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The narratives of homeless men on housing support and the role of a social worker in the process of becoming independent

Narracje bezdomnych mężczyzn na temat wsparcia mieszkaniowego i roli pracownika socjalnego w procesie ich usamodzielniania

Introduction

Homelessness is a social problem that humanity has been struggling with for centuries. We know from the pages of history that this term appeared in 1615 in Homer's *Odyssey* and spread in the United States in the 19th century (Bielecka-Prus, 2011). It was also there that the first research on this issue was undertaken. An example of one of the first works is the book entitled *The Hobo* by Nels Anderson published in 1923 (cf. Bielecka-Prus et al., 2011). Since then, research and analyses on this crisis have been undertaken, and effective forms of help for the homeless have been sought (Nelson et al., 2007; Jarrett, 2010; Nelson et al., 2014). To this day, however, it is a big challenge to

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develop a universal definition of homelessness and to identify solutions that would eliminate this problem (Wasilewska-Ostrowska, 2022). This is mainly due to the complexity of the phenomenon itself, as well as its ambiguity (cf. Flike et al., 2022). Many different factors lead to homelessness (cf. Crane et al., 2005; Rukmana, 2020; Zhao, 2023). Biographies of people experiencing this crisis show that each person is different, and many paths can lead to it. However, what connects people experiencing this problem is withdrawal from social, cultural and often professional life. This withdrawal may be a reaction to a negative life event with which the person is unable to cope, or a form of escape in a critical situation. Over time, people stop identifying with the world of others “those who have a house and work” and start looking for their own definition of life and self-define themselves anew. In the process of constructing a new identity, they may be accompanied by a great sense of fear, but also disagreement with the fate that has befallen them. In addition, they may feel loneliness, helplessness and anger at themselves and others: “Homelessness is identified with a sense of loneliness, aimlessness, resentment at one’s fate, associated with entering the world of ‘strangers,’ created by others, unknown, hostile. There is a feeling of loneliness, often despite the presence of other people in a similar situation. This emotional emptiness, apart from the feeling of loneliness, is additionally intensified by the feeling of hopelessness accompanying the homeless, the futility of the actions taken, closely related to resentment against their situation. At this stage, we can talk about physical homelessness (rooflessness), which is accompanied by emotional homelessness” (Kostrzyńska, 2016, pp. 230–231).

In Poland, the phenomenon of homelessness was officially addressed only after the political transformation (1989). Previously, people without a roof over their heads were helped by various church organizations, but also by secular ones. The introduction of the Social Assistance Acts (1990 and 2004) regulated the issues related to professional assistance offered to people experiencing homelessness. Currently, such a person can benefit from several possible solutions. Firstly, one can count on support in the form of a shelter. According to the Act on Social Assistance of 12 March 2004 (Journal of Laws of 2004, No. 64, item 593, Art. 17), the task of each commune is to allocate a place in a 24-hour or intervention facility. The first group includes shelters for the homeless and shelters for the homeless with care services - intended for people who, due to illness, age or disability, need partial (but not full) care to meet their needs

(ibid., Art. 48a). People are directed to shelters by administrative decision, preceded by an environmental interview. During their stay, they are supported by a social contract (ibid., Art. 48a) and can be assisted with an individual homelessness program (ibid., Art. 49). 24-hour homeless shelters are open all year round. In addition to basic services (accommodation, meals, clothing, assistance in ensuring personal hygiene), employees suggest activities aimed at increasing social activity and independence of residents. A maximum of 80 people can stay in these places. In shelters with care services, key assistance activities are combined with meeting those needs that people are unable to meet on their own (Regulation of the Minister of Family, Labour and Social Policy of 27 April 2018 on minimum standards of night shelters, shelters for the homeless, shelters for the homeless with care services and warming houses). The second group of facilities is of an intervention purpose and can be used by anyone without meeting any additional requirements. These include night shelters and warming facilities. The hostel offers assistance throughout the year, but only at certain evening and night hours. It is intended for no more than 100 people and its task is to offer basic services (a place to sleep, a hot drink, a bath and change of clothes). The facility should also have a room for preparing meals, which can be used as a common room or meeting place. The warming facility, on the other hand, provides its support in the period October-April from 6.00 pm to 8.00 am or around the clock, if there is no night shelter in a given commune. It has rooms where you can warm up and drink a hot beverage, change clothes or disinfect them when it is not possible to replace them. There are also toilets and rooms for administrative work or for individual interviews (ibid.). In addition, people in the crisis of homelessness can count on financial and material assistance, meals in soup kitchens, use of the baths and, most importantly, they have the support of specialists. Social workers play an important role among these professionals. They perform many tasks, including diagnosing the problems and needs of people in the homelessness crisis, referring them to facilities, helping in developing individual programs for getting out of homelessness, motivating and supporting them in becoming independent. They also offer social skills training, a social contract and organize support from street workers and assistants for people in the homeless crisis (Podgórska-Jachnik, 2014).

However, institutions alone will not solve the problem of homelessness. There is a lack of stable employment for people exiting homelessness,

insufficient funding for housing programs, and bureaucratic obstacles that make it difficult for people experiencing this crisis to obtain effective support.

In order to meet social expectations, in 2022 in Poland, a government project related to the deinstitutionalization of services was adopted, it meant that the assistance would become more focused on community work and access to housing for excluded people. It did not mean the complete liquidation of institutions, but making the institutions less numerous, and the assistance even more individualized and focused on intervention (so that people do not become dependent on social support and, as far as possible, become active and return to society). The proposed trend is also in line with the housing first concept.

Research Methodology

The research I conducted was qualitative. The case study method was used (Stake, 1997). The main purpose of the conducted analyses was to examine the narrative of men experiencing homelessness on the causes of their housing exclusion, assisted housing programs and the role of a social worker in their becoming independent. The research questions were:

- What were the individual paths of the men surveyed into homelessness – sources of exclusion?
- How do the respondents relate to housing support?
- What significance do the respondents see in social workers in the system of assistance for people in the homeless crisis?

The research was conducted in 2019–2021 using narrative interviews in three shelters located in the Mazowieckie and Małopolskie voivodeships. The research questions were open-ended.

Six men attended. The respondents agreed to participate in the study, were assured of full anonymity and a change of their names. To ensure a higher quality of research, data triangulation was used. The study participants were:

- Waldemar – 33 years old
- Tomasz – 54 years old
- Michał – 62 years old
- Jerzy – 66 years old
- Wojciech – 46 years old
- Marek – 56 years old.

Results

Individual ways of entering homelessness – causes of housing exclusion

Waldemar has stayed in the shelter for half a year, has vocational education, is a bricklayer, currently not working, spent time in a penitentiary facility, is divorced, has two underage children, takes help of a psychologist and attends support groups for people addicted to alcohol. As he claims, his main problem was the fact that he grew up in an alcoholic family. He could never count on his parents. He was the eldest of the siblings and always did most of the housework. When he entered adolescence, he began to rebel, he ran away to his friends more and more often and spent the most time with them. After graduating from vocational school, he left his family home and moved in with a friend. He also took part-time jobs in construction. He often partied, and then he met his future wife. She impressed him not only with her appearance, but also with her features, she was modest, she had goals in life and dreams that she wanted to fulfil. It was for her that he changed his behaviour, spent less time with his friends, and started looking for a full-time job. Soon it turned out that the girl was pregnant and then they decided to get married. They lived with the woman's parents. When their first child was born, the world became too monotonous for Waldemar. He thought he was too young to spend all day with his wife and a child. In order, as he emphasized, to "diversify" his life, he began to reach for alcohol more and more often. There were conflicts at home, especially with in-laws, which were about the difficult financial situation. The in-laws expected their son-in-law to work more and spend less on his own pleasures. At that time, it also turned out that the wife was pregnant with her second child. The conflicts began to escalate. Waldemar moved in with a friend. There, he drank alcohol almost every day and stopped going to work. However, he had to make a living. Persuaded by a friend, he entered the store and took out a few things without paying for them. This is how he stole for the first time in his life. After that, criminal behaviour became a routine, until he ended up in prison for two years. His wife had kept contact with him, but after some time she made the final decision to divorce. After leaving the prison, Waldemar had nowhere to go. According to him, the reason for his homelessness is primarily alcohol, as well as being in prison and the breakdown of his family.

Tomasz has been staying in various shelters and night shelters, he does not work, he has primary education, he is single, he has no children. As a child, the man was brought up in a care and educational institution. As he emphasizes, he does not know what a real family is, he has never experienced love from his parents. In the orphanage, he was often the victim of aggression from his peers. Over time, he learned that he must defend himself to survive. As a grown-up he left the institution and began his adult life. It was not easy for him. At first, he stayed with his grandparents, who were already ill at that time. He lived with them for 2 years, then moved to another city where he found a job. At the age of 22, he came to a farm where he helped the owners, for which he received a roof over his head and food. He lived with them for 4 years, until their tragic death (they died in a car accident). Then their children decided to sell the farm, and he started looking for work again. Tomasz has never started his own family because, as he believes, he does not know if he is suitable to be a father and a husband, as he has never had the right role models. The addiction he fell into led him to a rehab centre, and from there to a homeless shelter. According to Tomasz, homelessness was mainly due to the breakup of his biological family and his stay in a care and educational institution, where he did not have the opportunity to learn many skills needed in his adult life. He could not, in his opinion, find himself neither in his professional nor in his family life. In addition, alcoholism became a problem, which, according to him, makes it difficult for him to return to society.

Michał – he has been in an institution for people in a homelessness crisis for 2 years, receives a pension, is divorced twice, has three adult children, does not keep contact with them, admits that he is addicted to alcohol, but is not currently taking therapist's help. He was brought up, as he claims, in a normal family where he never lacked anything. His parents worked, and he, at those times, had what he needed. He might not have respected it a bit because it was all too easy for him. He was an only child, his parents loved him very much and were solving all his problems for him. They were proud of him when he went to high school. After finishing his education, he quickly found a job (in fact, his father helped him with that) and then he met his first wife. He was happy with her, but his coming back from work later and later after drinking started to bother her a lot. After two years, she decided to divorce. Then Michał began to drink more and more, neither conversations with his parents nor with his

superiors at work helped. During that time, he met his second future wife. She was his neighbour whom he had known for several months. She often helped him into his apartment when he couldn't do it himself (due to the state of intoxication he was in). She, as Michał claims, was the impulse to change his life. He went to an AA group and stopped drinking. They had three children. Michał returned to work, over time he was promoted, they could not complain about money. They could afford to spend holidays together, go away for the weekends, and buy each other presents not only at Christmas. Unfortunately, in the early 90s of the last century, the changes that took place in the country meant that the place where he worked got closed, and he became unemployed. As he emphasizes, it was such a difficult experience for him that he began to look for solace in alcohol again. Without a job, with increasing debts he could not cope with and more and more often spent time away from home with friends drinking alcohol. When he returned one day after a three-day absence, he found the apartment empty. His wife informed him that she was filing for divorce. At the same time, his father died unexpectedly of a heart attack. Michał blamed himself for this death, that it was because of the worries he had with him that his heart could not stand it. Two years after his father had died, his mother died of cancer. He was, as he claims, completely alone in the world, and he lost his apartment ending up with one plastic bag on the street. For several years he lived on his recreational plot (which he inherited from his parents). He was often visited there by social workers and city guards. With time, they convinced him to move to a shelter, because there were no suitable conditions on the plot. Michał believes that it is too late for him to change his life. He is ashamed of what happened, he does not want to have contact with children because he believes that the children do not want such a father. His main problem, in retrospect, was that his parents didn't let him grow up and take responsibility for his life. He has never learned to apologize or ask for help. He is ashamed of his life and feels inferior to other people.

Jerzy – he came to the shelter because of eviction (he had an indebted apartment), has an alcohol problem and debt bailiffs, is divorced, has one daughter, with whom he sometimes meets. He doesn't like to remember the past. He says that he had a good life, a family, a job and a beloved daughter who was the apple of his eye. He would do anything for her. Unfortunately, as he points out, problems at work, family matters and debts left him with

nothing. He enjoys having contact with his child. The princess (as he calls his daughter) offered him to live with her and her family, but he doesn't want to do it, he doesn't want to be a burden to anyone. Staying at the shelter made him realize that he couldn't do many things on his own. That's how he had been taught by his father that there are male and female jobs, and he stuck to it very much. Now he considers it a mistake, because everyone should be able to do everything or almost everything in the house to be independent. If he were to be born again, he would lead his life differently. He sees the future in dark colours, it is difficult for him to take up any additional work due to his age, and his debts have been increasing. However, he wants to do everything so that his daughter does not have to bear financial consequences for his life.

Wojciech – has secondary education, does not work, currently he is under the care of a psychiatrist because he suffers from depression and drug addiction, he is separated with his wife, there are no children. He is very troubled by his stay at the shelter, he does not identify with the people he lives with. As he points out, if it wasn't for his illness, he wouldn't be there. For the situation he mostly blames his father, who was a military man and had been teaching him his principles all his life. He had to do everything according to the instructions of his father, who was never satisfied with him anyway. When he was a teenager, he was constantly criticized, his mother did not defend him because she was also afraid of his father. Wojciech had no right to have his opinion, he even had to go to the school chosen by his father. He never had real friends, always alone, somewhere far away from others. When he was 18, his dad kicked him out of the house because he said he wouldn't support him anymore. He stayed with his mother's sister, who was his godmother, and he could always count on her. It was her who first noticed the symptoms of depression in him and enrolled him in a specialist. Wojciech started taking medication and his condition improved significantly, he found a job and at the age of 26 he married his fiancée. He thought he could deal with the past, but it wasn't that easy. He did not believe in himself, he blamed himself for his failures, there were problems with sleeping, eating, and he went to a psychiatrist again. Wojciech began to believe in the power of pharmaceuticals, without which he could not imagine his life. It even happened that he was hospitalized because he overdosed them. He was then sent to a psychiatric hospital for treatment. As he emphasizes, his wife loved him very much, but she could not stand his changing moods.

She made a new life for herself, although they did not get divorced. Wojciech has a lot of hobbies, he can paint, fold origami, he is passionate about music. However, he hides his talents from the world, he does not want others to think that he is bragging about it. He sees the source of his homelessness in his illness (depression), which, according to him, was affected by the relationship with his father and the lack of support from his mother.

Marek – has been staying at the shelter for 8 years. As he claims, he has never had a real home. He grew up in an alcoholic family. From that time, he remembers only alcoholic libations and quarrels, and sometimes even physical aggression of his parents against each other and the children (he had four siblings). At the age of 17 he ran away from home and never returned there (he has had no contact with his family to this day). He moved to a big city, took various jobs to support himself, and sometimes asked people for money or food. He slept in various places; over time he began to commit crimes. Consequently, he was placed in prisons, where he spent a total of 10 years. While incarcerated, he began to have health problems, as the doctors said, it was the result of previous neglect and an inappropriate lifestyle. When he left the prison walls, he had no idea what to do with himself. He went to an organization that helps people in a similar situation to his, and later to a homeless shelter. Marek believes that what led to homelessness was his poorly functioning biological family, as well as the state that did not support such children growing up in a pathological environment.

*The narratives of the respondents on housing support
and the role of the worker in becoming independent*

The data obtained from the interviews show that the respondents dream of their own apartment, where they could live freely and fulfil their plans. However, they are afraid that this dream may never come true, they think that they have no chance for such a solution: *“I would like to have a roof over my head, a piece of my own place on earth. In retrospect, I believe that this is the most important thing for humans (...). However, I do not believe that I will ever have my own apartment again, people like me are always at the end of the waiting list”* (Michał). The flat is of great value to them, but in their narratives, they share doubts as to whether they would be able to cope with the obligations if they ever got a flat: *“when I still had a family, my only task was to earn money. In the*

beginning, everything worked out, I had a well-paid job, I often got a bonus, and my wife was happy. Unfortunately, the company started to go bankrupt, I looked into the glass more and more often, and I took out a loan, which I have to pay back to this day. Well, what my wife did, she found another, with a thicker wallet, and I was left with nothing (...). Now I think that apart from tea and sandwiches, I don't know how to cook very much, hmm, it was always done by my wife, and before that my mother, who is no longer alive. I would probably have to learn to make lunches, clean, etc., but at my age, it's a bit too late to learn" (Jerzy). The respondents also wonder whether their financial situation would allow them to live on their own (taking into account that they currently have debts or insecure jobs): *"It's nice to have your own apartment, you can be free, there are no regulations, and you decide for yourself. However, you need money for this, because even if I get a flat for free, I must maintain it, rent, electricity bills, TV. You must have a good job and a permanent one, and if you are unemployed, the thing you do is go to a social worker and ask for money?"* (Wojciech). Despite their fears, most respondents express a desire to have their own independent apartment. Interestingly, however, they do not take any action to achieve this goal, only one of the surveyed men is on the list of people waiting for a social housing, the rest have not yet entered the office. Moreover, they do not try to solve their social problems, especially economic ones, they postpone it. Only Waldemar emphasizes that what is necessary are changes in life and not making the same mistakes: *"my greatest enemy was alcohol, it destroyed my life. As a child, I looked at my parents who were alcoholics and I hoped that I would not end up like that, but unfortunately, the disease caught me (...). I was impressed by the company, parties, I forgot about my wife and children, I preferred my friends. When I got to prison, only my wife visited me, she did not take my children, because she told them I had gone abroad to work. I promised her that I would change, but unfortunately (...). Now I know that I was to blame for everything, I'm not surprised that she wanted a divorce, I would probably also get a divorce in her place. Now, when I go to therapy, I understand that many things were still inside me from my childhood. However, I must fix it, I want to have contact with the children, I want them to contact me, but I must prove that I am a different person"* (Waldemar). Tomasz, in turn, admitted that he did not want to move out of the shelter. He believes that his own apartment is a big challenge and a threat, as it can lead to person's loneliness or a return to his old habits: *"I'm fine, as it is, I'm in a shelter, I have many friends, I can go out to the city. Well, of*

course, I must stick to the regulations, you know, but I'm not worried if someone will evict me in a moment. How many were there who went to live on their own and then sat at home alone, watching TV for hours and having a beer... And so, they returned to the addiction again. Loneliness is the worst feeling, it hurts the most, and here I don't feel lonely, I can always go to someone, talk to someone and it's better" (Tomasz). Other people emphasize that in order to fully overcome the homelessness crisis, one must prepare for life independence: "a shelter is kind of a school of life, you can learn everything here before you even think about your own apartment (...), before I got here, I neither knew nor understood many things. Only now I do realise how little a man knows and how much is ahead of him in order to become a person" (Michał). When asked if the narrators would accept the assisted housing program, if they were offered them, all except Tomasz agreed that they certainly would benefit. They have heard about such programs being implemented in the country and see them as a real chance to change their current lives. In assisted housing, however, they would expect the help of specialists, and they would like to be able to come to a support institution (shelters) in difficult moments to overcome a temporary crisis, if they experienced one: "I would love to have my own apartment, although I know that difficult times may come. If I had someone, or I could come here, to the shelter, I would always be sure that someone would help me" (Waldemar). Wojciech is convinced, however, that if he received the premises, he would completely cut himself off from the people with whom he is currently staying at the shelter: "I am not saying that I feel bad here, but I know that if I opened a new card, I mean moved from here to my apartment, I don't think I would be in touch with people from here, not that they are bad or something like that, they would just remind me that I had to be here once" (Wojciech). Despite some concerns, the respondents emphasize that if they had the hope that it could be realized now, they would start taking various actions that would allow them to deal with the difficulties (undertaking therapy, looking for a job, improving professional qualifications): "It's hard for me because I don't have any education, and I have a history of being in prison, but if someone told me today that I would get a flat, I would do anything to earn it (...). Even though I'm not that young anymore, I'd take up a course or something to get a job, and then I'd look for any job" (Marek). The respondents pointed out that shelter is needed, but only when it performs an intervention and temporary function. They emphasized that the shelter is needed, but only when it has a preventive and emergency

function. This applies to extremely difficult situations, when you need to provide immediate help. In the long run, institutions do not fulfil their tasks, because people get used to the institution and the rules prevailing in it, and consequently stop fighting to change their current life.

The surveyed men, in turn, when asked about the roles performed by social workers, most often emphasized that these specialists occupy an important place in the assistance system. First of all, their support focuses on talking to them and advising them on many issues: *"I really like talking to our social worker, she can listen and always finds a solution"* (Marek). Michał is very grateful to the worker who helped him with all the formalities to receive the sickness pension: *"If it hadn't been for our social worker, I could forget about the pension (...). I wouldn't have gone through it all by myself.... It is thanks to him that I have a pension today, it's not much but always a few coins a month"* (Michał). Wojciech, on the other hand, is encouraged by a social worker to activate socially and professionally. The worker motivates him to develop his potential, show his talents to others and use his passions in his professional work: *"A social worker is one of the few people to whom I showed my work (...). We often talk about what I do in my spare time. He was the first to suggest that I do more of it, and maybe even make money from it"* (Wojciech). During the interview, Waldemar emphasizes that this specialist motivates him to contact children. For him this is very important, but he is very afraid of it: *"I love children the most in the world. I know my wife may no longer love me, but that doesn't necessarily mean I can't have contact with my children. I would like to improve my relationship with my children, and the worker began to help me with this"* (Waldemar). For Jerzy, a social worker is a person who supports him financially and helps him receive material help: *"I am in a difficult situation. That's somehow happened. A social worker, when he comes, always asks if I need anything and if I'm fine here (...). From the beginning, he has helped me get some benefits or something I needed"* (Jerzy). In turn, Tomasz is persuaded by an employee to start addiction therapy: *"I have a problem with alcohol, I've already tried some treatment, but it didn't help me. I was sober maybe a couple of weeks (...). Alcohol is like medicine for me, I see something in it that helps me, but our social worker has been explaining that it doesn't work like that (...) she keeps telling me to start therapy, but seriously"* (Tomasz).

Research findings and conclusions

The results of the research I conducted among people experiencing homelessness show that various factors can lead to this crisis. Firstly, it is alcohol which led them to a disease – addiction. Secondly, men indicate that a poorly functioning biological family and the breakup of the family they founded contributed to homelessness. In addition, the respondents point out that their stay in a care and educational institution or a penitentiary had an impact on their current situation. Other reasons mentioned were financial problems (debts), eviction, illness, as well as lack of life skills, responsibility and a proper support system that did not support children growing up in dysfunctional families.

When it comes to the implementation of housing programs, the respondents are clearly ambivalent. On the one hand, they would like to take part in these projects, and on the other, they look for objective or subjective difficulties that would make it impossible. In their opinion, however, the goal (their own apartment) is so distant and unrealistic that they do not believe it will ever be achieved. Importantly, they emphasize that if it were otherwise (the goal would be more real), their motivation to change would increase.

The respondents appreciate the work of social workers and notice especially their tasks in the area of consulting, providing financial and material assistance, supporting in completing various formalities, motivating to undertake social and professional activity, encouraging addiction therapy, establishing contact with the family, as well as developing one's own potential.

An important conclusion from the research is that everyone needs a different kind of help. People in a homelessness crisis often carry for years the burden of their past, which they do not want to accept, have low self-esteem and faith in their own abilities. Being well bruised, they require multidisciplinary help. They need to believe in themselves again, regain self-esteem and independence. It is also worth noting that too idealistic idea about the future and overestimating your own abilities may pose a danger. What is worth recommending are housing programs (cf. Pleace, 2016) and even greater involvement of social workers in the effort to help people experiencing homelessness to become independent (Dębski, 2014). These specialists should be properly prepared to perform many tasks with such demanding clients and, therefore, it is advisable for them to constantly improve their skills and social

competences. A well-prepared social worker is able to change the life of many people, and in relation to excluded people it takes on exceptional significance. These professionals must be noticed and even more appreciated in the social assistance system, because their work brings many opportunities and benefits, primarily for people who remain on the margins of social life.

Abstract: This article is devoted to housing exclusion and support for people experiencing homelessness in Poland. It presents the results of research aimed at discovering individual ways of entering this crisis (the causes of exclusion), as well as at getting to know the narratives of men living in shelters about housing support and the role of social workers in the process of getting out of homelessness. The research was conducted using the case study method, with the help of a narrative interview. The data obtained showed that various factors lead to homelessness, primarily family, institutional, financial, housing, health, individual and systemic factors. The respondents expect social inclusion, especially housing, but they are accompanied by fears and uncertainty related to change. They also see the many roles played by social workers with whom they work on a daily basis. Above all they appreciate the counselling, material support, encouragement to do therapy, for socio-professional activation, personal development, contact with the loved ones and assistance in dealing with official matters. The condition for preventing the petrification of homelessness is the help offered to people struggling with this crisis led by specialists and social workers. An important factor in the process of getting out of homelessness are housing programs, which not only give people experiencing homelessness hope to improve their lot, but above all, they are an important motivating factor for any changes.

Keywords: homelessness, a person in a crisis of homelessness, deinstitutionalization, housing first programs, social worker

Streszczenie: Niniejszy artykuł poświęcony został wykluczeniu mieszkaniowemu i wsparciu osób doświadczających bezdomności w Polsce. Zaprezentowano w nim wyniki badań, których celem było odkrycie indywidualnych dróg wchodzenia w ten kryzys (przyczyn wykluczenia), a także poznanie narracji mężczyzn mieszkających w schroniskach na temat wsparcia mieszkaniowego i roli pracowników socjalnych w procesie wychodzenia z bezdomności. Badania zostały przeprowadzone z wykorzystaniem metody studium przypadku, przy pomocy wywiadu narracyjnego. Uzy-

skane dane pokazały, że różne czynniki prowadzą do bezdomności, przede wszystkim rodzinne, instytucjonalne, finansowe, mieszkaniowe, zdrowotne, indywidualne i systemowe. Badani oczekują inkluzji społecznej, zwłaszcza mieszkaniowej, jednak towarzyszą im obawy i niepewność związane ze zmianą. Dostrzegają też wiele ról pełnionych przez pracowników socjalnych, z którymi na co dzień współpracują. Przede wszystkim doceniają prowadzone przez nich poradnictwo, wsparcie materialne, zachęcanie do terapii, aktywizacji społeczno-zawodowej, rozwoju osobistego, kontaktu z najbliższymi i asystowanie przy załatwianiu spraw urzędowych. Warunkiem zapobiegania petryfikacji bezdomności jest pomoc oferowana osobom zmagającym się z tym kryzysem prowadzona przez specjalistów, pracowników socjalnych. Ważnym też czynnikiem w procesie wychodzenia z bezdomności są programy mieszkaniowe, które nie tylko dają nadzieję ludziom doświadczającym bezdomności na poprawę swojego losu, ale przede wszystkim stanowią istotny czynnik motywujący do wszelkich zmian.

Słowa kluczowe: bezdomność, osoba w kryzysie bezdomności, deinstytucjonalizacja, programy housing first, pracownik socjalny

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