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# A Tenant



Connecting those in need of everyday care  
with individuals in need of housing



# 1. Who is this innovation for?

- for adults who are dependent on the help of others – elderly, lonely, disabled, mentally and physically disabled, in danger of neglect, or with families that are unable to provide the proper care, but have space for a tenant
- for individuals in need of housing – homeless, or in danger of becoming homeless, struggling with poverty, or domestic abuse, individuals leaving foster care and orphanages, individuals living in dangerous conditions, living with dysfunctional families and looking for peace and security; young people who can't afford to rent, or purchase a house/an apartment, individuals who lost their dwellings in natural disasters and random acts of God
- for members of families of the dependants who have limited abilities to take care of their relatives due to other responsibilities (taking care of minors,



Photo from the film on innovation **A Tenant**, Sangaj Studio Filmowe Dorota Migas-Mazur

or disabled children), who live too far away, or have too much professional burdens, or have strained relations with the dependant, or lack social competences (addictions, disabilities)

- for social welfare centers, or local government institutions that fulfill obligations stemming from the Social Welfare Act

## 2. What social problem does it address?

- **in case of dependent individuals** the problem of lack of sense of safety, loneliness and difficulties in normal functioning, isolation and social exclusion, limited mobility, hostility to change, sense of burdening one's family, feeling of being useless, unhealthy habits (e.g. lack of proper hygiene)
- **in case of individuals looking for housing** – lack of safe shelter, difficult financial situation, lack of sense of safety, health and life risks (homeless individuals inhabiting structurally dangerous areas), violence, social exclusion, passivity and hopelessness
- **in case of the members of dependant's family** – weakening of family's care functions due to work-related migrations and inter-generational conflicts, decreasing number of individuals capable of providing proper care due to aging society, high costs of full time care, lack of the ability to fulfill one's personal life goals
- **in case of the social welfare centers** – issues with providing help to all in need at the level corresponding to their circumstances, insufficient funding, high costs of full time care (DPS), lack of reliable, systemic solutions for dependants, insufficient assistance support, difficulties with reaching dependants with social welfare, informative and prophylactic information, negative stereotypes regarding dependants, low social engagement of elderly and homeless populations, incurred hopelessness and entitlement of the dependants, social dysfunctions, lack of sufficient number of public housing units and shelters

# 3. Description

## Where did the idea come from?

Employees of the Social Welfare Center in Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski working with dependent individuals (disabled, elderly, alone) and persons looking for housing came up with this innovation. They decided to pair individuals in need of care, but with extra living space with those who would be ready to help and take care in exchange for housing.

That is how the **Tenant** innovation was created – a new service, never before implemented by government institutions or an NGO, and allowing for social inclusion of several social groups at once. It is also an alternative for institutional help, generating high costs not only for the individual in need, but also his or her family and community.

## Essence of the innovation

The project provides individuals in need of housing (due to domestic violence, homelessness, etc.) to move in with individuals living alone and in need of care. In exchange for housing the tenants would help with everyday care.

A well-trained team of professionals knowledgeable in working with both groups is a crucial part of a successful implementation of the innovation. It would consist of:

- **issues specialist**, who would plan and coordinate everyday tasks and completion of project's goals, recruit individuals for the project, collaborate with specialists, co-organize meetings and trainings, help with problem solving
- **integration specialist**, who would coordinate the work of dependants' caregivers, intervene and help handle any issues, or conflicts between the sides, help with recruitment efforts, communicate with dependants' families, gather and analyze data and documents pertaining to the dependants and their families, collaborate with other specialists, co-organize meetings and trainings, flag trainings necessary for the dependants
- **psychologist**, who would secure and maintain good communication and positive attitude towards the collaboration between the addresses and project

facilitators, facilitate psychological evaluations of the potential candidates and, if needed, provide psychological support. He or she would be responsible for facilitating mediations and interventions during crisis, as well as trainings and workshops, and support for the rest of the team

- **social worker**, who would inform potential participants about the project, research data bases and select potential participants, identify their needs and problems, take actions towards building up the independence of individuals searching for housing, cooperate closely with the project team, monitor well being of participants at their location no less than once a month and produce notes from these visits
- **caregiver working at the residence of the dependent individual**, who would take care of the individual, help with house upkeep, monitor the relationship between project participants and report any issues to the integration specialist
- **legal counsel**, who would provide legal advice to the team and project's participants, write legal opinions, legislative proposals and represent the team before courts and government institutions
- **IT specialist**, who would be responsible for project's website and print materials
- **accountant**

## The innovation step by step

### Recruitment

- Information campaign on the website and in the local media, flyers, posters in social welfare centers, NGOs, churches, community associations, public health centers, self-help centers, social integration centers, mayors' offices, among friends.
- direct engagement with social welfare center beneficiaries – dependants – in an effort to explain the benefits and rules of the initiative, searching for potential candidates.
- meetings with individuals looking for housing, discussing the rules of living arrangements with the dependants, scope of the agreement and the rules

- individual conversations with each candidate and members of dependants' families
- trainings and workshops for potential tenants regarding first aid and time management, interpersonal communication, basic social competences and other issue areas identified as necessary
- Project's team makes its final decision about pairing candidates.

It's crucial to slowly build relationships with the project's addresses, thoroughly diagnose their situation, as well as build up their social competences.

Individuals abusing alcohol and other psychoactive substances can't apply into the program. They are required to undergo therapy and prove a significant period of abstinence.

### **Pairing participants**

- meeting at the house of the dependant – introducing participants and making a decision about follow up meetings, or deciding on shared housing, discussing details of potential agreement. In case of immediate agreement by both sides to be paired the remaining details are discussed and move-in is arranged.
- signing of the contract
- psychologist support catered to a particular case
- preparations for the move-in of a tenant – help with securing any basic appliances as well as the move-in itself.
- Move-in day

At that stage there should be no rush and it's important to give both sides time to get to know each other and make an informed decision. A strict cooperation between the team and a proper flow of information about the current state of affairs and planned actions is crucial.

### **Monitoring**

- Systematic and regular (no less than once a month at different times of day) house visits by the integration specialist and the social worker at the house – diagnosing the needs and problems, necessary support

- regular house visits in the case of the dependant's absence (e.g. hospital stay)
- organizing trainings recognized as necessary for the participants (e.g. help with official paperwork, personal hygiene, cooking, household upkeep)
- organizing mediations in case of misunderstandings and conflicts, help with conflict resolution
- help with finding an alternative dependant in case of a resignation by one of the participants.
- help with eviction in case of any complications with tenant's move out

It would be worthwhile to evaluate the project at certain point and measure the level of satisfaction on both sides

*I'm very glad I don't have to keep the furnace going by myself and that there's someone to help with it. There are chores I don't have to worry about anymore.*

Innovation participant

*I had some doubts. I was wondering how I'm going to feel. I've been alone for 17 years, since my husband passed away. I was a little scared. But when the program representative brought the tenant I already knew it's going to be fine. I thought she'll be like a daughter to me.*

Innovation participant

*I believe you have to preserve certain standards. It's better to hold off on pairing than deal with consequences of a bad decision, especially since it's an innovation and everyone is watching closely and many have fears about us pairing people who don't know one another and in the day and age of all the scams and dangers people's senses are on high alert.*

Program representative

## What are the costs?

Costs include:

- team's compensation: legal counsel, psychologist, integration specialist, training instructors (e.g. first aid trainings)
- social workers' overtime pay
- purchasing psychological tests for tenant candidates
- purchasing appliances to furnish rooms for the tenants
- promoting the project and recruitment of the participants



Photo from the film on innovation **A Tenant**, Sangaj Studio Filmowe Dorota Migas-Mazur





## Tenants

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### Group's characteristics

adult individuals, either homeless, or in danger of homelessness, victims of abuse, coming out of foster care, or orphanages and willing to become independent, individuals living in dangerous conditions, victims of natural disasters or random acts of God without means to rent or buy a house/apartment on the market, but able to participate in regular bill payments

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### Problems to be solved

lack of safe shelter, financial difficulties, lack of sense of security, danger to one's health and life (due to dangerous environments), violence, social exclusion, passivity, hopelessness

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### Benefits of the innovation

safe shelter, institutional support, help with solving problems, improvement in living conditions, education, ability to realize one's ambitions

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### Effects

safe shelter without financial strains, health and life protection, ability to take care of one's personal hygiene and personal needs, sense of being needed, social inclusion, social activation, rebuilding of self-worth, gaining new skills and competences



## Dependent people

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### Group's characteristics

elderly individuals with physical and mental disabilities, typically with families unable to provide sufficient care, living in a house/apartment with a vacant, furnished room

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### Problems to be solved

lack of sense of security, loneliness, difficulty with normal functioning, social isolation and exclusion, limited mobility, hostility towards change, sense of being a burden on the family, sense of being useless, unhealthy habits, e.g. lack of personal hygiene

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### Benefits of the innovation

presence of another individual helping with access to social, health and cultural services, institutional support and ongoing monitoring, quick response time to potential dangers, help with everyday activities, help with solving everyday problems, emotional, educational, communication and transportation support

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### Effects

sense of security, ability to meet the basic needs, eliminating loneliness, ability to benefit from public goods, services and benefits, social inclusion, ability to remain in one's home, improvement in the comfort of living, better time management and more activities, help with burdens of disabilities

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## 4. Who's behind it?



photo: Wojtek Radwański  
(wojtekradwanski.com)

**Joanna Basińska** – Co-author of the innovation, head of the Service Help Department at the Social Welfare Center in Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski. She has been helping individuals in need for many years. She has been interested in helping others from early on in her career. She is a nurse and a pedagogue by training and a mother of two teenagers. She's full of energy and open to new challenges.



**Bożena Kotowska** – Co-author of the innovation, senior specialist in social work, coordinator of the Social Welfare Center in Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski. She specializes in addiction therapy. She is an occupational therapist, a nurse, an economist, a social worker, an educator, academic professor and an artisan. She loves animals, music and good food – especially with friends and family around.



**Anna Kwapisz** – Co-author of the innovation and a psychologist at the Social Welfare Center in Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski. She's a trainer in psycho-social skills and a socio-therapist. She works with adults and the youth. Working with other people is her passion and a source of satisfaction. She believes every man has a potential, a will to grow and strength to overcome life crises and that it's a psychologist's job to unlock those resources. In her private life she raises her teenage daughter.



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## 5. Contact information

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