

SUMMARY OF  
GOVERNMENT EVACUATION SCHEME

1938 - 1944

- Part 1. Evacuation
- Part 2. Reception

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Part 1

EVACUATION

Pre-war government planning in 1938 laid the responsibility for the Evacuation Scheme on the Ministry of Health. The country was divided into three zones:-

<u>Evacuation Areas</u>	<u>Neutral Areas</u>	<u>Reception Areas</u>
Originally 81, including London, large industrial towns and ports		1,100

The Home Office asked WVS and other voluntary organisations for their help in September 1938. In planning the movement of nearly 4 million - (3,500,000 to be accommodated in England and Wales - 400,800 in Scotland) registration for evacuation, transport, priority classes, expectant mothers, child care training etc. had to be worked out. With the prospect of sudden violent air attacks and original fears of gas attacks, it was essential to get mothers and children away from danger areas. Emergency food rations, petrol supplies, billeting allowances (from post offices), advice to parents on luggage and clothing, printing and distribution of postcards for assurance of safe arrival etc. etc. needed much thought and planning.

The Government Evacuation Scheme published in May 1939 listed as

<u>Priority Classes</u>	1. School children in charge of teachers
	2. Children of pre-school age with mothers or other people responsible
	3. Expectant mothers
	4. Adult blind and crippled - so far as feasible

<u>Registration</u>	In London, Glasgow, Birmingham, Hull, Southampton, etc. Schools to be used for registration with teachers as registrars. Handbooks to be supplied. Forms in duplicate to be completed.
<u>Expectant Mothers</u>	issued with coloured cards. Blue cards for mothers expecting a baby within a month to travel by road with midwives in attendance. Red cards for all others to travel by train.
<u>Child care training</u>	WVS arranged training courses for volunteers, in co-operation with National Council for Maternity and Child Welfare, agreed by the Ministry of Health.
<u>Hospital Emergency Scheme</u>	some patients were moved on August 28 1939.

(A great number of persons made private arrangements for evacuation.)

### THE FIRST EVACUATION

The Government order to evacuate was issued on Friday, September 1st 1939. The movement began to evacuate four million mothers and children. Many thousands of hospital patients were sent home - others moved to hospitals in safer localities by train, ambulance, or private cars with WVS enrolled drivers. Buses were laid on from detraining stations to billets and bedding was arranged.

By September 3rd (war was declared on Sunday, September 4th) 1,473,000 persons had been transferred to safer places with no accidents or casualties.

Thousands travelled by train and many thousands of others, including school children, expectant mothers, special schools and blind and deaf persons by motor bus. 23,000 mostly school children went by boat to Lowestoft and Yarmouth and on by bus. 17,000 WVS members were used as escorts.

Children under school age ('under 5<sup>s</sup>') went with their mothers or responsible adults. Nursery Schools went as units mostly to large country houses.

Three Receiving Nurseries were set up by WVS in London for small unaccompanied children. Parents worried over children going to total strangers for an indefinite period of time.

Private Evacuation - about 2,000,000 people made their own arrangements and considerable confusion resulted in Reception Areas.

#### The Drift Back during the 'Phoney' war 1939

Expected heavy air attacks did not materialise - endless problems arose. Large cities had no schools, no clinics, and lacked medical staff. Though many children had not been evacuated, those who had been were short of necessary facilities - mothers were lonely misfits in country surroundings - children unhappy; many mothers and children returned to their homes. By January 1940 about 80% had returned.

With air attacks still just as imminent the Ministry of Information asked WVS to circulate posters urging parents not to bring back their children and to establish a fuller understanding of each other's needs and difficulties.

Local Authorities and Finance - 1939 Local Authority difficulties - who was to pay for what? Many useful lessons were learnt before air attacks came in 1940. Recovery of costs as far as possible on a day-to-day basis' from evacuation authorities - costs for maternity services, milk for school children - immunisation against diphtheria - transport costs, etc. etc.

Billeting Allowances - 10/6 a week for 1 child, 8/6 each for two or more - to cover board and lodging - later 9/- per child (6/- to be paid by parents).

War Orphans and Allowances - part payment by those acting as child's guardians. Billeting allowances raised by 6d. a week later and in 1944 by an extra shilling.

Mothers with Young Children - Householders were paid 5/- per adult and 3/- per child under 14 with help for parents from Local Assistance Board Office.

Expectant Mothers - From November 1940 householders were paid 21/- a week full Board and Lodging (as much as possible to be recovered from the mothers) , which was increased in 1944 to 25/- weekly.

## THE SECOND EVACUATION

Only five days after the outbreak of war the Government took the drastic decision that in any future Evacuation Scheme, mothers should not be included. Adverse behaviour of the women and the fact that they were flocking back home were the reasons for the change in policy. A new plan was drawn up though not put into operation until air raids developed on a serious scale.

The Government determined that each child should have a medical overhaul and should carry a label indicating a suitable type of billet. Other measures included examinations on arrival in Reception area, the release of school nurses from casualty work, the opening of cleansing stations and a generous provision of mackintosh sheets.

WVS told its members to do all possible to influence parents to send their children away, describing conditions and answering questions to give parents confidence in the Scheme. Leaflets for parents were distributed in evacuation areas and a list of needs for each child -

Gas mask	Spare stockings or socks
Identity card	House shoes or plimsolls
Ration book	Warm coats or mackintosh
Food for 1 day	Toothbrush, comb, towel
Change of underclothing	Handkerchiefs
Night clothes	

The luggage should be packed in a haversack to be carried on the child's back, leaving his hands free. In the Spring of 1940 a big publicity campaign urging parents to register their children was run by the Ministry of Information. All these detailed schemes were altered by the tide of war. The enemy advanced into Belgium and Holland and those evacuated to Southern and Eastern districts were now in the danger zones. In June 1940 nearly 100,000 school children were evacuated from London and in a large number of coastal towns a similar exodus began. Mothers with young children could make their own arrangements; free travel vouchers were issued and a Billeting Allowance paid to the householders, etc. It was estimated that from September 1940 to the end of 1941 850,000 (mainly mothers and children) were evacuated under this 'Assisted Scheme'.

The problem of Old People presented many difficulties - mainly finding suitable billets for them. Mothers and children had to be considered first. The 'assisted scheme' made it possible for a good many aged persons to be moved to safer, quieter localities. Later in the year Government attention was drawn to the unhappy state of old people, some in a very neglected condition, spending all their time in public shelters. The Ministry of Health provided a limited number of beds in hospitals in reception areas for some of these. Many were more terrified of being moved than of being bombed, but by December 1940 about 4,000 had been evacuated from London to country districts. A number of voluntary organisations opened hostels for the aged and by June 1941 there were 50 in reception areas - by June 1942 the number had grown to 210.

Receiving Nurseries dealing with under fives were opened in Wales and Yorkshire. WVS escorts responsible for groups of young children often spent 15 hours a day in trains.

The 'Baby' bus, an American gift, took some of those going to the Home Counties.

Repeated air attacks made everyday normal duties more difficult to perform and all suffered from lack of sleep and interrupted routine. The Government decided to arrange once more for the organised evacuation of mothers and young children - many rendered homeless in the East End and the whole of the Metropolitan area. Local Authorities in receiving areas were warned that due to the experiences the evacuees had suffered, they would arrive in an exhausted, distressed state, probably far from clean. After a night of bombing with fires still raging, broken glass everywhere, gas mains exploded and probably no water, even washing was difficult. Reception Authorities were reminded that besides refreshments, facilities for washing and reclothing would be of the greatest help in restoring courage and self

respect. The fact that bombing soon spread to different parts of the country made it vitally necessary for evacuation plans to be flexible. Housing surveys were made and once a Lodging Restriction Order had been made for a particular town it became a 'closed' area unless special permission had been obtained from the local authority.

The only step taken by the Government towards compulsory Evacuation was during the winter of 1940-41. Only 400 children during the whole of 1941, most of whom were under fives, were evacuated under this Order.

The civilian population, despite pre-war forecasts, stood up to the heavy air attacks without showing signs of mental and emotional disorders. Their realisation that evacuation and shelter schemes were available to everyone helped to maintain a firm morale. All post-raid services, rest centres, compensation grants, feeding schemes and casualty services were important in a less tangible way.

Invasion Scheme 1940-1944 - An awareness of the possible invasion of this country drew nearer each week and made tremendously heavy demands on our resources. Hitler's original plan was timed to begin on 21st September, 1940. This involved the removal of hundreds of thousands of people from coastal areas, done as secretly as possible.

WVS were secretly briefed for this large scale evacuation plan and were all ready to do their particular part had the necessity arisen. The planning covered the working out of timetables, accumulation of emergency food stores, stocks of equipment, reservation of billets and allocation of workers to carry out manifold duties.

During the whole four years the 'Special' Scheme, as it was called, had to be continually revised and kept at a point where it could be put into immediate use if the emergency had arisen. The threat was only finally lifted when D-Day

arrived and, instead of enemy invasion of this country, British and American forces landed in Europe.

#### 1942 Evacuation of Battle Training Areas

In the summer of 1942 it was decided by the Service Departments to take over two small districts in East Anglia as Battle Training Areas and to evacuate all the civilian population. A little later, areas in Devonshire, Yorkshire and Scotland, all mainly agricultural country, had to be cleared for the same purpose. This meant the removal to other parts of the country of whole families including children, old people and invalids with their goods and chattels, their live-stock and farming implements.

The reasons for such a move had to be explained carefully and the distress minimised. Government representatives addressed meetings in parish churches and voluntary organisations helped with the preparatory work. WVS distributed leaflets and gave assistance. The search for accommodation was eased a little due to the shortage of agricultural labour and many farms were willing to take evacuated families in return for their help. Special licences were issued enabling owners of laid-up cars to put them on the road again, Information Bureaux set up, and petrol coupons issued for journeys involved. In actual numbers this was a small evacuation but a complicated and difficult operation.

#### Flying Bomb Evacuation - 1942-1944

Severe air raids temporarily ceased during 1942-43 but many places did suffer from enemy attacks including the cathedral towns of Canterbury, York, Norwich, Bath and Exeter.

Sudden swift 'tip and run' raids caused distress in small towns and villages along the coast. In the early months of 1944 raids on a heavier scale started again on London and suddenly ceased.

In June 1944, when the flying bomb attack opened, the holding together of the machinery of evacuation proved a wise decision. Again thousands of mothers and children were removed to safer areas. London was the chief target though towns and villages of the South and South East suffered severely - this strip of country was known as 'Bomb Alley'. The lessons learned from the previous evacuations proved fruitful in many ways. School children were thoroughly examined and cleansed - and medical notes accompanied them. Efforts were made to send evacuees away fully equipped. WVS Clothing depots worked at high pressure and 200,000 garments had been issued by the end of July despite clothes rationing. WVS were informed in advance by the London County Council of daily train arrangements and arranged for four welfare workers to travel on each train with a supply of urns of tea, hot and cold water, biscuits, sweets, baby food and baby bottles. The LCC supplied chums of milk and paper cups - work started at 5.45 a.m. at the base kitchen in Savile Row. On the peak day, July 11 1944, 95 five-gallon urns and 92 urns of boiling water together with a proportionate number of babies' bottles and teats were sent out. WVS Station Marshals worked at each terminus. During the flying bomb attack in July and August, 307,600 mothers and children were evacuated in organised parties. About 552,000 others made their own arrangements, and were assisted with free travel vouchers and billeting certificates. In all nearly one million people were helped by the Government to leave the danger zone for the safety and quiet of reception areas. There were mishaps - flying bomb incidents caused road blocks - buses were late - lorries carrying luggage would miss the pre-arranged train. The Ministry of Health set up a central depot for the collection and redistribution of unclaimed luggage and prams, which eventually caught up with their original owners.

In July 1944 several thousand old folks were enabled to leave London under a Government scheme to evacuate the

'able-bodied aged' who were placed in private billets arranged by the Assistance Board officers. WVS helped with all the details at the start of the journey and often provided escorts for the journey - other WVS members in reception areas took them to billots on arrival and supplied clothing where needed.

#### Evacuation - Closing stages 1944

Government plans to meet expected rocket attacks were being made. The V.1's, small pilotless planes - flying bombs - became familiar to the general public as 'buzz bombs' or 'doodle bugs'. The new menace V.1 was a long range rocket, probably causing devastating destruction. It was expected that 500,000 people would have to be evacuated from London; also important industries, Government departments, and hospitals would need to be cleared of all patients. Reception Centres and feeding stations would be required on the outskirts of London for refugees on foot. Fortunately these plans never had to be translated into action.

Rockets fell on London but the force of the attack gradually lessened as the Allies advanced in Western Europe.

Preparation for return of Evacuees - An organised orderly return home was planned by the Government to spread over a reasonable time. The London County Council had to arrange for children to be collected from nearly 1,000 billeting areas, formed into parties and train loads, and on arrival in London, re-sorted and taken to 80 different evacuation districts. A house to house enquiry had to be carried out to discover if there was a home to return to - if parents were still serving in the Forces, were ill or had disappeared. A record card was prepared for each unaccompanied child, lists were sent to reception areas showing which children should return home and which not - in the latter cases giving the reasons. In September 1944 it was decided that evacuation in reverse would be operated in stages with London coming last. Many persons did not

wait for the signal but went home regardless of dilapidated damaged houses and continued danger in the London area from rockets. Damage sustained in air raids, flying bomb and rocket attacks resulted in 1,000,000 to 1,500,000 damaged or destroyed houses. Londoners were finally told officially on 2nd May 1945 that the return movement could begin. The voluntary organisations who had given so much help throughout the whole evacuation period were doing their part in the reverse movement. WVS again arranged escorts and welfare workers on trains. Some mothers with large families stated that they felt unable to cope with reopening their houses and at the same time feeding and caring for their children. This difficulty was a very real one - and the Ministry of Health arranged with WVS for practical help to be given where necessary. Another return home problem was concerned with the under 5's from residential war nurseries. At the suggestion of WVS it was decided that in every evacuation area in London a talk should be given on the differences between the communal life the children had been living in the nurseries and normal homelife - also simple advice to enable parents and children to make the necessary adjustments after years of war and separation. Social workers, health workers, school nurses, child care organisers were suggested for use in this plan to give advice and help.

## Part 2

### RECEPTION OF EVACUEES

After the publication in 1938 of the Report of Committee of Evacuation the words 'reception areas' soon became familiar. The Report explained that in the event of war it would be necessary to move some of the population from highly congested urban areas to small country towns and rural districts - "Accommodation for large numbers of refugees

can only be obtained quickly and economically by billeting in private houses". And of course billeting of such a kind and on such a large scale was unprecedented. After the Country had been divided into evacuation, neutral and reception zones, the exact amount of accommodation in each reception area had to be ascertained. The choice of visitors to carry out the housing survey had to be carefully made - kindness and tact in dealing with householders was essential. 100,000 visitors were engaged in the investigation of over 5,000,000 houses which concerned 18,000,000 people. Despite the outcry against billeting in private houses, in England & Wales accommodation was offered for 2,250,000 unaccompanied schoolchildren and 300,000 in Scotland.

In January 1939 WVS formed a Sub-Committee for evacuation - which eventually included representatives from the National Federation of Women's Institutes, Queen's Institute of District Nursing, Girl Guides Association, National Council of Social Service and the London County Council. WVS issued an explanatory leaflet to tell simply what evacuation involved and how women could help -

'EVACUATION - DO YOU REALISE WHAT EVACUATION MEANS?'

'WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO? IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN YOUR  
CHILD'

'THE NATION LOOKS TO ITS WOMEN TO SAFEGUARD THE FUTURE  
GENERATION'

In February 1939 an agreement was reached on how WVS could help with communal feeding. A series of lectures was arranged covering such subjects as premises, equipment and staffing, diet and menu planning, buying and storing foodstuffs, quantities, preparation and service of food.

It was stated in a Government Memo that emergency rations would be supplied to reception areas - enough to provide for each evacuee for 48 hours.

Medical services, education, recreation and the establishment of Welfare Committees were other matters touched upon. The Ministry of Health asked County Councils to arrange conferences of all reception authorities enabling plans to be worked out with a greater degree of efficiency and asked that evacuating and transport authorities should attend these meetings.

The reception of large numbers of evacuees would make heavy demands on householders and WVS issued a special pamphlet 'Notes for the Guidance of WVS Evacuation Assistants' containing the following headings:-

1. Allocation of buildings
2. Reception at railheads and dispersal to billets
3. care of the evacuated after arrival -
  - (a) Management of buildings
  - (b) Feeding
  - (c) Transport
  - (d) Health
  - (e) Leisure
  - (f) Clothing and equipment
  - (g) Children under five
  - (h) Maternity care
  - (i) Information Bureau

To keep the ordinary woman informed on points she needed to know, other leaflets were issued by WVS including 'General information for Evacuation for Householders taking unaccompanied children' explaining what to do if difficulties arose - illness, education, food storage and menus. In July 1939 with the agreement of the Ministry of Health WVS issued a leaflet 'A Healthy Child is a Happy Child'.

The Assistance Board opened 605 new offices in various parts of the country and the department known as the Ministry of Food was equally busy. 45,000,000 Ration Books were already printed and in August 1939 iron rations were distributed to reception areas in readiness for evacuees. The National Registration Scheme undertook

that everyone, including children, would be given a number shared by no-one else. The quotation of that number would enable him to be traced to a particular district and finally to a particular house. It was suggested that teachers accompanying evacuated children should make sure that every child had his number and a name tab on his clothing, and that numbers should be recorded in the school register. Teachers played a prominent role in the evacuation scheme. 'Reception' rehearsals were held in different parts of the country during the summer of 1939 in an effort to smooth the arrival of evacuees.

The billeting survey had shown many householders ready to take evacuees provided they could be supplied with bedding. 1,470,000 beds or mattresses and 4,200,000 blankets were needed. The blanket situation was acute, for evacuees, hospitals, first aid posts, casualty trains and ambulances all needed extra blankets, and in addition the Army required 4,500,000 - 6,000,000. Six days before war broke out the Treasury agreed to authorise a certain amount of expenditure on blankets.

The arrangements that had to be made in readiness for expectant mothers presented some grave difficulties.

When a house was obtained the minimum standards of sanitation, water supply, heating and cooking facilities had to be met.

It was on the last day of August 1939 that the evacuation scheme was put into operation.

WVS had been told they would receive 24 hours notice.

When the signal arrived telegrams were immediately sent to 12 Regional Administrators who notified their County and County Borough Organisers and on to the Centre, District and Village Representatives.

Within 14 hours 120,000 WVS members were standing by ready to undertake any of the multiple tasks that were to fall to the voluntary worker.

On the first day of September people living in the reception areas stood on the threshold of a cataclysmic experience.

The unforeseen difficulties at the evacuating end have been explained. They created far greater difficulties for the reception areas. In some places there were scenes of indescribable confusion, the billeting being done in a very haphazard fashion. Many train loads of evacuees did not arrive until long after black-out. In one place 1,400 mothers and children arrived during blackout and it was not until 3 a.m, that the last was finally billeted. For three days the evacuees poured into reception areas - children of all ages, sorts and conditions, many ragged, dirty and suffering from skin infections - mothers and babies, expectant mothers, blind persons, teachers and helpers. Sick bays and maternity homes were hurriedly organised and other emergency services swiftly improvised. Country people were horrified at the ragged, dirty state of large numbers of the evacuees. Some householders turned evacuees out of doors each morning and told them not to return until evening. But on the whole, bad billeting was rare and for every bad case there were hundreds and hundreds of householders who received their guests with kindness and consideration.

The need for large supplies of clothing was immediate and urgent and on 8th September the Minister of Health broadcast an appeal for clothing and footwear. Boot manufacturers gave bales of leather, boot and shoe factories did repairs, but even with all the help that was given, time

and again it was the individual householder who bought the thick jerseys and coats and paid for the shoe repairs.

The verminous condition of many children was another shock for people in reception areas. Official and voluntary workers struggled to deal with the problem but the burden fell heaviest on the foster parents. Another matter was the extent to which enuresis became a problem. Feelings of insecurity and nervous tension were usually the cause - and often householders had to cope with it for many weeks. The Ministry of Information asked WVS to prepare a simple leaflet which was published under the title 'Information on Bed-wetting for Householders taking Unaccompanied Children' Child Guidance Centres were established where foster parents could take children regularly for advice and treatment.

Some problem children were unbilleteable and in addition there were also unbilleteable mothers. It was suggested that hostels and communal restaurants be set up. The responsibility for organising communal meals for school children was transferred to the Education Authority. To begin with, voluntary societies, the National Federation of Women's Institutes and WVS bore the main burden and canteens were opened where children and adults were provided with cheap, nourishing meals - finally more was done officially and the service fell into line with school meals. The value of this form of feeding was proved over and over again. Householders were thankful to be relieved of the responsibility of providing hot midday meals for children and for adult evacuees - the canteen not only provided them with a hot meal but with a place where they received a welcome and met other evacuated women - a social club frequently developed.

Special efforts were made for social and recreational needs WVS produced a leaflet entitled 'War Time Play Schemes for

Children' with suggestions that Boy Scouts or Girl Guides form committees to plan programmes. Advice regarding play rooms and leaders was included. Schools were used as play centres during holidays with one teacher to every 40 or 50 children. As 1939 ended, the drift back of mothers and children to the danger zones continued and the first few months of 1940 provided workers in reception areas with a brief breathing space during which readjustments could be made and schemes improved. From the beginning of evacuation there was a great need for nursery centres for young children under 5. The Health and Education Departments worked out plans. Local Authorities were told that nursery centres could be set up in places where there were 50 or more under fives. The Under Fives Department of WVS worked with the Ministry of Health and the waifs and Strays Society and with funds entrusted to WVS by the American Red Cross, opened and ran one hundred WVS Wartime Nurseries. After USA entered the war the Ministry of Health took full financial responsibility from 1st April, 1942. Communal meals were also being gradually extended and in March 1940 WVS had made a rough survey which indicated that at least 9,000 children were being fed by 1,300 voluntary workers.

Welfare Committees were at work in many country towns and villages.

Appeal Tribunals were also set up in a number of places.

It was realised that in any further evacuation medical inspections would need to be much more thorough and local authorities were given detailed advice. At the request of the Ministry of Health a further leaflet was produced by WVS on the cleansing of children's heads. Expert medical advice was sought and after approval by the Ministry it was printed and distributed to the reception areas. And was followed by another pamphlet 'Notes and Suggestions on

Clothing for those caring for unaccompanied children in reception areas'. Make-and-mend parties in rural areas put in many hours patching and contriving numerous small garments.

For the children themselves the months of country life had opened up a new world. They were always making interesting discoveries - 'that ducks have legs and can walk as well as swim'! The Government realised the value of the service that foster parents were rendering and it was announced that Her Majesty the Queen would send a special message to householders who had billeted evacuees for a substantially continuous period. Eventually the letter was sent to 336,629 householders.

So rapid was the German advance in 1940 that with startling suddenness people living in the South and South East woke up to the fact that at any moment they might be in the front line of battle. Evacuated London children, residential nurseries, schools and hospitals found themselves in the danger zone. Within a fortnight 12,150 children had been transferred to safer localities and in the next few weeks hundreds more - about 25,000 in all. Also another 100,000 school children were sent away from London. The 'assisted private evacuation scheme' came into force.

The invasion of the Low Countries, the tragic fall of France and the occupation of the Channel Islands brought many thousands of refugees to these shores.

By this time the Battle of Britain was being fought high up in the summer skies and daylight raids were being made on a number of towns. In September when heavy bombing really started there were more than 520,000 schoolchildren still living in the London area.

For the first few weeks after heavy raiding began workers in reception areas had a hectic time. Many of the problems of

the first evacuation appeared again. But what was almost equally important and helpful - the temper of the country had changed.

As the tempo of war increased so the demands for clothing became more and more urgent. During the last six months of 1940 WVS received and distributed clothes to the value of £1,500,000. The Ministry of Health made grants of money for purchasing material, the American Red Cross also provided material, and by the end of 1940 nearly 500 miles of material had been made up. WVS were the sole distributing agents for American Red Cross, official agents for Canadian Red Cross - the task assumed vast proportions.

As winter closed in, the severe night raids were of longer duration, but instead of evacuation increasing it lessened. People were adapting themselves and resistance was hardening.

At the beginning of 1941, including persons using the 'assisted' scheme, the total number of evacuees in reception areas was in the region of 1,250,000, further increased by evacuated civil servants, staffs of business firms, banks, insurance companies, workers in war industries and members of the armed forces. It is easy to realise that the actual housing of all these people presented a considerable problem. The throat of invasion still loomed very large. Besides the problem of finding actual house room for all evacuees, local authorities were faced with the difficulty of furnishing and equipping hostels, maternity homes, communal billets and nurseries.

It was estimated that to equip a nursery for 40 young children 4,000 items were required.

In the various reception areas the start of different forms of welfare work had sometimes originated with the officers of the Ministry of Health or an energetic member of a local authority, but the development of it was largely in the

hands of voluntary workers. Members of 'Women's Institutes, WVS, Church workers and teachers and many others were the essential life-blood of the social services. WVS clothing stores had to work to a careful system and then in June 1941 clothes rationing was introduced!

1941 saw the growth and development of welfare services in the reception areas - and during the following two years this went on, accompanied by continual readjustments and improvements. Side by side with our intensified war effort was the rapid expansion of war production - new factories, new aerodromes being constructed. A little later accommodation had to be provided for several million American troops.

Under the supervision of the Board of Education 94 hostels had been set up for children attending secondary and technical schools. There were 233 hostels for backward children - also 207 'buffer' hostels where children for one reason or another needed temporary accommodation.

Nine convalescent hospitals, seven for children and a mixed group of 31 others. All through the war the majority of hostels struggled along with inadequate and overworked staffs.

By 1943 there were 68 clinics, 47 these fully staffed. The number of ante-natal hostels gradually increased from 17 in 1939 until towards the end of the war there were 99.

It was at the beginning of 1943 that WVS inaugurated Clothing Exchanges - places where outgrown but not outworn garments could be exchanged for others in the size needed. The value of this scheme in a time of strict rationing can be imagined. Many mothers and foster mothers had cause to bless the Clothing Exchanges. In less than two years the number had grown to 383. Make-and-mend parties were attached to nearly every Exchange.

The three years from 1941 to the end of 1943 had gradually wrought many changes in the reception areas. The value of these changes was to be put to a severe test in the year that lay ahead. The first flying bomb fell on London the night of 12th June 1944. The attack quickly increased in violence and once again reception areas prepared hurriedly for crowds of evacuees. Unofficial evacuees arrived in large numbers and put a severe strain on billeting arrangements and general welfare facilities at many reception areas. Empty houses again had to be requisitioned for buffer hostels and communal billets.

After five years of war it was immeasurably harder to obtain all the necessities. Senior boys and girls from secondary schools helped with the reception of 'flying bomb evacuees' - sorted and delivered luggage, amused the children, helped in canteens, nurseries, schools and play centres. In July 1944 the Ministry of Health took steps to evacuate some 'able-bodied aged'. WVS did a great deal to help - clothing needs were met, visiting done etc. etc. Under the strain of the flying bomb attacks many expectant mothers were thankful to take advantage of the evacuation scheme. Between 700 and 800 women left the danger zones each week - 1944 saw a record number of confinements in wartime maternity homes - a total of 41,248. And the mothers with babies were among the first to flock back home! Though workers in reception areas did not realise it, the last evacuation of the war was over. The greater understanding that had gradually developed between townspeople and country folk was one by-product of evacuation that was worth preserving.

When a count was taken in March 1946, 5,200 unaccompanied children still remained in reception areas, most with their foster parents. Almost 4,000 old and infirm were still in billets and hostels under the evacuation scheme. The closing down of all the varied Welfare Services spread itself over a number of years.



