

Participant M18

I: So that's all started now. So the first section we want to get into, is we're interested in understanding people's experiences of being invited onto the NERS programme, so the very beginning, what worked well, what might have been improved? So could you talk me through that first stage, and how you found out about the programme, and then what happened from there?

R: That's a very good question. If memory serves correctly, I'd been to see the GP about - it might have been a blood pressure review, or something of that kind of nature. We had a general chat about general health, and obviously I do have a fair bit of weight that I should be losing, and it was suggested that I should take part in some kind of exercise programme. I had been a member of a gym in [place] beforehand, but obviously with Covid closing things down. And I'll be honest, I probably hadn't been for, I don't know, nine months before Covid hit even. I was still playing squash at the time, two or three times a week, so I felt that was probably enough, rather than me going to the gym as well. So, yeah, so I was introduced to the NERS programme, as I say, via the GP and I said, yeah, I'm having to take part in that. I didn't hear anything for a little while, and then some stuff just arrived through the post and online, and it sort of kicked off from there.

I: Okay. You said your GP referred you. When you were being referred, did you understand why you were being referred and kind how well was the programme described to you?

R: I can't say the programme was described particularly well, other than it's a case of you understand you're overweight, and you need to do something about your health, we can help you by putting you on one of these programmes, or would you like to do it? And I said yes. But as for what they entail, I knew it was going to be online or Zoom, rather than going into a gym, which I was more than happy with. But apart from that, that was really how it was just sold to me, that it was something you need to do and we're happy to help you do it, so that's what I did.

I: Okay. What were your kind of expectations of the programme, at that point, once they said, okay, this is what's happening?

R: Yeah. That's a good question. I must admit, I was fairly sceptical. I thought, God, this is going to be a bunch of very old, slow-moving people and it's going to be a waste of my time. But I was pleasantly surprised, and it's actually I really, really enjoyed it, and I'm sure we'll come on to this in a minute. I do gain a lot from it, I have to say, but from an expectation point of view, it's well exceeded my expectations. I thought it was going to be more like - I'm going to be condescending here - but when you see these people in the swimming pools doing exercises, I thought, oh, God, it's going to be that kind of pace, and I'm not going to get anything from this. But it's not like that at all, and it's a lot better than I anticipated, so it exceeded my expectations.

I: That's great. Thank you. Yeah, we'll definitely touch on that later on, but thank you. And, I guess, when you were going - I guess, because your expectations were, well, I don't know what it's going to be, it's going to be something, perhaps, and it exceeded your

expectations. I guess, was there anything you were kind of hesitant or unsure about when they said, and particularly in relation to that Zoom, or it not being face-to-face?

R: No, I had no real reservations on that at all, to be honest. Well, I suppose the only reservation I had was I thought that if I'm linked in with a lot of people, and you could all see each other, that could be, it could be embarrassing. But that's not the way it works, because of the way [name] does it, and she meets us all, and therefore you can only see [name] on the screen, and you don't see the other people until you get at the end, and you have more of a roundtable conversation type thing. So that was my only reservation about being on the spotlight, as it were, and other people seeing what I'm doing, but it wasn't like that. But that's the only real reservation I had, and the fact it was Zoom didn't bother me at all, and I've been quite used to using that, and the technology seems to work very well.

I: And when you were having these reservations, was this at the point of your GP consultation and kind of when you had the reservations, did you ask the GP the questions? Were they able to sort of answer those questions for you?

R: No. No. I think the reservations came - once the stuff came through the post and along the line, I knew it was happening. Then I thought, hmm, yeah, not quite sure this is going to work, but I didn't bother ringing anybody and asking what it was going to be like. I thought I'll give it a go, see how it goes and if I'm enjoying it - great - if not, I'm going to drop out. So I just put the toe in the water, give it a go and see what happens. And I'm - as I say, very pleased with the results so far.

I: Great. Thank you. And how would you sum up your experience, overall, of being invited onto the programme? I guess at that GP point, and anything that you think could have been improved?

R: There was a little bit of paperwork to do filling in questionnaires about health, which you expect to do. It's not the easiest, or the most pleasant thing to do, really, but it's a necessary evil, I guess, that you have to get this information beforehand. But apart from that, no, there was nothing that really sort of put me off, whatever, it was all fairly, fairly slick, I think, from what I remember.

I: Okay. And you got those letters through the post from your... Sorry, my voice is a bit, going a bit muted now.

R: It's all right.

I: [Unclear 05:17]. So you got those letters through the post, and you were... So did you call - what happened there when you got the letters through the post, how did that initial meeting with your exercise professional go ahead?

R: That's a very good question, actually. I think I just got the stuff on email about filling in your questions about health, which I then sent back. With the initial correspondence, I got some dates as well, and that it was going to be a Tuesday and a Thursday, between 11 and 11:45, two and 2:45. And it was just a case of here's the logon details, and see you at the first

meeting. And, again, it was - that's not meaning to sound negative, and it wasn't anything I ever expected, I had all I needed to know and I just tuned into the first meeting.

I: And was that the first exercise session, or did you have a meeting, just a one-on-one with your exercise professional beforehand?

R: No, not at all, it's all been online, basically, ever since - since I've not been to the gym pre-Covid, I've not actually met up with [name] face-to-face since then, no. It's all been done on the computer all the way.

I: And did you have an online meeting with her before you started the sessions, or a telephone call, or anything like that, or was it just [over speaking 06:40]?

R: That's a very good question. I think it was on Zoom, although it might have been on the phone, I don't know. But she basically talked through things like the blood pressure, general health, all that kind of stuff. Really just, I think, double-checking the information I had already sent back to them, and just talking to the same person and things hadn't changed too much since I sent the forms back. But I think it was - yeah, I think it was just... It might have been probably half an hour or so maybe, of just a sort of general chat through. I think she touched briefly on how it would work, and we didn't actually go through any exercise or anything, but just said how it would work and it'd be people linked in, and that kind of thing.

I: How supportive was she during that meeting, and did they put you at ease?

R: Yeah, absolutely. I mean, it was - yes, I think the answer is yes, I felt very much at ease with it, and was looking forward to the first session, then when that first session did start. So I had plenty of opportunity to ask any questions, not that I had that many, to be honest. But, no, I was given an opportunity to ask those questions, and it was fine.

I: And those questions you were asking about, were they about the programme? Were they about your expectations, or any [over speaking 07:56]?

R: Yeah, it was just the - so, from what I remember, because it is going back a fair while now, it was just some of the practicalities and things. There was - I remember there was something about getting an exercise band, which I obviously didn't have at the time, but [name] very kindly dropped some of those off at [place] Leisure Centre for the next time I was in [place], and I picked those up. The leisure centre didn't seem to really know what was going on, but we managed to work it out for ourselves, and I now have a band and that's working fine. I've got my own weights, so I didn't have to worry about that. So, yeah, the preparation was fine, and I felt that I was ready for the session when the first one came.

I: And so at the end of this first meeting, can you tell me at that point, what you were hoping to get out of the programme?

R: Well, again, the end of that first meeting, I still, in the back of my mind, thought it was going to be a bit too easy for me, I have to say. I mean, I didn't ask [name] that exact question, but I just still had the feeling that, yeah, this is going to be a bunch of people that we're not going to be... I won't even break a sweat here, and that's not what it's like; I do work very

hard on these meetings. But, no, apart from that, like I say, that was the only sort of thing in the back of my mind, that, well, I was still thinking I'm not sure this is going to work all right. But it has done, it has worked very well.

I: Okay. Brilliant. So we're going to move on to talking a little bit about those exercise sessions that you attended. So we'd like to understand about your experiences here, in the exercise sessions, and, again, understand what was working well, and what wasn't. So could you tell me a little bit about your overall experience of this? So you said you had just the Zoom meetings, or sessions?

R: Yeah, that's right, that's all I've had for the five months, yeah.

I: Okay. And how suitable did you find these sessions?

R: I found them very good, actually. Very good. And twice a week is a good period, and I could probably do three, but two seems to sit nicely. They're from two o'clock in the afternoon, which are great and it's, from my own perspective, is an ideal time to get stuff out of the way in the mornings, and I'm ready for exercise in the afternoon. The Zoom medium seems to work very well, I have to say, and I do like the fact that I don't have to travel anywhere. Because since I used to live in [place], and I was literally about half a mile from the leisure centre, and I'm now six miles from the leisure centre. So the fact that it's done on Zoom does make a big difference. I mean, I would have - if they'd insisted on going to a class then I would have gone, and I would have basically just built my day around the trip into [place] doing that. And I have to say, I would probably have been even more - I would have been more unlikely to go to a live class with other human beings in it, than I was to do the Zoom thing.

So that, for me, worked very well; it allowed me to try it without, I'd say, exposing myself, and that's probably not the correct, right word, but you know what I mean? Without being with other people in the same room, because that... There is an embarrassment factor to that, I think, and I think with the Zoom stuff, you don't have that and that's, to me, the beauty of it.

I: So is that the kind of reason why you would not want to go into face-to-face classes, or are there any other reasons why you would [over speaking 11:16]?

R: No, I think that's the main one, and now I've done some of these exercises, and I know what they're like. If it could be guaranteed that I was going to a group of a similar ability, I wouldn't be that against going to a live class. Having said that, it does put more travel onto it, which I'd like to avoid, if possible. But it hasn't put me off live classes, only inasmuch as if they were of similar ability, would I want to go to them.

I: Okay, that's great. Thank you.

R: Is that all right?

I: And when you - during the five months you were taking part online and virtual sessions, did you have an opportunity to take part in any other sessions, or any of the face-to-face stuff?

R: I don't think there's been a lot of face-to-face stuff, because of Covid, I think it's been mainly online sessions. I don't think there's been any live ones; I may be wrong with that, and I didn't proactively look into it, but it wasn't, if you like, offered to me to say, well, would you rather come to a class, or are you happy with the Zoom? If asked that question, I would have said stay with Zoom.

I: Okay.

R: As for - there have been no additional classes, other than twice a week, but if [name] couldn't make it, for some reason, I have had one or two sessions with another exercise person. I think her name was [name], if I remember rightly, but it was only once or twice, and the rest of them has always been with [name], which I'm very happy.

I: And you mentioned beforehand that the programme kind of exceeded your expectations of what you thought it was going to be, can you explain a little bit why that's the case?

R: Right. Well, I think the reason is, because at the end of the 45 minutes I am - I can't say exhausted - but I'm certainly out of breath. I've worked up a sweat, and I felt that I've done some good exercise and that's why... I'd say that's [unclear 13:14] and I thought I'd get to the end of 45 minutes and think, well, that was easy, and it's not been easy, it's been... Sometimes it's been bloody difficult! But, again, I think that's down to [name] making sure that people are not forcing themselves, but sort of stretch themselves, going that extra mile, as, well, pushing the envelope, or whatever the phrase is. So that's why it exceeded my expectations, and what I did feel, I was getting a lot more from it than I thought I was. I mean, it's not like a game of squash or something, and I come off that absolutely exhausted. But then I still feel that I've had useful, useful 45 minutes, and I feel that I've gained health-wise from it, and that's why it's exceeded my expectation.

I: Is there a way that maybe - did you have any expectations when they weren't met, or...?

R: Not really. I don't think so, and from an expectation point of view, I don't think so. I mean, as a feedback or observation, obviously, I can see [name] on the screen, and she can see all the people in the class. There's normally about three or four of us, or that sort of number. And she's obviously - she makes comments about, oh, that was well done. And you're never sure whether that was what you've done, or whether she's looking at somebody else, if you know what I mean? So, I mean, it's not a criticism, as such, but that's from an expectation point of view. It is nice when she says, oh, if you're doing an exercise and she says, well, that's good, Nick, you're doing it. But she mentions your name, then that you know she's talking to you, and you're doing something good. But when she says that's looking good, you just have to assume what you're doing is right.

I: Okay.

R: And she'll tell you if you're not, presumably.

I: **Yeah, okay, that's great. Going into your first exercise session, so you've had the initial consultation going to a first session then quite a while back now, but what were your thoughts about going into the Zoom session? Did you have any concerns, or did you receive any support from that exercise professional in attending?**

R: Not really, I mean, [name] is very good at sending down the Zoom links. She sends one for a Monday, and one for a Thursday; it's remembering which day is which is the hardest bit, I have to say. And we all, on the group that I'm in, we've all, at one stage, clicked on the wrong day and we've sat there waiting just to start, and it obviously hasn't started, but that's just an aside. No, I think it was a case of sending the Zoom links down, and I was very happy using Zoom. The link seemed to work, and you loaded it on a few minutes before it says, and they let you in when they're ready. So it seems to work very well, so I don't think there's any... And I've got no complaints with that at all, really.

I: **What additional encouragement or support would you have wanted, or would have been helpful for these exercise sessions, or that first exercise session?**

R: That's a very good question. Nothing springs to mind, possibly an email just to say, hope you enjoyed the session yesterday, it looks like things are progressing for you, I look forward to seeing you on Thursday. Might be a motivation to get people to go to the next one. I don't need that, I have to say, because I don't think I've missed... I don't think I've missed one session yet, that I've actually cancelled it, and it was either [name] was away or whatever, but I think [?that's just for 16:27] all of them. But, having said that, I'm not here next week, so that will be a change. But, no, I don't think - there's nothing desperately urgent for that. But, I mean, at the end of the session [Recording Break] everybody is okay, and we've all enjoyed it. But when you try to put four or five people at the same time, it's not the easiest thing to do, I have to say. Does that answer your question? I'm never quite sure [?if it is 16:50].

I: **Yes, it did. Sorry I lost you for a bit there.**

R: Oh, sorry, okay.

I: **Do you mind just repeating the last sort of...?**

R: All of that?

I: **No, I think I'd got to the end of the session, or something like that. So if you don't mind just repeating a little bit about what you said, probably the last couple of sentences, but if you don't remember that's also not a problem.**

R: No, well, just to recap, I said it might have been nice if you had had an email or something [?post 17:17] a session, just to say hope you enjoyed it, things are looking good or whatever, look forward to seeing you next time, which is fine. But at the end of these sessions, as I say, [name] does say, so, is everybody okay then? And we all basically logon and say, yeah, that's been lovely, we've had a good time, and we wave to each other and that kind of stuff. But

it's you don't get this - you can't give a lot of feedback in those things, I don't think. I've never really been asked for formal feedback from [name] or anybody else until this, to be fair.

I: Okay. That's great. Thank you. You said beforehand that during the sessions, you felt like you were out of breath towards the end, and I just wondered what you liked the most or least about these sessions?

R: Well, to be fair, I like doing exercise, and I don't do enough of it, I know. But I do actually like it, and when the endorphins are kicking in and that kind of stuff, it is quite an enjoyable thing, and you feel good afterwards. You feel like you've spent - you've had a useful hour's worth of exercise, or 45 minutes, or whatever it is. So that's what I've gained from it, I think. What was the second part of your question, whether anything had changed, did you say, or...?

I: What you liked most or least?

R: Oh, okay, well, yes. Nothing I liked least, I mean, there are times when it is quite tough and you are pushing yourself. And, I'll be honest, if I can't quite complete an exercise, I will stop it slightly early, and I'm not going to kill myself doing this. But, no, as I say, I enjoy doing it, and I get a lot from it. And, yeah, there's nothing more I would change it, really, I don't think.

I: Okay. Great. And you said you noticed a - you felt good after the sessions, and I wondered if you noticed or experienced any other positive impact from the sessions, so fitness, wellbeing, mood?

R: Yeah, my mobility seems to be better after the sessions. I tend to have a bit of a sit down after the session themselves, have a shower later on, and that kind of thing and then go out and do something. But I do feel a lot - well, I'd say a lot more mobile, as it were, after I've been doing the sessions, which is good. I mean, it's good that [name] does the stretching and the cooling down, because if I don't do that, then I do stiffen up quite badly. But if I do the cooling down sessions, then I feel fine with it. And, yeah, it just makes you feel like you - good use your time, and you feel better for it.

I: That's great. Thank you. And I wondered if you could - you said that you could have done three sessions a week, so did you manage to attend the two sessions a week?

R: Mm-mm. Yeah, I don't think I've proactively missed any, I don't think. So I'm more than happy with that, and Tuesdays and Thursdays, they're good days for doing it as well.

I: And do you think this level of engagement twice a week, would be different if it was face-to-face, or do you think it's because you're able to engage because you're on Zoom kind of...?

R: I'll be perfectly honest with you, I am more likely to do this on Zoom than I am to go into town twice a week just to do this. Not that I would just do this, and I'd do other things while I was in town, but it just... It suits my lifestyle at the moment, just to have this in the diary,

it's... Actually, it's Mondays and Thursdays - not Tuesdays and Thursdays - Mondays and Thursdays, and I actually quite look forward to it, to be honest. It's something in the diary, and very often I have to finish work a little bit early to do it, but that's fine, and that's bad planning on my part. But, no, the fact that it's a Zoom and at home, and I haven't got to travel, and that's a real encouragement for me to do it. If I had to drive 15, 20 minutes to go and do this, then to shower over, and drive 15, 20 minutes back, I would probably be less inclined to do it.

I: Okay, thank you. That's really interesting. Thank you for letting us know. I also wondered, so you said you've done about 16 to 18 weeks of the programme.

R: Something like that, yeah.

I: Where [over speaking 21:15].

R: Well, sessions, and not weeks, sessions.

I: Sessions. Oh, how many weeks do you think you've done of the programme then? Probably around...

R: That's a good - I mean, actually, I think I've just contradicted myself, but is it 16 weeks? It's got to be, yes, that's only four months. Yeah, it's actually, I take that back, I think it is probably 16 to 18 weeks that I've done, I would think.

I: Okay. And so have there been any challenges attending any of the sessions, or anything that helped you keep particularly motivated?

R: Well, keep motivating, it's because I do enjoy doing the sessions and I put in a diary, and I know they're coming up, which is all great. Yes, sometimes other things get in the way, and... Oh, that's right, I did miss one session when I worked through it. I was doing some work on the computer, and I completely forgot the time; so I did miss the one session. But, no, apart from that, as I say, I know they're in the diary, I know they're coming up. Sometimes I have stopped doing what I'm doing to go and do the exercise class, which is fine, I mean, you can't complain about that. But, no, there's nothing that really puts me off it at all, no.

I: Okay. I'm really sorry, I think someone's trying to get into my [over speaking 22:37].

R: Oh! recording.

I: Give me two seconds [over speaking 22:39].

R: Yeah. No problem at all.

I: Thank you. I'm just going to pause the recording.

R: Okay. Okay.

[Recording Pause]

- I: There we go. So, yes, I guess going back to what I just said, anything about keeping motivated and attending the sessions during the 16 weeks?**
- R: No, I've had no problem with that at all. Nothing's been putting me off, and I've been, as I say, quite looking forward to doing the session, so from a motivation point of view, it's not an issue.
- I: Okay. Brilliant. And you mentioned - so you've had this... Have you had a 16-week assessment, so this might have been...?**
- R: Yeah, I did have a - and, again, an interview with [name] where we talked through things like blood pressure, and all that kind of stuff. So, yes, I have had a review that was probably about two weeks ago, maybe, something like that kind of timeframe.
- I: Okay. And how - what was the experience of doing this face-to-face? I'm sorry, online?**
- R: Online? It was fine. It was fine. I mean, as I say, I'd done some blood pressure readings, which I do on a regular basis anyway, so I could share those numbers with [name] for it, and we just had a general chat around fitness, and how things were going, so it was fine.
- I: Okay, that's great. And the progress that you - do you think that you've made progress during the sessions?**
- R: Definitely. Definitely. My mobility is better than it was, and my balance is getting better, although there's still a lot to be done with that, and some of these exercises [name] is doing with me is showing. I didn't realise my balance was as bad as it was, but that, again, is improving. I have lost a bit of weight over the past couple of months as well, but I have been dieting as well, so I can't say it's all down to the exercise programme, but it certainly hasn't had an adverse effect, let's say, on the weight loss. So, yeah, generally I'm very pleased with the way progress is going. Obviously, I'd like to be losing weight even faster than I am, but that's the way it goes, isn't it?
- I: Okay, that's great. Do you think that your progress you've made, would it be different in a different platform, or face-to-face, or...?**
- R: Well, I'm speculating wildly here, but if you're asking me if I'd have had to go to [place] to do these sessions in a class, I'd have probably done less sessions. So it would have probably not been as good progress, but that's purely speculation and I can't really back that up with any data, as such.
- I: Okay. And specifically looking at your - because you've... Oh, you were taking part in the virtual online sessions, looking more into that, could you tell me what your overall experience of virtual sessions were, and I guess, yeah, what you got out of it, or any difficulties?**
- R: My overall impressions are, I think they're very good. Personally, I enjoyed them a lot, I have to say. I think the medium works well, and Zoom seems to work well and it's got... You've got good clarity on audio and visual. You can see [name], and you can see the exercise she's doing, and you can copy them. She can see you and add advice, if you're not doing

something properly, and she does do that, and keep your neck straight, or keep your back straight, or whatever. And she does do that, which I think is great because you are getting some feedback, and that is giving you some reassurance that you're doing it correctly. So I think that medium works well, I have to say.

I: Do you think there's anything that affected your ability to fully participate in the sessions?

R: No, I don't think so. I don't think so. I mean, she always makes sure you've got your weights and your band, and some water to hand, should you want it. So you're not wasting time looking for things. Occasionally, we use chairs for some of the exercises, but not every session. So sometimes if your chair is not everybody, you've got to go and get it, but it's a minor point. But, no, I don't think there's anything stopping me doing the full potential, I don't think. I live on my own, so it's not a question of space or anything of that kind of nature. I've got quite low ceilings in here, which I've struggled with some of the exercises, but, no, there's nothing that's holding me back, I think it's a great thing to be doing.

I: Is there anything that you feel could - or you should, the exercise professional should have done to support you, or anything that would have made things easier or better during the process of having it online?

R: I don't think so. I mean, it's, like I say, she's very upfront of what's needed to start the sessions and doing the sessions. So, no, I don't think there's anything else that she could have done, really. I mean, people are there - I'm there to do the exercising, and I prepared and I wear the proper shoes and wear the proper clothes, which was recommended in the bump that I got at the start. So, no, I think she's doing a fine job, to be fair.

I: That's great. Thank you. We're going to move on to a little bit about relationship, so relationships you may have had through the course, or through the sessions, and with your exercise professional, and how they might have supported you. So with your exercise professional, can you tell me a little bit about your relationship and maybe how well you get along, or how supportive they are?

R: That's a very interesting question. I mean, obviously, I speak to [name] twice a week at the Zoom sessions. I had met [name] previously, when I used to go to the gym down in [place], so I knew who she was. That's a difficult question, really, I mean, we don't... The welcomes are fine, and how is everybody? Everybody okay? And we've got the Zoom there, and you've got your water ready. We have all of that at the start of the session, which is fine. I mean, some participants do struggle a little bit on the technology side, so occasionally we have to wait for people to log in, or get their wi-fi sorted out, all that kind of stuff. But the actual interaction with [name], is just a quick around the table, and how is everybody? Everything okay? It's not like an in-depth conversation at all. And, likewise, at the end, it's the case of hope everyone enjoyed it, is everybody okay? And she'll go around and say is everything all right you, everything? And then we say, right, see you next time. So it's difficult to say how you build a relationship up, really. But, having said that, there's no negative comments, put it that way. She's not like rude or abrupt, or anything of that kind of thing, if that's what you're aiming at, I don't know?

- I: You said you say hello at the beginning and some how do you go at the end, is that amount of support and, I guess, communication with your exercise professional the right amount for you, or is there anything you could have wanted more or less?**
- R:** Pretty much so. Pretty much so. And, again, I have taken the opportunity of asking questions at the end of some of the sessions, particularly if I've not understood maybe one of the exercises or something. And that's the only thing I would say that might be a little bit more of, is... But, again, it's my fault for not asking the questions, about being more clear about what some of the exercises are entailing, because, I mean, you're watching [name] on the screen, and you're trying to copy her. And, as I said, she does give you feedback if you're doing it right or not. But, occasionally, I feel doing the exercise you could almost like do with asking, am I standing in the right place, is my back straight enough, that kind of thing? Which you can't, because you're on mute and I understand why that would be, because otherwise you're just going to be, you're going to hear everybody, and that wouldn't be good. So that's the only - and I don't have a solution to that, and I don't know what the answer is. But, in answer to your question, yes, sometimes I think, well, would it be nice if I can ask a question here at this stage. And you could, obviously, stop the exercise and wave a hand, and she'll do it. But then you're holding everybody else up, and that is the danger, of course, of asking a question during an exercise; everybody then has to either stop, or is interrupted at the same time. So I don't know what the answer is, but that's the only thing I would say that would be useful if you could, I don't know, ask a question during the exercise or something.
- I: Do you think that the level of support of being able to ask those questions would differ, depending on the platform, or the way that you're having the exercise sessions? So I guess face-to-face versus online?**
- R:** Yeah, I suppose if you were in a room with, I don't know, a half dozen or so people and you, I don't know, had a question and you could just raise your hand, and [name] could walk over and maybe deal with you there and then, while everybody else carried on. With this particular medium, you can't really do that, because as soon as you put your hand, lift... Figuratively, put your hand up on the screen or whatever, then that is obviously going to... Means she's got to stop and talk to you, and I'm not sure how that would affect other people. So that's the - that could be one reason why an in-class session would address what I've just said, that if you were not struggling, but if you had a question or a query, you could possibly ask it as an aside, rather than do that on Zoom.
- I: Yeah. That's great. Thank you. So did you feel that your exercise professional was appropriately skilled to deliver these sessions, and go, went at the right pace for you?**
- R:** Yes, the pace is quite fast, but, again, that's - again, you have to keep up with it, and I'd rather it was that than being too slow, I have to say. But, no, [name], she's very competent and she can do all the exercises herself, and it's not like she's asking you to do things that she's not demonstrating, which is great. No, I think she's perfectly fine with it, yeah.
- I: That's great. Thank you. So were there any family or friends outside of the programme that supported you in your sessions?**

R: No.

I: **Anything like that, or provided encouragement?**

R: No.

I: **Okay.**

R: I live alone, so there's not - and I live in a fairly isolated place as well, so it's not like you've got people popping around every five minutes. But, no, I've just been getting on with this myself and doing it, and I've told friends and family I'm doing it and they said, oh, that's great. But, other than that, there's no extra support added.

I: **Okay. Do you feel that there might have been any, or were there any negative influences around you taking up the programme, and people that may have questioned why you're doing it, or anything like that?**

R: No, I can't say I've experienced that at all. Most people I speak to, as I say, that I say that I'm doing it, say, oh, good, well done on you! Well done on you! And it's as simple as that, and no one's taken the micky or whatever, or anything else. So, no, I've had no real negative feedback at all.

I: **So on the programme, I know there are other people on the Zoom calls with you, but you're all on mute, did you make any friends on the programme, or did they [over speaking 33:48] did you have any support from them?**

R: Not really, because, as I say, I don't think there's that much opportunity to do that. It's not like it's like an open forum, where you've all got the faces on and you're having a discussion about something, that doesn't happen. It's more - well, it just doesn't happen and you've got, like I say, four or five people linked up, and, yes, you'll get different people's faces popping up at the end of the sessions. One of the generals on there, is I noticed, purely from his background, he had a motorcycle helmet, and I'm a motorcyclist, so we had a chat about that. So that's - we have... We do occasionally talk about that post the session: how was the trip to Spain, er, to Scotland or wherever? So there's a little bit of that, but I don't think, from actually building relationships with people, that doesn't really happen, I don't think. In fact, I can - apart from [name], who is the chap I'm talking about, I'm not sure I could name the others that are on the session, to be honest, because you just don't interact with them.

I: **And do you think that's from being online, or do you think another platform you'd be able to be...?**

R: No. Yeah, it's purely from being online. If you're in the same room together, then post the session, while you're just towelling off, whatever, you would probably wander over and chat to somebody: how did that go? God, that was terrible! And you would just generally interact, because you're in the same room with people; you don't do that on Zoom. I mean, you could do, as much as you could put five minutes at the end where you just have all four faces up, or whatever and say, anybody got any questions, or does anyone want to make any comments, but that doesn't happen. It's not something I particularly want to do. Other

people may find it a more socially engaging way of doing stuff. Personally, I like my own company and I don't want anybody else's. That's a little harsh, but, no, I don't think there's really an opportunity with the Zoom, a way of doing it, but in a classroom, yes, I think pre and post the classes, people, I think would socially interact more.

I: And for you, how does, I guess, having the Zoom sessions affect, I guess, your level of social support, or I guess connectiveness with people, or I guess isolation? Or do you feel less, or more isolated when you do online stuff?

R: I feel more engaged when I do it online, because it means I've spoken, like I'm talking to you now, the people on the exercise class, at least I've seen another face, because I do live in a fairly remote spot, and there's no... I don't see neighbours, or anything like that. If I want company, I can go - I would go and find it, but I enjoy my own company and I like living alone, and I think the Zoom thing is actually quite a... It's quite a nice link to the outside world, in some ways, but I wouldn't want to give that up to start going down to [place] to go to a class. So I think the downside to that outweighs the social side of things. At the end of the day, I mean, this exercise class is for me to get fitter and more healthy. So as long as it's doing that, that's ticking the box. If I'm not making lifelong friends doing it, then so be it.

I: Okay. That's great. Thank you. So we're going to move on to now some overall reflections on the programme, and do you think you've developed more of an enjoyment for exercise? You mentioned beforehand that you enjoy it?

R: Yeah, I think so. I think so. I mean, I've always enjoyed exercise, particularly after you've finished doing it, because you feel so good. It's a bugger at the time, but afterwards it's fine. But, as I say, I still try and play a bit of squash as well, and I do some walking, but, again, that's on my own. But squash, yeah, probably twice a week, maybe on average, sometimes three. So I do interact with people there. I'm not sure if that was the question, actually. Was that the question you asked?

I: Oh, it was just enjoyment of exercise.

R: Oh, enjoyment of exercise. Yeah, I enjoy the squash, and I enjoy... As I've said to you a number times, I enjoy doing these sessions on a Monday to Thursday. It makes me feel good afterwards, and you just feel better in yourself for doing it.

I: Yeah. Have you found it's benefited your wellbeing, and I guess mental health as well?

R: Well, I'd like to think my mental health was okay anyway, but, yeah, it certainly hasn't had any detrimental effect on it, but, no, just a feeling of... Well, self-worth is the wrong word, but just a feeling that you've done some exercise, and you feel good because you feel better, and that puts you in a better mood, I suppose.

I: Okay. Thank you. And do you think you'll continue with exercise?

R: Yeah, definitely. Definitely. While these Zoom meetings are going on, I'll be doing these twice a week, and as long as they will go. If they were stopped tomorrow, I'd like to think I would seek out something else to replace it, but I probably wouldn't. I'll probably just carry

on playing squash, but I wouldn't start, I don't think, going to classes in the gym. I might look at restarting gym membership and doing more gym sessions in my own time. But I know now that I wouldn't be doing it as regular as I'm doing it on the Zoom classes, I would find an excuse not to do it, unless there was a set class every week that I was going to, or a set session [unclear 39:08]. But, given the option, I will, I'll find an excuse not to do it. Whereas Zoom, it's very hard not to, because it's there, it's in front of you. Why aren't you doing it? You know what I mean?

I: Yeah. That's great. Thank you. And then are there any changes, or what changes would you like to see from the NERS programme, in the future, or any particular way in which it's developed, or delivered? Sorry.

R: I don't think so. I think the Zoom medium works well. I think the numbers of people in the class, three or four is fine. If there were a lot more than that, I think you may get into problems, because, as I said, with people having difficulty connecting, you could be waiting around a bit more, for like ten people or something, two of which were the signal was dropping out and they were coming back in, and all that malarkey. I think that might put a bit of a downer on it, but I think two, three, four people that are normally there, then it seems to work okay, because you're not hanging around too much, which is good, I think. But, no, I think the Zoom - I think the Zoom meeting works well, and I can't really think of another one that would be that much better, really, I don't think.

I: Okay. And if this Zoom medium would continue, or it does continue to be delivered, how important is it for you that the sessions are created and delivered by the same, or by your exercise professional, the sense of continuity? Because I know you mentioned before you'd had a couple of sessions with someone else, and how does that dynamic change, or does it feel important for it to be just the same exercise professional, or not?

R: That's a very good question, Imogen. I think I've only had probably two sessions that haven't been with [name], and both with a lady called, I think she was called [name]. They were - I think they were different, inasmuch as they were more intense with [name], but, then again, I was with a different group of people. Now, whether that means they were a more advanced level than I was, and therefore I was struggling, or whether it's that [name] is simply a tougher exercise person than [name] is. And I don't know the answer to that, but I did find it more demanding with the [name] one, because the exercises were faster and they were more intense. But, as I said, I'll just recap that, but I think that could have been because I was with a different group of people, because it was on a different day. And I think [name] may have been used to doing that higher intensity with that group, which I think, in some ways, is good, because if you're in a group of similar ability, I think you're all going to gain from it more, than if you've got a wide range of abilities where some people are really struggling, and other people are, come on, bring it on, I want to do more.

Now, whether there's any design around that with NERS, whether you look at the level of people and try and put similar abilities together, I don't know the answer to that question. Of the four people that I normally exercise as well, three or four, we seem to be about the right sort of level, I think, but it's hard to tell, because you can't see them when they're

exercising. They may well be doing things twice as fast as I am, or half as fast as I am, I just don't know because you can't see them. Does that answer your question, I think?

I: Yeah, so what do you - you've [unclear 42:41] from what you've said there, it seems to be that the level or intensity of the exercise is what's important in it being delivered in the future, rather than...

R: Yeah, exactly.

I: ...the exercise professional themselves, and being that person?

R: Yes, I think so. Yes, I think some of the exercise professional is, they'd almost be the same sort of training, I would have thought. And if they're all delivering a similar kind of level, then that's absolutely fine. I don't think any one person is particularly better than another. I could be wrong with that, because I've only had experience of two people, I have to say. Something I will add into that, though, is on that level thing, the good thing that [name] does, is she will demonstrate an exercise and say, right, this is, if you like, the basic level. If you want to make it a bit harder, do this with your arms. And if you want to really make it hard, do this with your arms. Now, that is quite good, because that does allow individuals then to almost like pace themselves, and if you are struggling, you stick on the easy one. If you want to really go for it, at least she gives you the option of doing that. I should have mentioned that earlier, because I think that is actually quite an important point, about the different levels. Because if you've got mixed ability groups, she is demonstrating almost like mixed ability levels of exercise you can do, and that's a real plus point, actually, and I should have mentioned that more proactively, sorry.

I: That's great. No, that's really interesting to know. Thank you. Yeah, that's great. And these NERS sessions, do you think that online, do you think that NERS users would be willing to pay for the access to digital content? And, if so, what would be a reasonable amount for online...

R: I knew that was coming.

I: ...live sessions, and recorded content?

R: Yeah, I knew that was coming. The fact they're free is great, I have to say. If they were charged for them, that wouldn't put me off it completely. It would depend on how much they would charge, and how the money was collected. If you were talking, I don't know, a couple of quid a session, not a problem. If you're talking £20 a session, absolutely no chance. So somewhere in between those, anything up to a fiver, I would probably pay a fiver a session, but I wouldn't want to pay any more than that.

I: Okay, that's great. Thank you.

R: Does that makes sense?

I: Yes, definitely. So we'll move on to just the last ten minutes or so...

R: Yeah, sure.

I: **...into the... We're interested in understanding about costs, so any costs to you, the service user, that you've paid to participate in the NERS programme. So I've got - I'm going to be looking slightly to my right, because I've got my screen in front of me and the form.**

R: Okay, that's fine.

I: **So I do apologise if I'm not looking at the screen.**

R: That's all right.

I: **Approximately how many weeks have you had in total of the sessions? So you said about 16 to 18 weeks?**

R: Sixteen to 18, something like that, yeah.

I: **And these have all been virtually?**

R: All virtually, yeah.

I: **And you're attending two sessions a week?**

R: Two sessions a week, yeah.

I: **Have there been any payments for these virtual sessions?**

R: I've not been charged anything, as far as I'm aware, and no one's paid me anything either for being there.

I: **Did you have to buy any specific clothing to take part in the NERS session?**

R: I didn't. As I say, the exercise band was supplied to me by [name], and that was free of charge. I've obviously got gym equipment, because I play squash anyway, so I didn't have to go and buy special trainers or anything of that kind of nature. I had this stuff here already, so there was no additional cost.

I: **So no footwork - footwear, sorry - no footwear, no exercise equipment. And did you have to buy any devices or laptops, or anything like that to take part in the sessions?**

R: No, I mean, I think most people have their laptops anyway, so I just used my own laptop. I had a set of weights here as well, that I've had for a long, long time, donkeys years. So, no, it was just a case of utilising the resources I already had. I didn't have to buy anything special for it. I mean, other people who haven't got weights, maybe wouldn't want to do that, but, personally, no, it didn't cost me anything else, any more.

I: **Okay, perfect. And what's the main way in which you connect to the virtual sessions? So through wi-fi broadband, or through your phone, or [?G 47:08], or anything like that?**

R: That's through a wi-fi broadband on a laptop, or actually it's on an iPad, actually, rather than a laptop.

I: **Okay. And a bit of a tricky one, but how much per month are you paying for your home broadband?**

R: I pay £35 a month for broadband. Sorry, 20 - yeah, sorry, yeah, £35 a month for broadband, and I pay 15 quid for a mobile phone.

I: **And then... Okay. Thank you. And then did you think - so I know you hadn't incurred any costs, but do you think the costs impact your ability in engaging with the NERS, or do you think it would have if you had to buy, or costs for anything else?**

R: Well, personally, probably not. I'm fairly well off, so if I'd had to buy the band, depending how much it is, that wouldn't have been a massive problem, I don't think. But, no, I don't think - well, as I say, I didn't have to buy anything. If I'd have had to go out and buy a lot of specialised equipment, then, yes, I'd have probably maybe thought twice about it.

I: **Yeah.**

R: At the end of the day, using an exercise band and some weights, or tins of beans, if you haven't got weights, apparently, and that's it really, that's the only things that we were using. It's not like we've got rowing machines, or anything like that was required.

I: **That's great. Thank you very much. Okay, yeah, so those are all of my questions for you today, really. We've kind of covered all those cost elements now. And, yeah, I just wondered if you had anything else you'd like to add, really, or anything else you expected me to ask you, and maybe that I didn't?**

R: No, no, you've been fairly comprehensive. I'm surprised it's took this long, to be honest, but there we are! That's okay. That's fine. No, it's - as I said to you at the start, I enjoy doing the exercise programmes. I feel I'm benefiting from it. I feel better for doing them, which is great. The fact that I don't have to travel anywhere to do it, is a real plus for me. The fact that it's on my own in the room, again, is a real plus that you're not looking at other people, or other people are looking at you, which I think is great. [name], as an exercise professional, I think is fine, and, actually, she demonstrates things well, she explains things pretty well. She does give the different levels that you can do, depending on how good you are, shall we say, which I think, again, is good because she's catering then for a number of different people. As I say, relationship-wise it's difficult to build a relationship with somebody, but, I mean, I consider her to be a friend, shall we say? And, yeah, she's a very pleasant person to chat to, and I've got no real problems with any of that. So, no, and you have a very happy customer at the moment. And the fact it's not costing me anything is great, and I love that, and I will continue to do it while they're still offered on the basis.

I: **That's great. Thank you very much. I'm going to stop the recording now.**

R: Okay, yeah.

End of Transcription