

London Metropolitan Archives

Information Leaflet Number 32

The evacuation of children from the County of London during the Second World War



Timetable of events

| Date | Events |
|--------------|---|
| 1930s | Discussions at national and local government level about principle of evacuating vulnerable groups of civilians to reduce chaos expected to result from massive air attacks on cities and subsequent panic. |
| May 1938 | LCC approved principle of evacuating all its schoolchildren. |
| Jul 1938 | Anderson Committee report established that evacuation would not be compulsory although billeting would be; schoolchildren could be moved in school parties in the care of teachers; central government would pay initial costs. |
| Sep 1938 | LCC put own evacuation plan into action during Munich crisis by moving nursery and disabled children. Co-operation with Metropolitan Boroughs and adjacent local authorities. |
| Nov 1938 | National Government began preparing scheme; member of LCC staff added later to organising group from Ministry of Health and Board of Education. |
| 1939 | Increased sense of urgency, especially in London, led to priority being given particularly to schoolchildren, younger children with mothers or guardians, and pregnant women. In London LCC co-ordinated schemes for metropolitan area and for 11 contiguous boroughs and district councils in adjacent counties. LCC's 12 education divisional officers acted as dispersal officers. |
| Jul 1939 | People leaving London privately. Many schools used as registration centres with teachers volunteering to act as registrars. |
| Aug 1939 | Less than 70% of London schoolchildren registered for evacuation. |
| 1-4 Sep 1939 | Plan II put into operation: over 600,000 London schoolchildren among 1½ million people evacuated. Only problem was telescoping of transport arrangements leading to unexpected destinations. |
| Jan 1940 | About 35% of London schoolchildren had returned, especially to East End. Schools began to re-open November 1939, with health and welfare services re-appearing, despite schools having been commandeered for other services. |
| Spring 1940 | Development of Plan IV for large-scale evacuation. To be carried out over longer period, only when heavy bombing became serious, and not including mothers with young children. Schoolchildren were again to be registered but only 10% were so in London. |

| Date | Events |
|---------------|--|
| May-June 1940 | Further evacuation of about 160,000 children from LCC area and move of those already evacuated from South, South-East and East coasts to Wales, Midlands, Surrey and Hertfordshire. |
| Jul 1940 | Plan V ('Trickle') developed to take parties of schoolchildren away from blitz. As more children left, groups became increasingly miscellaneous. 60,000 evacuated thus over 12 month period. LCC conducted programme for London and Home Counties. |
| Sep-Nov 1940 | Plan VII sent homeless mothers and children away in groups. |
| Summer 1943. | For every two secondary school children in London, one London child was still evacuated |
| Jul-Sep 1944 | Final wave of evacuation ('Rivulet'), caused by buzz-bombs, to West, Midlands and North. |
| Oct 1944 | Gradual return of evacuees, but few to London and South-East which were still vulnerable and where structural damage was widespread. |
| Jul 1945 | All evacuees had been brought back |

Problems in tracing individual children and schools

Researchers should note that it will often be impossible to trace records of individual children.

1. Many children returned unofficially and could have been evacuated several times.
2. Not all children went with their own schools.
3. Evacuated parties could move several times as reception areas became unsafe.
4. Record-keeping became very difficult. The LCC found it impossible to keep annotated nominal rolls. Relatively few schools retained sufficient identity to keep records as in peace-time.
5. The local education authority in the reception area became responsible for the education of evacuated children. Other children were taught under the Home Tuition Scheme in any building available.
6. 'Many schools had lost their identity and their former pupils to such an extent that the local authorities could not pick out a particular reception area as the temporary home of their schoolchildren' (Titmuss, see bibliography). Ealing

brought 708 children back from 60 places, the LCC collected from 1,000 billeting areas.

7. Many records relate to policy and general matters : there are very few records of individual children or schools.

General note on records

1. National government: records at the National Archives at Kew among those of e.g. Ministries of Health, Education and Housing and Local Government. At least some series subjected to heavy weeding.
2. Local government:
 - a. LCC - records of Council and its committees and of departments (see below, Records in London Metropolitan Archives).
 - b. Metropolitan Boroughs: apply to local archives departments or libraries.
 - c. Counties adjacent to London: apply to county archives or history centres.
 - d. Other counties: apply to county record offices.

Records in London Metropolitan Archives

Records of the London County Council and its committees

- Council minutes 1938-1945: available on open shelves in the Information Area.
- Council presented papers 1938-1945: LCC/MIN/398-403.
- General Purposes Committee minutes and presented papers 1938-1939: LCC/MIN/6295-6296 and 6473-6481
- Emergency Committee III minutes and presented papers 1939: LCC/MIN/4373-4385
- Civil Defence and General Purposes Committee minutes and presented papers 1940-1945: LCC/MIN/2760-2796
- Education Committee minutes 1938-1945: available on open access in the Information Area.
- Education Committee presented papers 1940-1945: LCC/MIN/2954
- Education Committee General Sub-committee minutes and presented papers: LCC/MIN/3388-3401

LCC departmental records

Education Officer's department

- Subject and policy and other files: LCC/EO/WAR/1-5

This is the most significant series of LCC records relating to evacuation. It contains not only a very informative account of evacuation operations to 1943 (LCC/EO/WAR/1/1) but also a wide range of central government public and confidential circulars, reports of conferences with other bodies, statistics (e.g. LCC/EO/WAR/1/226), files on special categories of evacuees (LCC/EO/WAR/2/passim), reports on damaged and emergency schools, transport schedules (LCC/EO/WAR/5/7-9 and 23), a directory of London schools indicating to which schools in the reception area they were sent 1939 and 1940 (LCC/EO/WAR/5/5 a copy is available at the counter in the Information Area), anecdotes (LCC/EO/WAR/1/232) and a few records of individual schools (LCC/EO/WAR/4-5).

- Log-books of individual schools: LCC/EO/DIV/various

Note: war-time log-books do not often survive and they may not include evacuation periods as the schools suffered so much disruption. Most will be subject to a 65 year closure period.

- Both these factors also affect inspectors' reports (LCC/EO/PS/12).
- In 1945, the Education Officer's Department compiled an account of evacuation describing its work in the evacuation of children (SC/PPS/41). This manuscript has been published by the office and is available for purchase.
- SAMWAYS, R (ed). We think you ought to go. Greater London Record Office, 1995 (62.86 COL)

Public Health department

- Evacuation of children and organisation of treatment centres 1939: LCC/PH/WAR/1/14. Plans V and VI 1940: LCC/PH/WAR/1/19. Evacuation survey by National Federation of Women's Institutes 1942: LCC/PH/WAR/1/21.

Welfare department

- Rest centre files (LCC/WE/RC) including files relating to evacuees returning to London 1941-1945: LCC/WE/RC/Box 8
- Material collected for war history 1939-1945: LCC/WE/M/Box 1/15
- Files on billeting charges, etc. 1939-1941: LCC/WE/M/Boxes 7-9
- Evacuation of the blind 1939-1944: LCC/WE/M/Box 30

- Note: some records containing confidential information may be subject to restricted access.

Children's department

- Evacuation of children from residential schools and homes 1938-1945: LCC/CH/M/6
- Return of children from evacuation 1943-1948 with historical record of evacuation 1938-1943: LCC/CH/M/7
- Evacuation proposals for approved schools 1940: LCC/CH/D/2/2
- Evacuation of approved schools and remand homes, and war service of staff and pupils 1939-1945: LCC/CH/D/3/2
- Note: the introductory notes to the lists of records of children's residential homes include references to the evacuation of the children, often when the records of the home do not appear to include further information. Some records containing confidential information may be subject to restricted access.

Clerk's department

- Evacuation schemes 1938-1947: LCC/CL/CD/1/88-98
- Re-opening of schools 1939-1943: LCC/CL/CD/1/99
- Central government evacuation leaflets 1939: LCC/CL/CD/3/80, 92
- Account of LCC services during war 1939-1945: LCC/CL/CD/4/8

Note: other files in the Civil Defence (CD) series of files may include references to evacuation or to the staff who planned or executed it, and to damage to schools and other establishments for children.

- Staff for evacuation schemes 1939-1943: LCC/CL/ESTAB/3/19-20

Deposited records

No comprehensive survey has been made of these records. Readers are referred to the subject and general indexes but may also care to note:

- Parish magazines 1938-1945 may contain references to registration and evacuation.
- Charities, particularly those nation-wide, would have noted the effects of evacuation. For example, the annual reports of the Charity Organisation Society, some of its post-war case files and its records relating to the setting up of Citizens' Advice Bureaux, contain relevant information (for records see list A/FWA).

Note: some documents may be subject to restricted access.

- Hospitals and other medical institutions providing health services for children and pregnant women either evacuated their patients or provided services for evacuees before and after leaving London.

Note: some records containing confidential information may be subject to restricted access.

Middlesex

Readers interested in children evacuated to or from the county of Middlesex are also advised to consult the records of Middlesex County Council in London Metropolitan Archives.

Photographs

The LMA Photograph Collection contains photographs of children in transit, of damaged schools and related subjects. Please ask staff for further details.

Maps

London Metropolitan Archives has a series of Ordnance Survey maps, compiled by the LCC Architect's department, which has been colour-coded to show the extent and severity of bomb damage in London. Copies of these are available on open access in our Information Area. They have been published as *The London County Council Bomb Damage Maps 1939-1945* edited by Ann Saunders with an introduction by Robin Woolven (London Topographical Society and London Metropolitan Archives 2005). This book is now out of print but a copy is available for consultation in our Information Area (62.87 LTS).

Reading List

The library holds a large stock of books which relate to or touch on the experience of London and Londoners during the war. These are government pamphlets, reports and other papers; the experiences of small groups of people or individuals; the response of local authorities; and studies of post-war reactions.

The following books are the most significant or immediately interesting but searchers are strongly advised to consult the library's catalogue.

TITMUSS, R.M. *Problems of Social Policy*. HMSO and Longmans Green, 1950. (62.71 TIT).

FERGUSON, S and FITZGERALD, H. *Studies in the Social Services*. HMSO and Longmans Green, 1954. (62.71 FER).

O'BRIEN, T.H. *Civil Defence*. HMSO and Longmans Green, 1955. (62.8 OBR).

These three volumes are from the History of the Second World War: UK Civil Series edited by Sir K. Hancock. A projected volume on education by Dr Sophia Weitzman to which these books refer was not published.

For evacuation Professor Titmuss' volume is probably the most detailed.

ISAACS, S (ed). *The Cambridge Evacuation Survey*. Methuen, 1941. (62.86 ISA).

JOHNSON, B.S. (ed). *The Evacuees*. Gollancz, 1968. (62.86 JOH).

ALLEN, E. *Wartime Children 1939-1945*. Adam and Charles Black, 1975. (62.71 ALL).

Of these books the second is anecdotal and the third a Black's Junior Reference Book.

LCC *A short account of the services of the Council during the war of 1939-1945*. LCC, 1949 (P18.0 1949).

This is a pamphlet. The accompanying photographs are in the Photograph Collection. Some of the drafts upon which the text was based are also in the library.

SAMWAYS, R. *We think you ought to go*. Greater London Record Office, 1995 (62.86 COL).

Available to buy at London Metropolitan Archives £5.00

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8

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