



„Wychowanie w Rodzinie” t. XXXI (3/2024)

Submitted: August 9, 2024 – Accepted: November 10, 2024

Danuta DUCH-KRZYSTOSZEK\*

Magda PROKOPCZUK\*\*

## Support for seniors and their families – a case study of the Warsaw Uprising Veterans’ Home

### Wsparcie osób starszych i ich rodzin – studium Domu Powstańców Warszawskich

#### Abstract

**Aim.** The purpose of this article is an attempt to describe the needs of the elderly participants of the Warsaw Uprising, and to answer the question of how an institution, dedicated to this specific group, the Warsaw Insurgents’ Home, run by the city unit of the Center for Intergenerational Activity, responds to these needs. An important thread under consid-

---

\* **e-mail:** [d duch@aps.edu.pl](mailto:d duch@aps.edu.pl)

Maria Grzegorzewska Academy of Special Education, Institute of Philosophy and Sociology,  
Szczęśliwicka 40, 02-353 Warszawa, Poland

Akademia Pedagogiki Specjalnej im. Marii Grzegorzewskiej, Instytut Filozofii i Socjologii,  
Szczęśliwicka 40, 02-353 Warszawa, Polska

**ORCID:** 0000-0003-2694-1442

\*\* **e-mail:** [mprokopczuk@aps.edu.pl](mailto:mprokopczuk@aps.edu.pl)

Maria Grzegorzewska Academy of Special Education, Institute of Philosophy and Sociology,  
Szczęśliwicka 40, 02-353 Warszawa, Poland

Akademia Pedagogiki Specjalnej im. Marii Grzegorzewskiej, Instytut Filozofii i Socjologii,  
Szczęśliwicka 40, 02-353 Warszawa, Polska

**ORCID:** 0000-0002-4697-2417

eration is also the cooperation of the House staff with families in terms of daily support and care.

**Methods and materials.** The empirical material was collected in a qualitative research carried out by means of individual in-depth interviews with the employees of the Warsaw Insurgents' Home, volunteers and insurgents, as well as analysis of the content of websites and materials (articles, information brochures, mentions) both those indicated by the management of the institution, as well as those available in the virtual space, on the official portals of the Warsaw City or other partners cooperating with the institution.

**Results and conclusion.** The needs of the insurgents are changing as a result of the progressive aging process, limiting psychophysical fitness and the possibility of social adaptation; a large group of insurgents live in single-person households and require support in daily functioning; the Warsaw Insurgents' House responds to the changing needs of the insurgents by undertaking new functions (coordination of the services of the City's institutions, new services of the House); in meeting the needs of the frequenter, the Insurgents' House cooperates with the City's institutions and with families.

**Keywords:** Warsaw Insurgents' Home, elderly/seniors, very old people, family, social services, coordination of social services.

### **Abstrakt**

**Cel.** Celem artykułu jest próba opisu potrzeb osób starszych – uczestników powstania warszawskiego – i odpowiedź na pytanie, jak na te potrzeby odpowiada Dom Powstańców Warszawskich – instytucja przeznaczona dla tej specyficznej grupy osób, prowadzona przez jednostkę miejską Centrum Aktywności Międzypokoleniowej. Ważnym wątkiem rozważań jest również współpraca pracowników Domu z rodzinami w zakresie codziennego wsparcia i opieki nad jego podopiecznymi.

**Metody i materiały.** Materiał empiryczny został zebrany w badaniu jakościowym zrealizowanym metodą indywidualnych wywiadów pogłębionych z pracownikami i wolontariuszami Domu Powstańców Warszawskich oraz z powstańcami. Przeanalizowano także treści stron internetowych i materiałów (artykułów, broszur informacyjnych, wzmianek) zarówno wskazanych przez kierownictwo placówki, jak również dostępnych w przestrzeni wirtualnej na oficjalnych portalach Urzędu m. st. Warszawy i innych partnerów współpracujących z tą instytucją.

**Wyniki i wnioski.** Potrzeby uczestników powstania zmieniają się na skutek postępującego procesu starzenia się, ograniczania sprawności psychofizycznej i możliwości adaptacji społecznej. Duża grupa powstańców mieszka w jednoosobowych gospodarstwach domowych i wymaga wsparcia w codziennym funkcjonowaniu. Dom Powstańców Warszawskich reaguje na zmieniające się potrzeby podopiecznych poprzez podejmowanie nowych funkcji (koordynacja usług instytucji miasta, nowe usługi Domu). W zaspoka-

janiu potrzeb podopiecznych Dom Powstańców Warszawskich współpracuje z instytucjami miasta i z rodzinami. Podczas planowania miejskiej polityki senioralnej władze miasta powinny mieć na uwadze, że starość jest długim okresem życia człowieka, a zbiorowość osób starszych nie jest monolitem. Proces starzenia się wiąże się ze zmieniającymi się potrzebami, których rodzina nie zawsze jest w stanie zaspokoić. Szczególnie należy zwrócić uwagę na grupę osób sędziwych o zwiększonych potrzebach i mniejszych możliwościach ich zaspokajania.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Dom Powstańców Warszawskich, osoby stare/seniorzy, osoby sędziwe, rodzina, pomoc społeczna, koordynacja usług.

## Introduction

Polish society is ageing. Already now, every fourth inhabitant of Poland (25.9%) is 60 years of age or older, and forecasts say that there will be more and more elderly people, especially those in their old age and extreme old age (GUS, 2023a)\*. Old age determines a person's life in both the public and private spheres. It is characterised by a lack of professional activity, non-profit making sources of income (lower than profit-making ones), an empty house (adult children, often widowhood), health problems, loss of fitness, and problems with everyday functioning. The older people are, the more likely they are to need some form of support and care. In modern societies, the responsibility for care is shared between the family and public care institutions. There is a proven connection between these two sources of support. Zbigniew Tyszka wrote: "The intensity of the care and security function of the family is inversely proportional to the size of the non-family security of dependent persons in a given society" (Tyszka, 1979, s. 62).

In this paper, we will consider three main issues concerning the elderly. First, we will look at the needs of the elderly. Second, we will try to determine whether these needs can be met within the family, and if not, whether they are met by municipal institutions. And thirdly, how the family and institutions cooperate in meeting the needs of the elderly.

The paper is based on empirical data collected in a qualitative study using the method of individual in-depth interviews conducted with the insurgents, employees and vo-

---

\* According to the WHO, old age begins at the age of 60. In the traditional classification, three periods of old age are distinguished: 60–74 years – in Polish literature referred to as early old age/age of ageing/advanced age, 75–89 years – middle age/senior age, and 90 years and above – late old age/extreme old age/longevity.

lunteers of the *Dom Powstańców Warszawskich* [Warsaw Uprising Veterans' Home]\*. The content of websites and materials (articles, information brochures, mentions) indicated by the management of the facility as well as those available in the virtual space on the official portals of the City of Warsaw Office or other partners cooperating with this institution were also analysed. Our considerations concern a very specific group of elderly people – Warsaw veterans, who are now of a very advanced age. The institution whose functioning we will describe is also specific, as the Warsaw Uprising Veterans' Home was established on the initiative of the city authorities as an expression of gratitude to the insurgents. The results of the study ultimately allowed us to develop several recommendations for municipal senior policies.

### **The family as an institution and support group for the elderly**

The belief that the family is a group of people whose members support, care for and experience each other's needs is common in our culture. Sociologists do not view the family any differently, as they consistently recognise the caregiving function as one of the primary functions of the family institution\*\* (Tyszka, 1979; Adamski, 1984, 2002; Szlendak, 2010). Support and care are also referred to in the *Kodeks rodzinny i opiekuńczy* [Family and Guardianship Code], which states that spouses are “[...] obliged [...] to help each other” (art. 23), and “[...] parents and children are obliged to respect and support each other” (art. 87) (*Ustawa* [Act], 1964). Everyday practices seem to prove that the principle of family support and care is quite widely implemented by Poles.

---

\* The study is ongoing and the number of interviews is constantly increasing. Nine interviews with insurgents (some biographical), two with employees of the Warsaw Uprising Veterans' Home and two with volunteers have been conducted so far. In the text, quotes from the interviewees are marked with the following symbols: PW – statements by insurgents, P – employees of the Warsaw Uprising Veterans' Home, W – volunteers.

\*\*Descriptions of the care function provided by the authors of academic textbooks on the sociology of the family sound similar: Franciszek Adamski: “protecting family members in certain life situations when they are unable to meet their own needs” (1984, p. 51; 2002, p. 36), Zbigniew Tyszka: “material and physical security for family members [...] completely or partially deprived of their means of support or physically disabled and in need of care” (1979, p. 62). In this description, Z. Tyszka writes about material assistance for the elderly (parents, grandparents) and physical care for the infirm. Tomasz Szlendak: “The family protects children [...] and other members in cases where they are unable to cope with adversity or meet their needs” (2010, p. 116).

It is a truism that in old age, a person's limitations in daily functioning increase. Difficulties in independently performing activities such as dealing with matters in offices, shopping, cleaning, preparing meals, getting dressed, and personal hygiene are reported by 9% of people aged 55–64, 13% aged 65–74 and over 22% aged 75 and over (CBOS, 2019). People from single-person households report difficulties in their daily functioning more often than others – every fourth person (26%) requiring support ran a household alone.

The range of needs of older people declaring problems in their daily functioning is wide. More than half of them require financial support (64%), help with household chores such as shopping, cleaning, washing, and preparing meals (59%), as well as assistance with doctor's appointments, visits to the authorities or the bank (59%), and advice on important matters (57%). A significant percentage of people in need of support would like to have company at home, on walks, in church (45%) and care in case of illness (40%). The declarations of the elderly show that they mostly receive the help they need (between 84 and 90%, depending on the need reported). The most unmet need is financial – 55% of people who need financial support do not receive it sufficiently.

The results of the research also confirm the significant role of the family in meeting the needs of the elderly. Overall, 94% of older people in need of assistance receive it from immediate or extended family members: most often from children (69%), less often from spouses (47%), siblings (26%) and grandchildren (22%). They are also relatively often helped by neighbours (26%), friends (21%) and acquaintances (20%).

The public debate is dominated by the opinion that the state does not care enough for its citizens and does not provide them with institutional forms of support and shifts the responsibility for meeting the needs (not only of the elderly) onto the shoulders of the family, mainly women. Institutional forms of support were rarely used by older people in need – 11% declared help from a community nurse and 10% used the services of a community carer. Even less common was help provided by someone from a parish or charity (6%). Only 2% of older people in need of support had a paid carer to help them.

The results of the 2021 National Census of households with people aged 65 and over also provide us with some data on the living conditions of older people. In the census year, there were a total of 5,148,800 of them, of which 1,285,600 (25%) were single-person households, and 782,300 (15%) consisted of only two elderly people (GUS, 2023b). This means that in 40% of households with people aged 65 and over, there were no younger people who could provide support if needed. Moreover, in as many as 2,358,200 households with older people (46%), there was at least one person with disabilities. In general, households with older people have a greater need for care and less potential for care provision. The older the person, the more likely they are to suffer from various illnesses and physical and cognitive impairments.

We have not found any statistics or research results on households and the family situation\* of the elderly that would provide a background to describe the life situation of the regulars and charges of the Warsaw Seniors' Home. This is the smallest group in the age structure of Poles – at the end of 2022, there were 274,240 people aged 90 and over, which accounted for less than one percent (0.7%) of the Polish population and 2.8% of all people over 60 (GUS, 2023c). This age group includes around 190 people who are “under the umbrella” of the Warsaw Uprising Veterans' Home – the youngest is ninety-two or ninety-three years old, and the oldest is one hundred and two. “This is the majority of insurgents living in Warsaw” (P1).

### **The living situation of the veterans**

The financial, housing and family situations of the regulars and charges of the Warsaw Uprising Veterans' Home vary greatly. Some insurgents are well-housed and financially secure, but some live modestly. Some are completely alone, with no one close to them, although there are relatively few such people. Most of them have close or distant relatives but live alone. Some of the insurgents have children living abroad – over the years, direct personal contact with them has become less frequent, and more and more often they only communicate by phone and via instant messaging. Other people's children are in the country, but the insurgents do not want to be a burden on them and burden them with their problems. From daily conversations with the insurgents, the employees of the House conclude that they want to be independent for as long as possible, but it is becoming increasingly difficult for them.

It is not easy to come to terms with the fact that they are less and less independent, that a walker and a cane are needed, and that there are difficulties with eating, including physiological difficulties. Where? [...]. And it is unpleasant for someone who stands on the barricade with a weapon and then cannot hold their urine [...]. But it affects all of us, regardless of whether we have contributed to our country or not. That's just how old age is (P3).

In the life of most insurgents, the role of an elderly person becomes superior to their other social roles, including that of a hero. However, it should be noted that in their old

---

\* The GUS studies provide data for different groups of older people: 60 years and over, 65 years and over, 75 years and over, which makes it difficult to describe a selected group of older people relatively fully and to make comparisons between groups of older people differing in age, as well as to compare data over time in order to describe changes.

age, the insurgents are a privileged group, as they have access to a range of services and systemic assistance from the city authorities that is not available to other people of their age.

Old age is associated with withdrawal from professional life. It always means major changes in a person's life. There is a group of insurgents who, after retirement, remain active in the public sphere. They fulfil various functions in veteran organisations, participate in the solemn celebration of the uprising, get involved in schools where they talk about the historical events in which they took part, work to commemorate wartime events in the urban space and take other initiatives aimed at preserving memory. However, a large group of insurgents is accompanied by a feeling of loneliness associated with old age.

The employees of the Warsaw Uprising Veterans' Home recognise that their charges "suffer from a certain isolation, loneliness, a sense of a certain loss of purpose in life" (P1). The insurgents themselves also talk about this:

It happens in different ways. Even if they have families, they are also very lonely because it is quite often the case that they have raised children who are abroad. And they are simply alone. It happens that the children are there, but they are so absorbed in their own affairs that they often even forget that they can call their parents or grandparents on the phone [...]. The point is to make people feel needed. Because if you feel alienated or lonely, you feel completely useless. And that's the end of it (PW4).

Later in the interview, the speaker emphasised that interpersonal relationships and active participation in social life are fundamental to well-being and that loneliness can lead to negative emotional effects. He also recognises that physical and psychological limitations, such as the fear of leaving the house, become barriers to building relationships, which intensifies isolation: "People are herd animals. And limited opportunities [to go out], sometimes the fear of going out alone, makes them live in loneliness" (PW4).

## **Warsaw Uprising Veterans' Home as an institution**

Warsaw Uprising Veterans' Home at 22 Nowolipie Street has a fairly short history, dating back to 2018. It was then that the Warsaw Monopoly Association, in partnership with the Society of Friends of Warsaw, fulfilled a public contract from the city to create a daycare centre for participants in the Warsaw Uprising\*. Since January 1,

---

\* Find out more about the project on the Monopol website (see *Stowarzyszenie Monopol*)

2022, the facility has been run by the municipal unit of the Nowolipie Intergenerational Activity Centre. The Warsaw Monopoly Association remains an important partner of the Warsaw Insurgents' Home and, as part of their ongoing cooperation, implements a cultural programme for its residents – information about integration events and cultural and social activities is posted monthly by the Association on its website in the About the Warsaw Uprising Veterans' Home tab. Projects carried out by the Association Warsaw Monopoly for the Warsaw Uprising Veterans' Home are financed by the City of Warsaw.

The Warsaw Uprising Veterans' Home is a place of daily support for the veterans of the uprising, where they can rest, spend time together, eat warm meals and take part in cultural events. Several features distinguish this facility from other places of this kind for the elderly. Firstly, the residents of the House are participants of the Warsaw Uprising, which means that the House is not only a place of daily support, but also a place where patriotic values and the memory of the Uprising are cultivated, and where educational meetings between generations are organised for children and young people. The House organises concerts, lectures and meetings to commemorate the Uprising.

The second distinguishing feature of the Warsaw Uprising Veterans' Home is the wide and comprehensive range of services it offers. The idea of the House arose from the need to repay the insurgents for their fight for the city. This gratitude was to be expressed not only in the annual celebration of the anniversary of the outbreak of the uprising but also in ensuring dignified living conditions for the insurgents. Currently

House is the coordinator of all municipal aid and, in short, anyone who has the status of an insurgent confirmed by the Warsaw Uprising Museum can turn (whether in person, as a family member or as a friend) with a request and we try to fulfil this request to the best of our ability (P1).

Warsaw Uprising Veterans' Home works with other city institutions to provide support to the insurgents. If necessary, they can receive assistance at their place of residence. This can include: home delivery of meals, help with shopping and filling prescriptions, and physiotherapy services as part of a home rehabilitation programme\*. During their

---

*Warszawski*) and about the Warsaw Uprising Veterans' Home on the website of the *Centrum Aktywności Między pokoleniowej "Nowolipie"* (see *O Domu Powstańców Warszawskich*).

\* For natural reasons, the community of living insurgents is rapidly shrinking every year. According to data from the *Muzeum Powstania Warszawskiego* (Warsaw Uprising Museum) website, the list of insurgents who passed away in 2021 (up to the end of October) had 160 names, a year later in the same period 129. On 26 July 2023, 425 insurgents were



daily activities (e.g., going to the doctor, to the office, for a walk, etc.), the insurgents can also count on the assistance of one of about a hundred volunteers who work at the Warsaw Uprising Veterans' Home.

The veterans are connected to the House in different ways and benefit from its support\*. There is a group of regulars, i.e. people who regularly come to the Dom to spend time there. There are about 20 of them, but on special occasions (e.g. anniversary of the uprising or Christmas) there are about 50 of them. Nearly 70 insurgents use the vegetable parcels and the same number use home rehabilitation. It should also be mentioned that some of the people with the status of insurgents do not have regular contact with the House's employees – these are people “[...] who can manage on their own, who do not need or want anything, and who make it clear that they do not need regular contact with us [...]. We are only there when they report their needs to us” (P1).

## **Expanding the range of support and fostering relationships**

There is one more feature that distinguishes the Warsaw Uprising Veterans' Home from other places for the elderly and determines its activities and functions. It is the fact that it is intended for insurgents, i.e., a closed community. New people are rarely referred (or do not refer themselves), often in a situation of some kind of life change. Just as the insurgents and their needs change with age, so does the institution that was established to meet these needs.

Initially, as the staff at the Warsaw Uprising Veterans' Home say, it was conceived as a meeting place for people who are well enough to come here, meet up with friends and make new ones. The place was teeming with cultural life – concerts, lectures, and visits to museums. The situation changed during the pandemic. When everyone was confined to their homes, the employees focused on providing support in the place of residence – delivering meals, shopping, and helping to buy medicines. Special care was given to people who lived alone without family. The pandemic revealed the growing need of senior citizens for help in their daily lives, which was due to the progressive ageing of this group and the fact that they often live alone. Therefore, it was decided to expand the activities of the Senior Citizens' Centre – to support them in their place of residence and to coordinate the municipal services in this respect. This meant that the activities of the centre extended into the private sphere of the insurgents,

---

living in Poland. One of them said in an interview that there are “200 of them at the moment, last year there were 320” (PW4).

\* The figures on the scale of the aid provided, obtained during the interviews, cover the period May–June 2024.

and the tasks carried out in households became support for families in fulfilling their caregiving functions (and sometimes it was necessary to replace families in fulfilling these duties).

Nowadays, the Warsaw insurgents are elderly people and it is not uncommon to celebrate the 100th birthday of one of its regulars in Nowolipie\*. It is also not uncommon to hear about the death of another person. Many residents have been bid farewell during the pandemic. The staff of the Home monitor the changing needs of the residents, which are largely related to the process of advancing age, gradual reduction of psychophysical fitness and social adaptation. For the employees of the centre, this process is very visible. One of the employees compared the fitness of the regulars at the beginning of the centre's operation and now:

Well, there is a huge difference [...]. Even before the pandemic, when we closed the centre, where 40 people came, they were all independent. You could count on the fingers of one hand who was in a pram or with a walker. The rest of the people were independent. The rest of the people came to us by public transport. Now there are no more of them (P3).

Increased free taxi travel limits break down the barriers to the insurgents reaching the House on Nowolipie, at least partially.

There are currently around 140 people under the care of the House. Every year, there will be fewer and fewer of them, and they will be getting older. This also changes relationships. As one of the interviewees notes: "The [Uprising Veterans'] Home has become a place where strong bonds and relationships are formed" (P1). The care to meet needs and the strong bonds that create a specific kind of closeness are elements of the quasi-family relationships between the Home's employees and the charges. The employees build them in a very conscious and reflective way. For example, after realising that "[...] all changes are always difficult for the residents [...] we try, we even have it written down, to have as little employee turnover as possible. [...] This was also a request we had from the residents" (P1). Wherever possible, the employees also try to ensure that the residents have contact with the same rehabilitation specialists or volunteers.

The employees are attentive observers of the insurgents and sensitive to their needs. When it was noticed that the regulars at the Nowolipie House did not eat breakfast because they overeat cookies and have difficulty making a meal for themselves, warm breakfasts were introduced at the House three times a week. The identification of needs

---

\* The average age of living Warsaw insurgents as of March 1, 2024, is 97 years (see *Powstańcy warszawscy...*, 2024).

also concerns the situation in the places of residence. Rehabilitators and volunteers who enter the home environment are the “eyes” of the home’s employees and if they see any difficult situations that concern them, they are to report them. The accepted principle is that they do not take action to resolve difficult situations themselves, but that specialists – people who deal with such matters daily, have the knowledge and have the appropriate tools at their disposal – do so. After discussing the problem, if necessary, the Warsaw Uprising Veterans’ Home, as a municipal institution, contacts the social worker of the respective district and asks for an assessment of the domestic situation to determine whether someone needs additional support.

The guiding principle at the Warsaw Uprising Veterans’ Home is the recognition that “the insurgent is the most important thing – their needs and subjectivity” (P1). The Home’s employees not only respect the principle of the subjectivity of the charges themselves but also make every effort to ensure that outsiders do not treat the insurgents instrumentally:

We take great care to ensure that the full subjectivity of individuals is preserved [...]. We always tell various external partners that we do not decide for the insurgents, we are a platform that can pass on a request. We can express an opinion on a proposal, but we do not decide for someone that they will or will not go somewhere, or do something, this decision is always a personal one [...]. Each of these people has their values, their own views, their character, the things that are important to them. When these external initiatives already arise, we try to make sure that the rebels don’t [do] something and others don’t [do] it (P1).

Individual, personal relationships, care, help, respect and strong bonds build a sense of security among the residents, who bestow their trust on the employees of the shelter: “I can say that we enjoy a very high level of trust from the people who come to us regularly, but also from the people we support in their home environment” (P1).

### **“My second home”**

The insurgents intended to have a meeting place where they could come to meet and chat, sometimes to a nice concert or other event, “just to be together here” (P3). At the Warsaw Uprising Veterans’ Home, the insurgents received “safety and entertainment. And that was all” (P3). Programmes to help the elderly were added later. Now they are becoming equally important. The changing needs of the residents of the House have resulted in the creation of a space that the insurgents can call “my second home.” There are slightly fewer events there, it is a quiet, relaxing, casual, quasi-private space. There

is a sofa where you can lie down if you feel unwell or need a moment's rest – “it's no problem at all” (P3). One of the interviewees vividly describes the atmosphere of the house in Nowolipie as follows:

I feel that they treat it a bit like a home. [...] as a place where they can come, sit down, read the newspaper, and feel at home. This is a special place for these people. How often they say that this is their second home, because there are people here, and there are no people at their home because they are very often alone. And when they are not alone, they have a lot of difficulties at home, problems such as a sick wife or husband, or a million other things. And this is a place where they can rest, and I think that's what home is all about. Because at home we rest, we feel comfortable. Well, just like at home, sometimes we will argue here, sometimes we will cry, sometimes we will break something. That's just how we are with each other. When we are tired, we will take a nap, just like at home. We will eat dinner, just like at home. We can listen to music, we will spend holidays together, we will have guests, we will celebrate birthdays and, if we want, name days. [...] It's also okay if they sit here alone, in the sense that they sit and read the newspaper, nothing happens. Silence is also okay because they are not alone. They have the feeling that they are among people (P3).

The regulars at the Warsaw Uprising Veterans' Home are all single. Only one of the men lives with his sick wife – for him, being at Nowolipie is a time to relax.

Not all insurgents are regulars at the Warsaw Uprising Veterans' Home. Some are socially active and do not have time for it, others cannot come because their health does not allow it or they are prisoners in their own homes. Still others do not want to because they associate the Warsaw Uprising Veterans' Home with a retirement home: “These are people from whom we hear that... it sounds so strange coming from a 96-year-old, but we hear ‘it's not time yet. I still have time to come to a place like that’” (P3).

### **Cooperation between employees of the Warsaw Uprising Veterans' Home and family members**

The employees of the Warsaw Uprising Veterans' Home are in constant contact with each insurgent who has contacted them or has been referred to them, and the principle of cooperation with their family is an organisational norm. In the beginning, the employees try to recognise the life situation of each person – whether they are alone and have no relatives (there are not many such people, but the Warsaw Uprising Veterans' Home takes care of them first), whether they have relatives and live alone, to what extent their

needs are met and to what extent they can count on support from their family. The employees of the Home have contact details of the relatives of the insurgents (most often their children). When they witness situations that they should report to someone (e.g., concerning health or worrying behaviour), they first want to report them to the family. It is rare for an insurgent to refuse to provide contact details of family members.

The contact between the employees of the Warsaw Uprising Veterans' Home and the families of the residents varies because the family situations of the residents are different. When trying to contact family members, there is sometimes a clear resistance to taking care of the parent in need, which is unpleasant for the employees: "No, because as a stranger, I care more about this person than his own family" (P3). The employees mention two main reasons for such situations. Firstly, "these children are often in a much worse state than their parents" (P3) and find it difficult to take on the responsibility of care and the associated tasks. Secondly, the parent-child relationship has not always been a healthy one: "We don't really know what kind of parent this person was" (P3) and the child does not feel obliged to provide care.

An example of the complexity of family relationships is the story of a man who was placed in a nursing home. The police were brought in to search for his daughter, about whom the staff at the retirement home knew nothing except that she existed. When she was found, the woman "made it clear that if necessary, she would contribute to the costs, but that she absolutely did not want to have anything to do with this man" (P3). The employees of the Warsaw Uprising Veterans' Home sometimes encounter difficult family histories: "These relationships are very different, but also when you talk to these families, I understand their withdrawal, because these stories are really different. But it is not for us to judge" (P3).

The fact that the children of the insurgents are of an advanced age is a general problem. Even if the relationships are good and the employees have a good relationship with the family, the situation still requires attention: "You have to remember that the sons and daughters [of the veterans] are usually of a senior age – because if someone is 97 years old, their son maybe 77 [...]. We also often work with other senior citizens" (P1) who have difficulties related to their old age. Therefore, employees often try to establish contact with the next generation, i.e., with grandchildren who are younger and can support their parents in caring for their grandparents.

Another challenge when working with families is that some of the refugees have children abroad. Even if they care deeply about their parents and organise care for them, sometimes even 24/7, their role is limited to looking after them. They are not on-site and are unable to provide personal care daily, so others have to take over these tasks.

There is also a group of insurgents who have a son or daughter almost every day, and the employees of the House have quite a close relationship with them: If something happens, for example, if we can't get through, I call my son/daughter and say, "I can't

get through.” “Okay, I’m on my way then” (P3). It is with these families that the Home’s employees find it easiest to work.

### **Functions of the Warsaw Uprising Veterans’ Home for the Family**

The Warsaw Uprising Veterans’ Home fulfils various functions in its work with the families of the insurgents. Firstly, the employees of the House inform family members about the behaviour and conditions of the insurgents that they, the rehabilitation workers or volunteers have observed and which, in their opinion, require intervention. This also applies to health emergencies on the premises of the House (high blood sugar, fainting, etc.), when the family member is routinely informed and “the decision as to whether someone goes to the hospital or not is usually made in consultation” (P1).

The team of carers at the Warsaw Uprising Veterans’ Home also very often has an educational function. For family members, they are the ones who will guide them in dealing with matters, advise them on how to act, how to take advantage of the support system, and who to turn to. The principle of the House is not to take responsibility for the care of the insurgents: “We try to train volunteers not to do the work of the families, but rather to be educators [...]. It is best if the family manages these situations” (P1). At the same time, employees give the families of insurgents the feeling that they can always count on their support.

The employees of the Warsaw Uprising Veterans’ Home also attach great importance to educating family members on how they can cope with difficult situations they may experience as supporters. This applies, for example, to situations in which a family member feels that the health or well-being of an insurgent is at risk due to inappropriate actions or lack of action on the part of third parties (in dealing with the health service, employees of municipal social welfare centres, etc.). In general, families are advised to be very cautious when assessing the situation without recognising it and under the influence of strong emotions. It is not rational to thoughtlessly assume the bad will of third parties or to take the stories of relatives as completely reliable. Families can discuss difficult situations with the employees of the Warsaw Uprising Veterans’ Home to calm down their emotions and find the best possible solutions for the insurgents together. Sometimes, employees also take intervention measures (e.g., in social welfare centres) to help families solve the problem.

The employees of the Warsaw Uprising Veterans’ Home intervene more decisively when they see that a family is not coping for various reasons. “And if a person is no longer able to live independently, and we are unable to provide a 24-hour carer, the only form of assistance is a stay in a nursing home, and for insurgents, it is free of charge” (P1). The employees say: “We have had very good experiences with the nursing home

and we have people who decided on their own [to go to such a home] somewhere at some stage in their lives when they saw that functioning alone at home was risky for them” (P1). The Warsaw Uprising Veterans’ Home cooperates with the “Kombatant” nursing home on Sternicza Street. Trips to this home were organised for the insurgents so that they could see what it looked like, and what the living conditions were like, and familiarise themselves with it as one of the options to choose from\*.

## Conclusion

Warsaw Uprising Veterans’ Home is a place where people meet: insurgents with other veterans, volunteers and employees of the House, schoolchildren, artists giving concerts here, and lecturers giving lectures. It is a place where old acquaintances are renewed and new ones made. According to our interviewees, the insurgents can feel at home here. The residents positively receive the activities of the Warsaw Uprising Veterans’ Home. As one of them notes, “Institutions such as Nowolipie 22 and Monopol [*Stowarzyszenie Monopol Warszawski*] are doing a really great job with these people in need, people who should be noticed and who deserve a lot of respect in some way” (PW4).

Research findings show that the needs of the insurgents are changing due to progressive ageing, reduced psychophysical fitness and social adaptation. A large group of insurgents live in single-person households and over the years require more and more support in their daily functioning. The Warsaw Uprising Veterans’ Home responds to the changing needs of its charges by taking on new functions (coordination of services provided by city institutions, services provided by the House in the place of residence). In meeting the needs of its charges, the Warsaw Uprising Veterans’ Home cooperates with city institutions, non-governmental organisations and families. The care provided by families (usually children) for the insurgents and their cooperation with the Home of the veterans varies and depends on the family relationships between the insurgents and their children, the health of the children (who are also elderly) and their place of residence. For this reason, the Warsaw Uprising Veterans’ Home

---

\* The “Kombatant” nursing home care is a special place because in 2006, on the initiative of Jerzy Stasiak, a Warsaw insurgent and resident of the home, a Memorial Chamber was established there, in which unique documents, photographs and medals donated by the residents of the home and their families are collected. The nursing home residents can honour the memory of the historical events they took part in and pass it on to younger generations, as the memorial room is used for so-called living history lessons for pupils, students and other interested parties. On 1 August, the insurgents living in the “Kombatant” nursing home care lay flowers on the memorial stone commemorating the uprising located on the premises of the centre.



tries to involve the younger generation – grandchildren – in the care of the charges. The cooperation with the families mainly consists of informing them about the observed conditions and behaviours of the charges and educating them about possible solutions. Through its activities, the Warsaw Uprising Veterans' Home also supports the family (and sometimes replaces it) in functions other than care, e.g., emotional (giving attention, celebrating birthdays), identification (keeping the memory of the uprising alive and a sense of belonging to the Warsaw insurgents) or recreational and social.

The results of the study allowed for the development of several recommendations for urban senior policies. City authorities should bear in mind that old age is a long period of human life, and the community of older people is not a monolith. The ageing process is associated with the changing needs of older people, whose families are not always able to meet these needs and require support. The experience of the Warsaw Seniors' Home indicates that the key to institutions developing appropriate forms of support for the elderly is monitoring their needs, cooperation with the family, and a network of contacts with city institutions and non-governmental organisations. Particular attention should be paid to the group of very old people, with increased needs and fewer possibilities to meet them, and to older people who do not have their relatives around them.

## References

- Adamski, F. (1984). *Socjologia małżeństwa i rodziny: Wprowadzenie* [Sociology of marriage and the family: Introduction]. Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe.
- Adamski, F. (2002). *Rodzina: Wymiar społeczno-kulturowy* [Family: Socio-cultural dimension]. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego.
- CBOS. (2019). *Jakiej pomocy potrzebują osoby starsze i kto im jej udziela?* [What kind of help do older people need and who provides it?]. Retrieved from: [https://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2019/K\\_116\\_19.PDF](https://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2019/K_116_19.PDF).
- GUS. (2023a). *Prognoza ludności na lata 2023–2060* [Population forecast for 2023–2060]. Retrieved from: <https://stat.gov.pl/obszary-tematyczne/ludnosc/prognoza-ludnosci/prognoza-ludnosci-na-lata-2023-2060,11,1.html>.
- GUS. (2023b). *Narodowy Spis Powszechny Ludności i Mieszkań 2021: Starzenie się ludności Polski w świetle wyników narodowego spisu powszechnego ludności i mieszkań 2021* [National Population and Housing Census 2021: Ageing of the Polish population in the context of the results of the National Population and Housing Census 2021]. Retrieved from: <https://stat.gov.pl/spisy-powszechne/nsp-2021/nsp-2021-wyniki-ostateczne/starzenie-sie-ludnosci->



- polski-w-swietle-wynikow-narodowego-spisu-powszechnego-ludnosci-i-mieszkan-2021,3,1.html.
- GUS. (2023c). *Rocznik demograficzny* [Population yearbook]. Retrieved from: <https://stat.gov.pl/obszary-tematyczne/roczniki-statystyczne/roczniki-statystyczne/rocznik-demograficzny-2023,3,17.html>.
- O Domu Powstańców Warszawskich* [About the House of the Warsaw Uprising Fighters]. (n. d.). Retrieved October 28, 2024, from: <https://cam.waw.pl/o-domu-powstancow-warszawskich>
- Powstańcy warszawscy zostaną zwolnieni z podatku od nagród* [Warsaw insurgents to be exempted from tax on rewards]. (2024). Retrieved from: <https://www.portalsamorzadowy.pl/zmiany-w-prawie/powstancy-warszawscy-zostana-zwolnieni-z-podatku-od-nagrod,541782.html>.
- Stowarzyszenie Monopol Warszawski [Warsaw Monopoly Association] [website]. (n. d.) Retrieved October 28, 2024, from: <https://www.monopolwarszawski.pl/o-nas/historia.html>.
- Szlendak, T. (2010). *Socjologia rodziny: Ewolucja, historia, zróżnicowanie* [Family sociology: Evolution, history, diversity]. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.
- Tyszka, Z. (1979). *Socjologia rodziny* [Family sociology]. Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe.
- Ustawa z dnia 25 lutego 1964 Kodeks rodzinny i opiekuńczy* [Act of 25 February 1964 Family and Guardianship Code]. (1964). Dz. U. 1964.9.59.