact opposite, I'm sure. So if you're saying, do you approve of it? Yes, I do. Am I any good at it? No, I'm not.

I: **Did anyone contact you to offer you the...**

R: Oh, yes.

I: **...virtual?**

R: I mean, oh, yes. I mean, around here, for instance, if I went a fortnight without seeing [name], somewhere along the place, that would be unusual. So, yes, and [name] would immediately say, are you...? And tackle you in the high street or wherever it is, and she's a charming person. And her fellow helpers as well - I'm missing out a whole series of other people here as well - and in a small community, you just find out what's going on. Oh, that sounds good, we'll give that a try. And that's the way it grows, and if, when you go, you like it, well, why not stay a while?

I: **Yeah. Did [name] mention to you, why don't you have a go at the virtual programme?**

R: No, I don't think she's been explicit about that, no. No, I'm only hesitating, because I can't remember any response. I think most of my responses with [name] have been personal, so and that's more to me, going to me than it is to her. I know she does an awful lot, because I see it coming over on my computer, but it's interesting to note and probably this is worth you noting. My instantaneous reaction is, no, I'm not interested.

I: **Yeah.**

R: So I wish I could explain that. I think it's something to do with feeling uncomfortable with it.

I: **Yeah. Uncomfortable with being online in front of the camera, or feeling...?**

R: On being online, but doing it properly. It's strange for me, and I've always been a people person, and that doesn't do anything for me. With people, I'm fine, but [unclear 43:49]

sitting on a sofa in the office here looking at a television screen. No, thank you. It's not me. I'm too old to go in for that lot.

I: Okay. So talking more a bit about [name] now, what was your relationship like with her? How well do you get along?

R: Very well.

I: Yeah. And do you think she was appropriately skilled to deliver these sessions?

R: Oh, God, yes. Oh, a hundred per cent. God, yes! And everybody she selected to join her. And I have no - I couldn't be more praise... I couldn't more praise everybody who has had, who have been her assistants and everything, which is again down to her and her selection, and that kind of stuff. So no worries about that at all, no.

I: Yeah. What was it about them, do you think that was so effective for you?

R: Well, first of all, that they recognised what the essence of the job is to be, at least to begin with on it, and I remain so. You've got to get on with people, and in order to do that, you've got to be prepared to think, oh well, with this person, I think if I went about it this way, I might get a better result. And I'd prepared it as to actually look out for in your mind, for other ways of doing things, which might appeal to people more than they're doing. Does that make sense to you?

I: Yeah.

R: But that just sounds right.

I: Yeah.

R: And, yeah, all her assistants, everything about it, I can't think of anybody who has been, as it were, a waste of time.

I: Yeah.

R: And I can make that judgment, because, as I say, having been a [profession] and that kind of thing, and inevitably taking an awful lot of the classes in gym, a football team, the netball team, and this, that and the other, I do know the principles of this. So I can judge when somebody is doing a good job.

I: Yeah, that's very good. So they sounded like people-people, is that right?

R: Yeah, correct. Oh, you have to be.

I: Yeah.

R: If you don't like people, I would recommend very, very strongly not to do that job.

I: Yeah. So do you feel like the amount of support they gave was right for you?

R: Yes.

I: Could it have been with more - could you have done with more, or was it could you have done with less?

R: I think in terms of more, if I say they did what they were enabled to do themselves. When you're in a situation where the space that you're using is sometimes taken away from you at the last minute, and you were the one that's got to get in touch with everybody to tell them if the classes have been cancelled because of this, that and the other, you find yourself in a different position with that. And you would, if it - if it was easy-going, ongoing, and, yeah, in this case, the school recognise what you were doing and its importance, as much as you recognise the schools importance. Professionals actually respecting each other.

I: Yeah, I see. And so could the way she supported you have been improved in any way?

R: Oh God, yes, nobody's perfect, and [name] isn't perfect, but she is very good. And I think that if we can all reach the stage of being very good, that's sufficient.

I: Yeah.

R: That's as good as it's going to get.

I: Yeah. So the aim for this evaluation is to learn and get better results, and provide a service that's better for people, so what sort of ways could that support have been better for you?

R: Well, again, it's going back to not so much them, but the principles of the people who have power over the buildings, and some people only see education at schools, and you can go on and on and on about this. You can only be as good as the authority, if you like, is, as a whole, and how it operates. Some authorities are very good, and I think, in many ways, [place] is a good authority, but I think that... Well, I think I'm old enough and I can say it. I they could be of a much broader-minded approach to many things that goes on in county councils around, not only in Wales and England, but everywhere.

I: Yeah.

R: And working in Nottingham for 20 years, so I can assure you it's exactly the same there. And I saw people - an awful lot of people are simply out to get what they want.

I: Yeah, I understand.

R: That's sad, that.

I: Yeah, it is sad, that.

R: Yeah, I think so.

I: So your - you said that your wife took part as well in this programme, did you have any support from your friends and family outside of the programme?

R: Oh, yes, I mean, my daughter, who lives in [place], she was very approving. She is very, very athletic, and athletic-minded, so very pleased to see both her parents taking part in programmes done, and interested and everything else. Yes, absolutely.

I: **Yeah. How...**

R: I mean, it's - I suppose we can call ourselves a fairly active family, really. So I think it's important that your own background plays - I'm keen on activity and this, that and the other. An awful lot of people aren't, and they will have their reasons for why they're not. And that's got to be worked through, so I think in many ways both Kate and I were easy meat, actually, for the instructors and this, that and the other. We wanted to be there, and there was no problem in that.

I: **Yeah. So how important do you think that your family, so your wife and your daughter, their support and encouragement was, how important do you think that was to you attending every week?**

R: Well, you've got to understand my daughter is [place], and we were down in [place]. So this isn't as if we were living in the same household, or this, that and the other. And this was in the time of all [?hours 52:26] where we were approaching retirement, anyway, say, 50, 55. And so I think both [name] and I have a limited sort of experience of that, and we were self-motivated anyway. Our daughter would have been keen anyway, and so are our grandchildren, so they're all active.

I: **Were there any negative influences from family members, who maybe dismissed the effort or asked you why you were doing it?**

R: No, nothing like that at all in the family, no. No, no, no, if we're talking about a family that if I thought for one minute they harboured a thought like, well, this is a waste of time, physical activity. Well, I would do my very best to dissuade them, and change their mind. No, no, I've never had to do it, and they are all, in their own way, active.

I: **Yeah. Okay. So moving on to your overall reflections of your involvement in the programme now, do you...? Have you found that through the programme you've developed the enjoyment for exercise?**

R: Oh yeah, it was there, though. You're talking to somebody who was doing it. So it was no difficulty. I think the difficulty all - nearly always comes from people who are, say, at the age of 30, 40 are doing it for the first time in their life, and then that would be full of [unclear 54:20] and that kind of thing. Whereas if you have been doing it all your life, and I played rugby until I was 40. So sport and that kind of thing was in my life, so, yeah, it's what I did. But not everybody has that kind of experience, so there you go!

I: **Yeah, I understand. And...**

R: And that's why teachers, that those who are coaches and that kind of thing, need to be aware of the huge contribution they can make to so many families, simply by encouraging people to be active.

I: Yeah.

R: Simple as that.

I: Yeah. And have you found it to be a benefit to your wellbeing, your mental wellbeing?

R: Yeah. And that's particularly - that's interesting, that's a very pertinent question. I'm at the age of 80, and I'm now having... I've had a scan of my brain and that kind of thing, with a suspicion there might be something. I'm not quite right there now, but at 80 this is the sort of thing that happens. I do know that if you're fit, physically fit and if your lifestyle is good, then the chances of you getting real brain damage that can't be handled, is decreased incredibly. It is so important.

I: Yeah.

R: Yeah, but then it's not until you arrive there, and I've only just arrived there, that you realise how important.

I: Yeah. I'm sorry to hear that you're having these scans.

R: Well, do you know, well, what [unclear 56:39] I'm 80 years of age. I don't want to live until I'm 180. And it is what it is. As you get old, and you get a bit more philosophical in most those things.

I: Yeah, I see. And so in terms of your wellbeing in how happy you are, and how content you are with your life, did it help at all, the exercise programme?

R: Oh, yes, of course. I mean, once you bring people together, you've changed their lives.

I: Yeah.

R: I really don't think that these simple facts are available to an awful lot of people, who are often in power making decisions about programmes that deliver this. It's incredible, the effect that exercise programmes... Telling people who are older together, what it can accomplish in the right hands.

I: Yeah, I see.

R: Which is just a [unclear 57:48] you don't have to be a miracle worker. That's all you've got to be, is a human being that feels the needs of other human beings. So that means you've got [?to look 58:03], and then you've got to see, and then you've got to appreciate, and then you can perhaps be some kind of useful person to that person, whoever it is. The process is very, very easy, and it's called being a human being.

I: Yeah.

R: It's as simple and straightforward as that.

I: Yeah. So speaking of other people's needs, do you think that the different types of delivery... So you know how one was virtual and one was face-to-face, do you think it suits people in different ways, dependent on their needs?

R: Absolutely. I'm sure that some people would find the face-to-face better, and other people will be more than perfectly happy with the programme on the computers. And I think younger people would take to the computer a bit easier than older people, generally speaking. But that's only generally speaking, and it doesn't necessarily mean that way.

I: Okay. So what sort of changes would you like to see with the exercise programme, in the future?

R: Well, for the benefit of the exercise programme, I think that it would be very, very helpful if there was an overall government directive to come to county councils, and that they have to with a strong, free stroke underlined, have to be seen to be positive in the encouragement of keeping people safe. Older people of non-school age healthy, and that is mentally healthy, as well as physically healthy.

I: Yeah.

R: It's as simple as that, and but you see there are - a lot of people would disagree with what I've just said, because they don't think it makes any sense. There you go! There's nothing I can do about that.

I: No. So if you thought maybe perhaps younger people might be better suited, generally speaking, to a virtual programme, do you think that anyone would be willing to pay for the virtual programme?

R: And you're asking this to see if that's a viable proposition, aren't you?

I: Not me, personally, but...

R: No, no, there's nothing about that - my comment that this is personal, but I can understand you exploring, well, how difficult is it going to be to ask people to pay for this? Again, that's a perfectly reasonable question, and I think that it's a personal, re-...a reasonable answer is, some won't do it, and some will.

I: Yeah.

R: Simple as that.

I: And how important do you think it is that it's - say you did get involved in your online sessions, how important would it be that it was [name] leading them, or do you think it could have been anyone?

R: Well, given the helpers that [name] has employed, either directly or indirectly over the last five, six years, I would have no problem with any of them. The selection of the right people for that job is fundamental.

I: Yeah.

R: And I think that [name] is pretty good at that. And I don't know how good, because I don't quite know how to measure that skill. But I'm thinking - I'm pausing, because I'm thinking of the people that my wife and I have come across, and I can't think of one that, in some ways, has been useless. Well, I didn't like that person, or this, that and the other. Quite the reverse, so that says something [from our choice 1:02:42], doesn't it?

I: Yeah.

R: That's how - I think that, I suppose, behind what you're asking and this, that and the other, if you want a view about how [name] is viewed, I can tell you now, she is viewed very highly in the community.

I: Yeah.

R: She really is, I mean, a cracking girl. She's - her major claim to fame is the speed that she can go on her bike, when she goes back to [unclear 1:03:23]. One or two have people expressed this, and you see this blur passing past your house, and you know it's [name], yeah.

I: Oh wow! It's - the question is more about whether the local feel is really important to kind of mimic online?

R: Well, you're straying out of my knowledge range. You see, I don't think that I can confidently answer that, because I don't know how to. So I think that if it's all right with you, I will dodge that one.

I: No problem at all.

R: Because I don't just want to - you to run away with my personal thoughts on things, when I don't know the first thing about it. I'm conscious, so one of the reasons why I don't like going on that thing, and I'm looking at it now, is that I don't really know how it works, so...

I: Yeah, I see.

R: ...it's an enemy, and not a friend.

I: Yeah, I understand. So we've finished the questions, and I'm just wondering if there's anything you want to add?

R: Well, only that the importance of the exercise programme in the community, is it's so big that it's hard for me to find the words to really... So many, many people, and so many of the benefits are incidental to just being together and sharing together, and this, that and the other. There's just so many old people, particularly that they're gaining incredible value out of this. It might not be physical fitness value. Mental fitness, oh yes! Absolutely, oh yes! So, yeah, good on you all, and I wish you the best of luck of making sure that in the next ten years, you have an even better exercise programme operating in Wales, than there is at the moment, and that it's got far more support.

I: Yeah. Oh, that's great. Thank you so much. I'm just going to stop the recording now.

R: Yes.

End of Transcription