

Participant M17

I: Perfect. Thank you.

R: Back in 2020 ... I became pre-diabetic, so I'd been conscious of everything that was going on, and I was attend-... After the first NERS referral, I kept on going to the gym as a member and paying... Well, not as a member, but paying for gym sessions on my own.

And then in early-2020, while I was undergoing one of the diabetic reviews, there was a visiting doctor came out of the [*hospital*], and he was travelling around various surgeries and he said, would I like to be referred back on NERS. Obviously, for a different reason now.

I: Yeah, that makes sense.

R: ...that's a long story, but a shorter version of it, really.

I: That's fine. I'm here to listen to your long story. Yeah, that sounds really difficult. So when the doctor - was it your doctor that referred you, or was that someone...?

R: Because - and coming up with the [*hospital*] in [*place*], was kind of work on behalf of the Welsh government, which is what the NERS scheme is that we're talking about here. But he was looking essentially at the diabetic issue, and because I was in a pre-diabetic situation, the nurse who normally carries out my diabetic review in the surgery, said, well, I can see this guy, which I did, and he was helpful as well. I take on board every bit of information I can that's going to improve my quality of life, and it was he then who referred me to the NERS scheme, but it wasn't my personal GP, if you see what I mean? It was a visiting doctor.

I: Yeah, okay. Did he describe to you what the programme was going to be like, or did you kind of already know because of your previous involvement?

R: Yeah, I knew pretty well it was going to be a 16-week round job, and essentially the guidance I would be given in class, if you like, on what would be of benefit to help my general health and condition, yeah?

I: Yeah. Yeah. And when he mentioned it to you, how interested, how like appealing did it feel for you?

R: Well, I just felt it was going to be something more that was... As I said, because of the reviews in-house, as it were, I found that anything that was going to avoid me developing full-blown diabetes, was going to be worthwhile. And he - it was his suggestion about NERS and, yes, I was more than happy to take it on board, really.

I: Yeah. Did you - was there anything you were unsure of, or hesitant about getting involved?

R: No. No, I mean, it's the same leisure centre that I've attended in the first session on this one. So I'm well aware of the layout there, what facilities are available and the care and attention that's given by the NERS people on the site, if you like, with running each class.

- I: Yeah. And the doctor who referred you, did he feel particularly supportive about you getting involved, or...?**
- R: Oh, yeah, I think they all feel - I think medicals, if I can call them that, generally kind of help patients help themselves, and it's just one way of helping yourself. I mean, some people just ignore their condition, and get into a terrible state. And I'm not saying I won't get into a terrible state, but it's feeling off the worse, isn't it? And it's self-help, as far as [?you get it 06:29]. So, yes, he was positive about the scheme.
- I: Okay, that's good. Is there anything you would - that they could have improved about that point, about getting you onto the scheme?**
- R: No, I think, generally, my experience of the scheme is there's always a waiting list to get on there. I think the instructors, if I can call them that, are always working against the odds in trying to take people on board. And then also that 16-week [unclear 07:02] only can help people.
- I: Yeah. How long were you waiting for before you got to start?**
- R: Not too long. Unfortunately, there was something I recall and it went wrong in the first instance, because this guy had come from outside the practice, and the initial referral went to the wrong place. It didn't - it wasn't a huge problem and that was corrected. I think, from memory, I saw the guy probably in January time and I'd started by March, late, late-February, March anyway. And then, of course, we all know what happens thereafter.
- I: What a year!**
- R: What, a year!
- I: Yeah, it's been longer than that, hasn't it?**
- R: Oh, it's just dreadful, yeah. Yeah, and going - well, [unclear 08:04] but, I mean, going to the leisure centre now, it's still odd, because I suspect it's been a bit quieter, because of the school holidays. Because I think I started back on the 6th August, really. It's so quiet there, which is unusual. Whereas, normally, it's buzzing and as the NERS people have to work their way around members of the public paying to come into the gym, and the... It's attached to a school, and the school children in term time have access there. So I don't know what it's going to be like in the coming weeks, but it's been fairly quiet up until now. Quite different to when it was there in March 2020.
- I: Was that something you quite enjoyed then, when it was quite busy and a bit of an atmosphere?**
- R: Yes. I like 3D relationships, right? I mean, you and I are now having a 2D relationship and that's fine. I mean, I find Zoom very helpful for this kind of thing, but for kind of virtual lessons that were going on, I couldn't react. In a gym you've got people around you, you've got the instructor walking around you, chatting to you, making sure everything is all right and it's just a different atmosphere to it all.

I: Yeah, there is. So how long were you - so once the referral had gone to the right place, did your exercise professional reach out to you?

R: Yes, she did. Yeah.

I: Do you remember her name?

R: [name]

I: [name]. So did she - how did she make contact the first time?

R: She telephoned me, and invited me down to meet her and sign me up for the scheme, basically, and talked through what my needs and expectations were. And it was all very friendly, really, and that... Like I said, that was the start of it.

I: And did you meet face-to-face, or was it...?

R: Yes.

I: Yeah. Okay. Did you have any concerns before this first meeting?

R: None. As I say, I think my experience in the past was helpful there anyway, and knowing what to expect. But the bonus is, with all due respect, this lady, [name], is more people-friendly. When I had my back in 2015, it was a different kind of experience then to the one I experienced at the beginning. And I don't know whether you know, but from [unclear 11:07] the NERS scheme has restarted here now, and because of the pandemic, of course, I hadn't been in the gym since March 2020, until the 6th August, this year, so that was the strangest bit. It wasn't the initial one was the problem, it was going back in was the problem.

I: Yeah. I suppose it's a big jump from what you're used to doing, is that's what changes, doesn't it?

R: Yeah. I mean, there was the initial change for losing [name] right at the very beginning. Although, let me say, she was superb in that she ran different things online. They had ongoing walking expeditions, which was adding up all the miles we were doing whilst we were in lockdown, marching around Wales, adding up the miles and stuff like that. But, as I said before, she also started to run an online class, which we'll come to in your discussion with your virtual stuff. And she also provided me with a video, but she - in normal times, she was running Tai Chi classes, so she sent me a Tai Chi video which I could use at home, because that was a one-to-one. It's strange, you get [unclear 12:40] I'm doing Tai Chi, and then you can follow him, whereas if you're in a class of people you get terribly distracted trying to do things like lifting weights, and bands and God knows what else. So, yeah, she's been superb.

I: Wow, that's really good. Was she particularly important in your kind of engagement?

R: Yes. I think we certainly had a good rapport almost right away, and it was good to see her back there on the 6th August. I mean, it's a step forward for me, in so many ways, really, the reintroduction of it.

I: **Yeah, that's very good. What exercise sessions did you get involved with when it was all face-to-face at the beginning of [over speaking 13:42]?**

R: Yeah, and I'm doing a mix of things, really. It was I do a session on a recumbent bike, upright bike, treadmill. And there is weight exercises and leg extension exercises, and it's just generally an all-round measured improvement. Because in conjunction with that, nothing to do with NERS, but ever since I had my back operation, I do see these exercises each morning as soon as I get up, which is intended to deal with the problem there. So my main effort in the gym has been aerobic, rather than... It's just to keep [?breathing 14:37], etcetera, well.

I: **Yeah. And did those sessions feel suitable for you then?**

R: Oh, yeah, yeah. And I think with the diabetes, I mean, there's a lot to do with diet as well, so I'm going to try and detox, if you like. As I say to people, I eat the right food, I just eat too much of it and that's my big problem.

I: **Yeah. Was it what you expected? Had anything changed from the previous ones you'd been involved in?**

R: Well, the most noticeable thing for me, is that this lady trusts me to do the work in the gym. Whereas the initial lady, the one that did the thing back in 2015, I think she's still around. I'm not going to name her, for a series of... I don't want the legal team coming down on me. But each time you completed a task in the gym, she wouldn't let - this was the other lady - she wouldn't let me move on to the other one until she signed the book. Well, you could spend hours, and if she had five on a NERS in that class, and each time each person had to wait until they'd completed their time, you could spend hours there.

I: **Yeah.**

R: And I've got a life outside of the gym. Whereas [name] is more - I think in the initial stages, clearly, she wants to see how you're performing on each of these things. But once she knows you're doing them, and she'll keep an eye on you, as you're going around the gym. But she's not bothering you all the time, so it's much more relaxed in my mind, anyway, and it's not so intense.

I: **Yeah. So did you enjoy the sessions, and which ones were the most enjoyable, if any?**

R: Well, some of the ones that I enjoy, at the moment, and not... There was a sessional circuit you could go to, a light circuit, which I've been the one session since I've returned, but with another of the NERS ladies there. And, as I said, [name] ran a Tai Chi session which was helpful. So those, again, were a nice experience, because you are doing different things. You go down the gym and pummel away if you want, for hours, and if you like that kind of thing, with your earphones on, that's perfectly all right. But when you're in the class, it's different and there's a different feel to it all. There's a commonality about it, and basically those

sessions were... Although they were run by the NERS trainers, they were mixed, in the sense that there were non-NERS people in the class, so they didn't know that you were NERS or non-NERS. Do you see what I mean?

I: Yeah.

R: The gym is a lonely place unless you - you strike up a relationship with individuals there, and that's something else I've missed, obviously, since the lockdown, because all the gyms are shut. And, certainly, as a NERS member, where you're considered vulnerable for whatever reason, you're not signed up for NERS if you're the fittest person in the world, are you? It was the reintroduction, as I say, the getting back to the gym after so... I was only prepared to go back to the gym once the NERS classes restarted, because that gave me a degree of comfort that things were safe again.

I: Yeah, I see. Yeah, and there's a camaraderie aspect to it, is there?

R: Absolutely. Absolutely, yeah.

I: So speaking of kind of the social elements, was there anything that particularly had like a positive impact on your mood?

R: Yes. I think if you got talking to a - I mean, some people have gone along, and I don't consider myself, my condition as serious as some of the individuals with cardiac issues, and all kinds of problems, and they have to be extremely careful. And I guess the instructors must be worried in case they just keel over one day, and not get off their bike, or fall off their bike. I jest about it, but, yes, I got to know several people both from the first NERS, way back in 2015, and again this time. So, yes, there is a shared experience, if you like, which is nice.

I: Is that what you were hoping to get from the programme, and what sort of things were you hoping? Was it health-related, wellbeing, friendships?

R: It's the wellbeing side of things more than anything else. The health - I think when you're on your own, as I am, obviously, to generate enough enthusiasm, to do the kind of exercises you would do in a group, is not easy.

I: No.

R: Whereas if there's people next to you lifting dumbbells or doing things, there's a driver there which comes from inside. And that's what - well, I'm still hoping to get back to, obviously, as this course develops now. Yes, just a general sense of wellbeing and, of course, I guess those people with cardiac issues will be hoping to restore greater energy. And I haven't got that, and I'm just keeping my... I couldn't run the London Marathon before, and I'm still not expecting to do it now. So, there you go!

I: Yeah. And were you - you were hoping maybe to kind of keep the diabetes under control?

R: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

I: How many sessions did you attend a week?

R: A minimum of two.

I: Oh wow!

R: If I could fit - because I do two gym sessions a week, and this was before the pandemic, and I'll come back to post-pandemic, if you like. Well, it's not in post-pandemic, but since I've returned. I was doing two gym sessions a week, and I would attend either a circuit issue, a circuit session or a Tai Chi session as well. Because in addition to this, until [unclear 21:54] the pandemic killed everything, and it did affect my social life greatly, you can imagine. But I was a member of a yoga class as well, and nothing to do with NERS. And that's gone to Zoom, and so it's been run by [name] so far as that's concerned.

I: Yeah, that's such a shame. It has been very difficult for a lot of people's social life, I think. Yeah. So other than the kind of group dynamic, was there anything else that kept you motivated to keep attending, and to give the classes your all?

R: Not really. I felt self-motivated enough and once I'd got into the swing of things, I mean, it was part enjoyment, and part pain and part wellbeing. Because none of this has come easy, and, I mean, I can only measure the damage of the pandemic has done, by what I could do pre-pandemic and what I can do now, and it's significantly different, of course. And just the word 'rehabilitation' is really beginning to click in at the moment.

I: How were you invited? So when the pandemic hit, how were you invited to do NERS virtually?

R: Well, [name] said - she sent this invite out, basically, and we... She was prepared to do a session each week for about an hour from her home, involving people of her NERS group. There was people there - as I said, I attended the first session just to see how it went, and there were people I never have seen in my life at them, any of the gym sessions. I didn't recognise anybody, so, clearly, [name] was running a lot of classes over this period, and so she invited us to try from home. But my problem is I'm talking to you from a desktop, not a laptop, or I've got a small tablet, but it's so ancient, the steering... I can't get [unclear 24:19] for it anymore, but I'm in a study, I've got a light above my head here, you can see a bookcase behind me. And so I haven't got the room to swing.

I: Yeah. So did you start - so you started doing some of the virtual classes, is that right?

R: For about ten minutes.

I: Yeah. Yeah.

R: I knew - I mean, I knew as soon as the first movements were taking place, that it wasn't going to work for me.

I: And was that - that was mainly a space issue, or was there anything else?

R: Space and distractions of other folks, and... I can't remember, and I don't know when it may have developed as the experience grew, but when I've attended Zoom meetings [unclear 25:25], and there's been a speaker, which if you substitute instructor for speaker, the speaker switches off the sound of the other participants. So if they want to ask a question, they can tick the box at the bottom, and put [unclear 25:46] the end. Well, that didn't happen, so there was people talking as well...

I: **Oh!**

R: ...and their images were on-screen. And it was just - well, it just wasn't for me, I'm sorry.

I: **No, that's all right.**

R: It didn't work.

I: **Yeah. No, that's fine. Was there any - did you see any kind of benefit of being on the virtual classes?**

R: I could see the benefit, if I could have adapted, but I knew that I wasn't going to... Yes, and I think from feedback I've had from [name] since, they did continue. So there were people who were obviously far more attuned to it. When I saw it, I think most people had tablets, as opposed to desktops. Some may have been working with laptops or tablets. Tablets would have been the best, I think, because you could move from room-to-room, and that would have given me an opportunity. But, yes, it did continue and I think they had a measure of success, but I didn't participate in that.

I: **Was it kind of how you feel now, how you've - now you've done them, is that what you expected to feel before you started?**

R: More or less, I think, because of what was happening on the yoga front as well, because I'd also tried to do that before I joined the NERS one, and that didn't work. And so I'd had a taste of, if you like, and the taste was bitter.

I: **And what were you told about that what the virtual classes would be like, what did [name] explain?**

R: Well, she told us we'd need a chair, and we'd need exercise bands, weights, if we had them and cans of beans, if we didn't, and things like that. So she was very informative of what you needed ahead of it, but it comes down to space. And there were other people - I don't know whether the husband and wife were both NERS sufferers, or NERS candidates - I can't say sufferers - but you get... There'd be at least three where there's a husband and wife there, or a partner and... And I just thought, this is odd, I've never seen this since the gym, because generally you have one partner who is ill, and probably the other one who is helping. And that may have been the case; but then, sorry, it was just all a bit bizarre for me.

I: **And how much of the face-to-face sessions did you do before it went virtual?**

R: It was very early on.

- I: Was that three weeks, or...?**
- R: Probably about three weeks and because, as I said, I know I've gone to a couple of Tai Chi classes, and one circuit, but the rest have been gyms. But it wouldn't have been more than two or three, and, in fact, what's happened since, [name] has restarted and for the rest of us, those of us who had cancelled so early on, she's given us a fresh start, if you like. And that's where we are with that, but it was very, very early on.
- I: Were there any kind of internet connectivity problems, or perhaps maybe you'd spend all day on the computer, and you don't want to then do an exercise session on the computer, anything like that?**
- R: Nothing like that at all. No, it was just me and the way the classes were, that's basically it. No internet problems. No, personality problems [unclear 30:12] of my personality.
- I: It's just preference, and you're not the only one.**
- R: No, well, I'm glad to hear it, because you sometimes think [unclear 30:21] and, of course, I'm of an older generation which the digital world is still a bit of a... I can't explain, there's probably a three-year-old kid that can come into this house, and do five times much work than me in 30 seconds. But everything is so much [?smaller now 30:42], and it's something I'm having to adapt to.
- I: Yeah. It's growing up with it that makes the difference, I think. But, yeah, no, you're not the only one, and you're really important to speak to, because NERS has to work for everyone. And if they do it all online, then that gets rid of a whole group of people that then can't take part, so it's important they know that, isn't it?**
- R: Yeah. And what I don't know is, whether there were any NERS participants who had no access to a laptop, tabletop, any kind of top. There are people like that and this, I think, is a dangerous assumption in the modern world, that everybody can go online at a second [unclear 31:34]. And I've got people in the family who haven't - wouldn't recognise a computer if it landed on their head.
- I: Yeah. What a different world that must be. Yeah. So was there anything that might have made a difference to whether or not you stayed on the virtual platforms?**
- R: As I said, I think if I had a very up-to-date tablet that I could have moved into a different room, and with a reliable internet connection, then I think things may have been different. Because I could have sighted the tablet and the lesson, if you like much better, than I can here.
- I: Yeah. And is there anything that you think that NERS itself, the programme, could do to kind of support people to get involved virtually?**
- R: What, other than supplying everybody with a new iPad?
- I: That would be nice, wouldn't it?**

R: No, I think it comes down to the individual preferences, and I have to say I enjoy the company of people. It's something I've missed hugely in the pandemic, not seeing so many people anyway. And whereas, prior to that, I was seeing people and letting them touch me, hug me, and me hugging them, and suddenly that's all gone. And so the people I knew down in... And, for example, there's a guy down the gym, who has got his own problems, but he sits on a bike and he rides it for an hour solid, and at the end of it he's sweating. But now I've got to know him quite well, and when you get to know him, he's got a huge set of individual problems of his own, which is why he's hammering this bike to help. But I haven't seen him since I've been back, but I've tried to contact and, apparently, he is turning up very early in the morning. Now, that's the kind of thing you can only do face-to-face, strike up a relationship. I mean, you look at [unclear 33:58] and I'm sure if we would have met in real life, we'd get on famously. But in order to get things going, I'd need to see you in real life. I mean, how people conduct interviews for jobs online, God only knows!

I: **I know, yeah. My interview was online.**

R: Yeah.

I: **Yeah.**

R: I mean, I was a manager of about a hundred people at a time, but if... You could look at this person's eyes and you could make all kinds of body language, whatever. You can't do that on Zoom. Well, I can't do that on Zoom.

I: **No, I think that's - that is a lot more difficult, isn't it? Yeah. So these kind of like - the concerns that kind of stopped you getting involved in the virtual, from that point onwards, did you discuss them with [name], and how was that conversation?**

R: No. I mean, we used to exchange emails from time-to-time, but we didn't speak until fairly recently again. But, as I said, what she set up with the group was this because, I mean, I knew every... I know every blade of grass between this village and the next village, because I've walked it so often during the last 18 months. I'm on first name terms with every slug and bird, and God knows what! But she - I think that it was nationwide and, I mean Welsh nationwide scheme, to have this walk around Wales by adding up the miles, and what you're doing. And she was translating some of the exercises, like I was doing in the morning every day, into mileage, if you like. And that was good, but that was only - it ran, I think, from June to probably September of last year, really. Nothing happened there since.

I: **Yeah. So do you think any part of the process of NERS is suitable online? So like the first meeting, or the referral, or maybe your end, your 16-week assessment, is there anything that you would see as being suitable online?**

R: I don't think you could do the whole thing completely online, from assessment to discharge, if you like.

I: **No. No.**

R: And I can't see how the instructor could measure your improvement, see how you're getting along in your general demeanour. For me, no, but then that's me, and I can't speak for others. Others are more attuned to this method of communication, and I'm not, and I put my hands up to it, really. It's great - I was speaking to a lady [unclear 37:18] that I know, [name], [unclear 37:20] being able to meet up, and having a chat on Zoom. That's all right, because we'd known one another before a pandemic, and this is where I sympathise with you, I mean, having your job interview online, because you've got no feel for... I mean, I don't know if it was one person, [?or another person 37:44] interviewing you, but it could be much better if you had a feel for what was going on, and other things going on in the room, aren't there, which you're not visible, you're not [over speaking 37:57].

I: **Yeah. There's a lot of cues you might miss, is that what you mean?**

R: Yeah, yeah. And sometimes - I know it's a bad thing, but sometimes I pride myself on being able to... Well, I don't want to go - what the virtual world will do, but I could meet someone and know almost immediately whether I'm going to rub along with them, or whether they are going to be sandpaper instead of rubbing... You just get that feel from people.

I: **Yeah.**

R: And I think I'm a pretty good judge of character, but I need to see the character, and I don't see it in a two-dimensional system, which is what this is.

I: **Yeah. So, on reflection, are you happy with your choice to wait until, to stop doing the virtual and to wait until it comes back face-to-face?**

R: Yeah, I was perfectly happy with that.

I: **Yeah. Oh, great.**

R: Well, happy, I mean, there was no substitute, and if I didn't attend the online, what would I have done then? But, I mean, throughout it all I've kept active. As I said, I've been gardening and walking, and goodness knows what else. So I haven't just sat in a chair and read a book, or watched television all the time, I've been active. I don't know how some other people might have coped, without [name]'s intervention. I would have preferred to be going to the gym, but as a substitute I'd rather walk that deal with it online - that's my personal choice.

I: **Yeah. So can you tell me how well you've kind of got along with [name]? What was your relationship like with her?**

R: It's pretty good. And, as I say, she's been - she's come back now, and it's almost as if we've not being away. I mean, we've got a good relationship, I would like to think, anyway, just an easy, relaxed kind of thing. There's no Miss Whiplash about it, to get on and do this and that, and the other, so, no, it's lovely.

I: **Oh, that's really good. And did you feel she had the kind of right skills for the job?**

R: Yes. I think she's been doing it for quite a while. She's fairly new to [place], I think, well, two years now. But if, for example, she's had some domestic issues to deal with in the recent

weeks, I've dealt with a colleague of hers, who has been equally affable and pleasant - [name] - and, in fact, I'm going to a circuit class with her tomorrow morning. So there's that interchange there as well, because those two women work well together.

I: Yeah. And the support that they give you, [name], and this lady, is that the right amount for you, or could you do with more or less?

R: No, not - actually, if I want to talk about anything, I started off by explaining some of the background to my life over the last ten, 13 years. And over a period of time, I've discussed that with [name] as well, because it provides an understanding of why I'm in a gym, and what I'm there for. So, as I say, it's an easy relationship and it's not that I've had... With you, this is a one-shot opportunity, so you've [?had the four barrels 41:49] very early on, but they just grab [unclear 41:52] over a period of time.

I: Yeah. Is there anything that they could improve support-wise?

R: Not for me, anyway, no.

I: Right. And how regularly were you in touch with [name], both when you were doing the face-to-face and maybe over the lockdowns?

R: Well, in the lockdowns, fair - well, fairly often, as I said, up until September of 2020. Less so after that, just the odd email exchange to try and keep up the [unclear 42:35] to when the gym might be open, when NERS might restart. I beg your pardon. But on a weekly basis, up until September last year, because I was [unclear 42:51] mileage [?figures 42:52], if nothing else, but not so far as virtual classes, no.

I: Okay, so moving on to support from elsewhere, did you have any family and friends outside the programme that were supportive of you being on it?

R: No. I mean, that's another important - my nearest relative, who is my younger sister, is 20 miles away, and doesn't drive. And I don't want to give you my life story, again, as to why we ended up here, but if my wife was still alive, we wouldn't be living here, we'd have gone somewhere else. But, unfortunately, it's like being cut adrift in a sea of strangers, really. And let me say, I've got decent friends around the village, but they're not like life-term, lifelong friends, so, no, there is no support domestically. I get a lady cleaner to come in, and she's been in today, and she does a couple of hours for me whilst I go out [unclear 44:06]. But, other than that, no, I've got no family support whatsoever.

I: Yeah. And your friends from the village, I know are not lifelong, but were they...? Did they have any kind of supportive role over the last...?

R: No. No, I mean, just general friendships and helping one another out, as and when needed. None of them are aware of the NERS scheme, and I tell them I go to the gym, and that's the limit of the conversation I have with them about that. But, no, if I need help, it's fine, to a point, but it's not like I have any family around me, and that's a different issue.

- I: Yeah. So the kind of people you met on the programme, would you call any of them friends at this point?**
- R: No.
- I: No?**
- R: No.
- I: In general, did they kind of - were they encouraging, were they helpful to get you to go to the sessions?**
- R: No, I haven't pushed them into anything, or they push me. I mean, I've seen them at different classes, different exercises, but we have a chat and we move on. To chat is nice, because you get just a broader of view of life, generally, and we've all got different views on different things, which is [?pleasant 45:41]. But, no, they're not friends, they're not in its truest sense, they're friendly, but not friends.
- I: So how sort of kind of - [name]'s support and [name]'s encouragement, how important was that for you to stick with it, if it wasn't from domestic or friends you've made on the programme? How important was that kind of relationship to your engagement?**
- R: I think it was encouraged to get you back there, when having developed a friendly relationship, but I was awaiting her reopening. And, yes, pleased to meet her and starting - carry on. So, to that extent, she's important and I hope, if I continued to go to the gym after the end of the NERS scheme, I will see her and chat to her. And I'm sure she'd be helpful, if I needed help later on. Absolutely. But we'll see, you know?
- I: Yeah. So reflecting, overall, on your engagement in NERS, have you found that you've developed an enjoyment for exercise?**
- R: Yes. I think wider exercise, rather than the narrow [unclear 47:12] which I was working beforehand. So things like Tai Chi have been an eye-opener, and in circuit classes, there's something which brings a different dimension to it, really, which I wouldn't know where to go for that kind of exercise, if it wasn't then NERS. Now that I know those classes exist, that it's there, that there's a possibility of being able to carry on with them, as part... As a gym member, rather than as a NERS member. So it has - it is, it's widened the scope, really, if I can put it that way.
- I: That's good. Yeah. And so have you found it to be a benefit to your mental health, or wellbeing?**
- R: Most certainly. Yeah. Yeah.
- I: That's really good. And at the start of the programme, did you have any kind of concerns about the mental wellbeing that this exercise programme, you were hoping it would help with?**

R: No, I did regard it as offering a benefit right from the start, because if anyone that's not been mentally affected by the pandemic, they're liars if they're not putting their hands up to that. Because it has changed just about everything, our relationships, as well as just everyday life, the limitations it's placed upon us. So, yes, to have that outlet was tremendous, really, or is tremendous.

I: **Yeah. So what sort of changes would you like to see for NERS in the future, if sky is the limit?**

R: That's a difficult one, but, I mean, I wouldn't want to see it... I mean, if the intention is to provide a lot of it by a virtual thing, then I think it has to be the choice of the individual participants. I think the main delivery must be face-to-face; I cannot see it working without that. My personal - I mean, others may disagree, so this is my opinion. As far as sky is the limit, well, I don't think it could be much better, really. I mean, it offers so many things, and if the [unclear 49:55] opens your eyes up to different things, that then you may or may not do to improve your health, then what more can you add? And the facility we've got in this local leisure centre, is pretty good, really.

I: **Yeah.**

R: The facility - I think we need the facilities there to be able to deliver it [unclear 50:19], and some may be worse than others, or better than others, whichever you put it, yeah. I mean, I can't see what else could be done, really. So long as the people delivering it have got the right personality as well, and not get can you move, can I move on to the next exercise, please, miss? And I've finished that now.

I: **Yeah, like being at school again.**

R: Oh, it was awful! It was dire! It really was dire. I felt I was going to be kept in detention.

I: **Oh really? Yeah. So if some content tends - it is going to stay online, I'm not saying that it is, but if it did, how important do you think it is that it has a local feel? So it's the people, it's your same exercise professional, it's the same people in your regular face-to-face classes, but online?**

R: I think that would be a prerequisite, yeah. And I think getting back to the initial assessment, is that going to be face-to-face, or not? And the discussion could take place at that point, as to whether the individual is comfortable with having things delivered online. Do they have the equipment to receive it online? I don't know, if somebody like me was introduced to NERS, and all of it was going to be delivered online, I'm going to be dead within six [unclear 52:04]. So, no, I joke about it, but it doesn't work for me at all, this type of thing. Having the odd - it's like Skype is another thing, and that's fine one-to-one, and... But once you get beyond that, it's out of the question, really.

I: **Yeah.**

R: And you can't say - you get a Tai Chi class, and you don't know whether the person who is delivering it is passing their hand around their head, or just on the side. If you're in a class,

you can see what the person is actually doing, and suddenly the hand appears, so you're, well, how did he get his hand from there to there?

I: Yeah. Yeah. It gets a bit more information from what's in front of you, yeah. And so maybe not you personally, but if NERS users... If NERS content was going to go online, how much do you think people might be willing to pay for live content that's happening just over the computer, but your exercise professional is in front of you?

R: I don't know. I mean, would I pay - because it's only £2 a session at the moment, when you're on a face-to-face basis. If somebody is going to get the full value of it online, then I'm sure they'd pay the two quid. But if they didn't feel that it was going to be a full-blown lesson in the truer sense of the word, then I can't answer that, sorry.

I: That's all right. [Telephone ringing] Do you need to answer your phone?

R: No, I'll leave it like that. I've cut the phone off in here.

I: Okay. So I was just going to ask you, there's this kind of economic element to our research where we're working out how, roughly how much people pay to be involved, so there's just a few short questions. So approximately how many weeks of NERS exercise sessions did you have in total, was that about three or four?

R: It's going to be 16 weeks, isn't it?

I: When you finished, yeah, but for now, or is that right?

R: Well, I'm working on the basis that I've restarted now, so I'm coming up to three weeks. I did about two or three weeks beforehand, and I can't remember it was so long ago. But, yeah, only two or three weeks each time, really.

I: Okay, so about six weeks in total you've had on this?

R: Yeah.

I: Yeah, on this round. So are you still attending about two a week?

R: Yeah.

I: Or more, yeah? And you paid £2 for each session, is that right?

R: That's right, yeah.

I: And what's the main way you travel to these face-to-face sessions?

R: By car.

I: Yeah. And, roughly, how many miles is it from your house to the venue?

R: About three, three and a half.

I: Okay. Do you pay anything for parking?

- R: No.
- I: **Great. And did you have to buy any additional clothing for to get involved, like gym clothes?**
- R: No.
- I: **Did you say no, sorry, I missed that?**
- R: No, sorry, no.
- I: **And any trainers?**
- R: No, I had trainers anyway.
- I: **Perfect. Okay, that's that bit done. Is there - we've finished the questions, is there anything you want to add?**
- R: Not really. It's just a very valuable facility, and I would strongly urge anyone whose doctor suggests they get on the scheme, get on the scheme. How will they receive it? I don't know. But, I mean, just the whole tone of this meeting has been leading down to virtual: what benefits [unclear 56:48]? And I am genuinely apprehensive of a future, where we have to bank online and our doctor's surgeries are difficult to get hold of, other than a telephone conversation. It's just a world that I'm not familiar with, and I don't know how I can adapt, and I'm getting on in years, obviously, but others who are much younger, hopefully... I hope the much younger ones have taken enough time to avoid getting cardiac problems anyway, but some will only do it at the very end. I mean, I used to be a smoker many, many years ago, and I've not smoked for 40 years now. Things like that, those are things we can do for ourselves. And NERS is another self-help thing with a bit of guidance from the instructor.
- I: **Yeah. I see. All right, so I'll just stop the recording, and then I've just got one more question.**

End of Transcription