

# Why did the british government decide to evacuate children



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In 1940 German air raids started in Britain. Children were evacuated as early as 1939 from the fear of being bombed. There were four main reasons for the children being evacuated so early; the safety of the future generation, boosting the populations morale, freeing mothers to work for the government and giving the children better opportunities to learn about personal hygiene and develop agricultural skills. One of the reasons for evacuation was the safety of young or pregnant mothers and also to protect the future generation.

Even though they were evacuated in 1939 the air raids did not start until September 1940. This led to women and children being brought back home and then sent away again. The time when the German bombing started was known as the " Blitz". Before the Blitz in the summer of 1940 the Germans had planned to invade Britain but were stopped by the Royal Air Force. On the 7th September 1940, when the Blitz began, London was bombed 75 out of 76 nights in a row. Other British cities were also hit. An example would be Coventry on the night of 14th September, Coventry was bombed for 10 hours.

A third of the city's buildings were destroyed and over 4000 civilians were killed. Altogether the bombing raids had killed over 60, 000 British civilians and over 2 million people were left homeless. The evacuation was necessary to preserve as many lives as possible. Therefore the British government decided to evacuate the children to ensure the safety of the future generation. Another reason for evacuation was to boost the population's morale. The population's morale was very low in that time because many problems happened to the country.

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In 1939 Hitler had defeated Poland using his tactic called the "Blitzkrieg". He attacked with air attacks and heavy artillery in a huge surprise attack. After that the time between September 1939 and April 1940 was known as the phoney war because there was no war. But in April 1940 Norway was conquered. Also only one month later Luxemburg, Holland and Belgium were also conquered. The Germans attacked France. The British troops tried to help the French but were driven back to Dunkirk at the end of May.

On the 22nd of June 1940 the French surrendered and Britain now stood on its own against Germany. During August 1940 German bombers started attacking the RAF bases and defences, but on 7th September they started attacking residential and industrial areas. After all these events the Government needed to boost the morale of the country so they could try their best to help in the war effort and to ensure that they should panic. The Government used propaganda posters to show the population that they were doing something about what has happened in and out of the country.

Consequently the Government wanted to boost the morale of the citizens so they can work for them, making them sure that their children were safe it would make them produce more goods for the war. The next reason was to free up the workforce. In 1941 there was a shortage of manpower in Britain's industries. In March 1941 the government ordered all women between 19 and 40 were to register for 'essential war work'. But women who were looking after children under the age of 14 did not have to work and so the government were so desperate for mother workers that they wanted to send children away to be evacuated to free them for the war work.

By the end of 1941 Britain had done more than any other country for the war. Women started to take over the jobs in the industries. 300, 000 working in explosives and chemicals, 1. 5 million in engineering and by 1943 7, 750, 000 women were in paid work. Therefore the Government used evacuation to free up mothers so that they could work for them. The final reason for the evacuation of children was to give them better opportunities in the countryside. The reason they will have better opportunities are that they were very poor due to the economic depression caused by the Wall Street Crash in 1929.

This led to widespread unemployment and poverty for the working class. This affected children so they lived with poor sanitation and bad diets. Children and young mothers were able to experience better living conditions in the countryside such as clean air, open spaces, personal hygiene and opportunities to develop farming or other agricultural skills. But not all children got better living conditions. Some even got worse living conditions having to fetch their own water and live in less developed farming areas.

Not only did it give children better opportunities, it showed the better off middle and upper class how deprived the poor working class in London were. Consequently the children were evacuated to give them the opportunity to improve on their hygiene and healthcare. In conclusion to this I believe the government had many reasons why they evacuated children, from keeping as many people for the future generation alive as possible to manipulating mothers to work for the country. There wasn't just one important factor there were many and they were as important as each other.